



WAITLIST SUPPORT SERVICE SUMMARY

Supporting women
experiencing homelessness



CATHERINE
HOUSE



Lang Family
Foundation

The Catherine House Waitlist Support Service would not be possible without the support of the Lang Family Foundation.

Roger Lang, Kirsty Roderick and the Foundation Board are long-term and valued supporters of Catherine House.

The Lang Family Foundation collaborated with Catherine House to address the significant increase in demand for our services.

Recognising the need for additional support for women on the Catherine House waitlist, a 12-month pilot program was established and funded entirely through the Lang Family Foundation.

We thank them for their ongoing support of women experiencing homelessness across South Australia.



WAITLIST SUPPORT SERVICE

PROJECT OUTLINE

‘Every woman without a home matters – Catherine House to do more’

Expand the Catherine House Intake Service through establishing the Waitlist Support Service, by employing a part-time Waitlist Support Worker and utilising brokerage funds.

Link to Catherine House strategic direction

This project aligns with Catherine House Strategic Pillars 3 (Growing our impact and influence), and 4 (Implementing innovation).

Goal and intention

Increase the service offering (crisis response/prevention/diversion) to women at risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness through the provision of practical support through brokerage as the Waitlist Support Service (WSS).

RISKS

Demand will exceed capacity

This was not realised in the first year.

A lack of safe accommodation options

Despite initially working towards offering motel accommodation, by researching and establishing a register, Catherine House did not proceed due to identified safety concerns.

Funding for a 12-month pilot will leave a gap unless further funding is sourced

The project identified a need for the WSS, as there is not a service like this in Adelaide. In March 2025, the Lang Family Foundation advised they would fund the project for a 2nd year with the same annual donation as the pilot year.

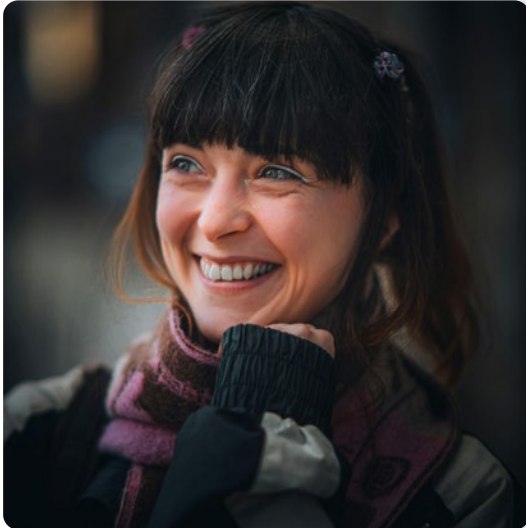
Safety concerns were identified over the pilot year. These included concerns for the worker and the client, as many clients had high domestic and family violence risk assessment scores and were in unsafe relationships and situations. In these cases, only phone support could be offered. There were also clients who had not been able to engage with support services as they were experiencing active unwellness.



EVERY WOMAN WITHOUT A HOME MATTERS

CATHERINE HOUSE TO DO MORE

DEMOGRAPHICS & STATISTICS



79 WOMEN

RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE WAITLIST SUPPORT SERVICE

Who were the clients

Clients across all age bands were supported, from 18-65 years of age. The highest % of clients were aged 25-34 (37%). The lowest % of clients were aged 65+ (2%).

Clients listed their country of birth from four different nations, 95% from Australia. From 12 different regions of SA with 27% from the western suburbs.

What was their situation when they contacted us

The women the WSS supported were either at risk, boarding, couch surfing, in a motel, or without any form of shelter when they reached out to us.

Goals

24 (30%) of the 79 WSS clients identified goal/s to work on.

Clients had choice and freedom regarding their goals. There were 17 categories of goals noted. The top three goals identified by clients were housing, dental care, and support with substance use.

Of the clients who identified a goal to work on, 46% of clients identified housing as a goal, 46% of clients identified dental care as a goal, and 17% of clients identified support with drug and alcohol use as a goal.

Collaboration

To support the clients' goals, referrals were made to 46 different external services on behalf of the client.

Other impacts

- Responsive collaboration: from a period of homelessness to housed in long-term properties. One client was housed in 10 weeks, another in 8.5 weeks, with furniture and layered support.
- The hope clients expressed, and the support received when other services were unable to assist.
- Being provided with a personal security alarm was a significant relief to clients, as well as dental support to relieve dental pain.
- The provision of personal care items to all clients in face-to-face meetings.

