



Crisis accommodation

Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation Functional Design Brief

May 2022

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present, and future. We honour Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' primary cultural and spiritual relationships to place, and their rich contribution to our society. To that end, all our work seeks to uphold the idea that if we care for Country, it will care for us.



We are all, always,
on Country



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Executive summary

This document focuses on the design of crisis accommodation facilities for women and children.

Research shows that women experience domestic and family violence at significantly higher rates than men. Domestic and family violence is a leading cause of homelessness among women and children, with more than 1 in 3 specialist homelessness service clients experiencing domestic and family violence¹.

Crisis accommodation provides much-needed emergency accommodation for people experiencing domestic and family violence and/or who are at risk of homelessness. People in crisis accommodation have often experienced physical and/or mental trauma. They are experiencing anxiety and are under immense stress. Under the current model for providing crisis accommodation, women and children are housed communally with others who are likely to be empathetic. However, a socially crowded, shared environment is not conducive to safety and healing, especially when everyone in the environment is under stress.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues within the communally based NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) crisis accommodation facilities. A shift in thinking nationally has led to a transition from communal to independent accommodation. This is referred to as the 'core and cluster' model, where assistance and resources from dedicated specialist staff and independent living units for accommodation are provided on one site.

LAHC and the Government Architect NSW, in consultation with the Department of Communities and Justice and key stakeholders, have completed a review of the design of current crisis refuges. This has culminated in this functional design brief, setting out a typology model for crisis accommodation development.

The intent of the brief is to provide:

- guidance to project and design teams on culturally appropriate design principles
- key spatial relationships and design criteria to optimise independence, safety, and wellbeing
- guidance for the creation of places of healing for women and children.

The brief is informed by research and engagement with stakeholders. It should sit alongside a project brief for a best-practice crisis accommodation typology and design for any future site.

The key objectives and desired outcomes of the project are to:

- ensure women and children escaping domestic and family violence are well supported and have the privacy, safety, and independence they need for healing, wellbeing and belonging
- give women and children the ability to develop a routine in their own space, without disruptions to school and work
- increase capacity within the refuge portfolio to cater for women and children
- give greater capacity for service providers to respond more flexibly to clients with different needs, cultural backgrounds and family composition, such as women with teenage sons
- meet the needs of women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence that may not be met under the current communal living refuge system
- give people with disabilities who are experiencing domestic and family violence easier access to crisis accommodation
- ensure crisis accommodation is designed to be durable, long lasting, and easy to maintain.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2019–20

1

Introduction

1.1 NSW Land and Housing Corporation

NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) operates under the portfolio and direction of the Minister for Homes as part of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

LAHC's role is to actively grow and manage the supply of the right types of housing, at the right time, in the right areas, for people in need in our communities.

We manage the largest social housing portfolio in Australia, with over 125,000 properties, including properties used for crisis accommodation purposes.

LAHC is predominantly self-funding. To fund the development of new properties, including for crisis accommodation, and to maintain and renew existing properties, LAHC collects rent from social housing tenants and sells properties no longer fit for use as modern social housing.

LAHC is continually reviewing the state's portfolio of housing assets to identify opportunities to deliver on the government's [Future Directions