Impact realisations

- The realisation that most women valued in-person support and connection more than the brokerage on offer.
- That clients in distress and crisis are not able to clearly articulate needs beyond the immediate, such as a roof, a bed, safety, or food.
- The realisation that we are indeed working in a new space, providing a service not offered by another.

EXTERNAL REFERRALS

CLIENTS WERE REFERRED TO

**46 EXTERNAL
SERVICES**



External services with the most frequent referrals

*Note external referrals are usually in response to case management or goals identified by clients, but not always.

Name	Totals
SA Dental Homelessness and Oral Health Program	20 (9.2% of referrals)
South Australian Housing Trust	17 (7.8% of referrals)
Lived Experience Telephone Support Service (afterhours mental health support service)	16 (7.4% of referrals)
Uniting Communities Therapeutic Counselling Services	6
Adelaide North West Homelessness Alliance Access – Team	5
Glasses South Australia	5
Thread Together – Magdalene Centre	4
13 YARN	3

CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY 1: HAYLEY*

Background:

Client: Hayley was heavily pregnant and living in an unsafe tenancy.

Concerns: Department of Child Protection (DCP) involved due to safety concerns.

Health and other agency support in place.

Support provided:

- Personal items, personal safety alarm, and metro card.
- Advocacy to the SA Housing Trust for expedited Category 1 triage with DCP support.
- Advocacy for long-term housing allocation.
- Advocacy for next vacancy in Catherine House Crisis Accommodation.

Outcome:

- Hayley temporarily stayed at Catherine House.
- Secured long-term housing near appropriate community supports.
- Continued outreach follow-up support from Catherine House to help settle in.

CASE STUDY 2: SUE*

Background:

Client: Mother sleeping in her car, with children staying with trusted family friends.

Issues: Struggling with physical and mental health, financial difficulties, and eviction from previous tenancy.

Support provided:

- Car registration payment, phone, personal safety alarm, and metro cards.
- Donated items, food, and personal items.
- Referrals for dental, mental health, and financial counselling services.
- Tenancy education and public housing application support.

Outcome:

- Sue moved into a new home close to schools and work.
- Accessing dental and mental health support.
- Both Sue and her son are on the lease, sharing costs.





CASE STUDY 3: AMANDA*

Background:

Client: Amanda is a young person transitioning from homelessness to her first tenancy.

Financial counsellor involved due to exhausted grant capacity of supporting services.

Support provided:

- Whitegoods package.
- Assistance in obtaining essential furniture for the new tenancy.

Outcome:

- Amanda successfully set up in their new long-term tenancy with necessary furniture.

CASE STUDY 4: MELANIE*

Initial situation:

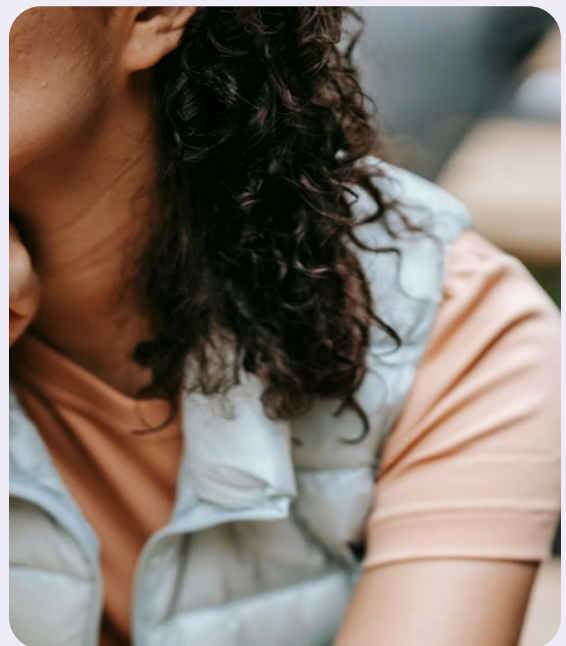
Client: Melanie was staying in communal accommodation with a shared room and was not doing well in that environment.

Progress and positive change:

Goal achievement: Melanie has worked through multiple personal and professional goals.

Employment: Melanie has secured a job, providing her with financial stability and a sense of purpose.

Housing: Melanie is actively working towards obtaining her own independent tenancy, moving closer to achieving stable and independent living.



*All names have been changed to protect client privacy.

KPIS AND OUTCOMES



1. Establish the role and complete the review and development of related procedures to implement the service.

Achieved

3. Provide a time-limited case management response to 30 women.

Partially achieved.

Case management was provided to 22 clients.

2. Provide eligibility assessment (for brokerage support) to 80 women.

99% achieved.

79 clients were supported.

4. Provide brokerage to 60 women.

Partially achieved.

32 clients (40%) received brokerage.

5. Evaluate outcomes of brokerage support provided.

Brokerage was used across five categories:

- Bills
- Bond
- Food, health, safety, and medical needs
- Storage
- Vehicle costs

A total of 81 items were provided.

The overall finding is that clients had great difficulty identifying needs that could be helped by brokerage, even with support and prompting by the worker. This resulted in an underspend overall. Clients were impacted by their situational crisis, and many were unaware of debts that may exist in their name.

People in crisis are often in states of fear, such as flight or freeze, unable to recognise their most basic needs. Our experience with women coming into our crisis accommodation is the same, and they often experience shame about their situation. They fear judgement and will often hold back on revealing the extent of their issues and concerns until they feel safe and can trust.



People need and value connection and it is no different when working with people who are in crisis and living without safe accommodation. A safe, trusting connection is the first thing that needs to be established to build any kind of effective working relationship.

Connection is vital for individuals in crisis for several reasons:

Emotional support: Having someone to talk to can provide comfort and reduce feelings of isolation. This emotional support can help individuals process their experiences and emotions more effectively.

Information sharing: Trusted individuals can share important information about resources, safety measures, and next steps. This can help individuals make informed decisions during a crisis.

Building trust: Personal connections foster trust, which is essential for cooperation and effective problem-solving during crises.

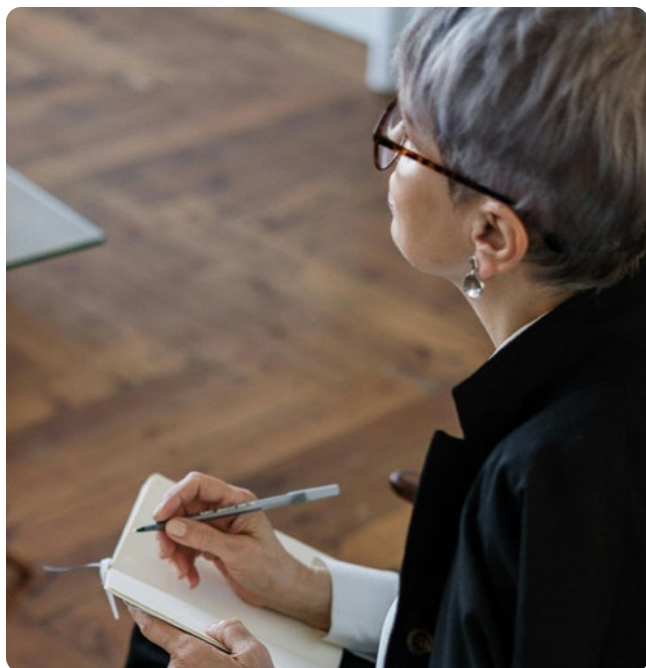
Creating safe spaces: Individuals can create safe spaces for each other to express vulnerability and seek help without fear of judgement.

In essence, strong personal connections provide emotional and practical support, crucial information, and a sense of safety and trust, all of which are vital for navigating and recovering from crises. [1]

It was also challenging for many workers within other support services to refer their clients for brokerage support, despite promoting this. Increased demand to support services across all sectors means a lack of capacity to make referrals for brokerage. Brokerage is not something that many services offer and so there is little reason to examine financial need if there is no easy way of meeting it. The demand for practical, financial, and individualised support far exceeds the resources of front-line homelessness services.

References

- 1. How to Support and Calm an Individual in Crisis:** www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/why-bad-looks-good/202503/how-to-support-and-calm-an-individual-in-crisis



6. Evaluate outcomes of case management provided.

The WSS worker reported that clients highly valued the connection and support provided through case management. Clients engaged with the worker and built a rapport, trust and safety. This connection allowed a comprehensive assessment of client needs beyond the immediate crisis of homelessness.

Building a connection with a client is one of the most under-resourced components of the sector, as it is worker and time-intensive, and the demand far exceeds the capacity to respond. Catherine House prioritises quality engagement over the total number of clients worked with. It recognises the need for women who have lived and living experiences of system failures, disadvantage and trauma to feel safe before any meaningful work can begin.

The case management is guided by clients identifying and working towards their goals. 30% of clients identified a range of goals, with 90% recorded as 'Achieved' or 'Ongoing'.

Outcomes achieved include:

- 13 clients were supported either into housing or with goods for their new housing.
- 3 clients attending detox and rehabilitation, with another attending for part of the designated time.

This illustrates a significant commitment from clients towards their wellbeing and the trust built with the Waitlist Support Worker.

7. Report on outcomes of service, providing recommendations relative to continuation, cessation, or expansion.

As a result of the outcomes achieved at the six-month mark, we forecast similar, if not greater outcomes at 12 months, due to the promotion and embedding of the WSS. The positive impacts of the service were outlined in the September 2024 Progress Report. A meeting was held with the donors who were pleased with the status and success the service had achieved thus far.

In February 2025

Catherine House advocated for the continuation and expansion of the project for a further year, and funding was secured from the inaugural philanthropic foundation to support this.

In recognition of the importance of connection, achieved through case management, it was recommended to increase the WSS case worker role from a 0.8 FTE to a full-time role for the second year. Discussion also occurred with the Director of Supportive Services about integrating the role into the New Generation Catherine House service model.

In reviewing the report on 'client situation status' on exit, we need to drill down further on the category 'Client no longer required assistance (11%)', in terms of what changed for the client. As they reported to be homeless on entry, it should be determined whether they received other assistance or the crisis ended and they could return to where they had been living.

In the WSS, as in our Intake Service, contact is often lost with a percentage of clients. This is due to phones being unavailable, stolen or no longer working, or the client's situation changing due to being or feeling unsafe or unwell, with multiple complex scenarios co-occurring. Contact ceased between the WSS and 31% of clients due to the service being no longer able to reach them. Determining potential outcomes achieved before contact was lost is a future reporting opportunity.

See the next page for recommendations for the second year of the WSS.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

REFINE FOCUS AREAS AND RATIONALE

For impact

Brokerage support to save a tenancy or other housing.

Directing brokerage to more women who don't require case management and need to fund a move from one private rental to another, or to pay rent arrears or mortgage arrears. This needs to be considered alongside a potential new Catherine House Rental Assistance Program in development for the second half of 2025.

This includes aligning with real estate agents or agencies who would support women and our program. They could, with clients' consent, refer women to the program. Until there is a program up and running that addresses this need, the WSS can address this need as it comes to light, but won't focus on actively seeking out clients who need this support.

Brokerage support to start a new tenancy

Support WSS clients, or assess referrals to the WSS with funds to commence a new tenancy. If suitable, support with WSS brokerage, or Wyatt Housing Grant, We Are Mobilise and Catherine House internal Moving on Packs.

Brief intervention

Continue to offer brokerage, as well as information, guidance, resources and referrals to women needing short-term case management while waiting for a housing outcome.

Support with housing needs, assessment and registration

Ensure women have accurate and current applications in place. Many WSS clients were not able to navigate this themselves, requiring support. In some instances, a lack of reading glasses was a barrier to completing applications.

Extend case management support

Currently, case management spans two to eight weeks. For women in crisis, managing significant

complexities, this is not sufficient time to create a safe environment to do more meaningful, potentially transformative work. Catherine House has expertise in case management, offering women a real opportunity to move forward, whatever situation they are in. The WSS will be able to work with suitable clients for up to 12 weeks.

Process improvements

Review how we capture client information and outcomes

Review how client circumstances and support provided are captured in the client record management system to facilitate better understanding and reporting.

Procedure review

Review procedures established early in the model development.

Client feedback

Consider a more efficient way to collect the breadth of WSS client feedback.

Brokerage

- Streamline the purchasing of high-volume goods by bulk buying personal safety alarms, metro cards, and gift cards (utilised as food vouchers).
- Introduce extra steps for tyre and vehicle registration applications.
- Regarding payment for rent or accommodation arrears, pre-purchase debit cards to pay real estate agents and landlords, as these transactions are time-sensitive.
- An alternative process to fund the purchase of furniture when outside the scope of the Wyatt Housing Grant.

Unmet needs

A lack of women-only shower, toilet and laundry facilities arose as an issue for women without shelter or accommodation. Further exploration is needed in ways we could address this. Potential collaboration with Orange Sky and the Adelaide City Council to consider whether a partnership with an inner city serviced apartment could provide a solution, in collaboration with the Homelessness Alliances.

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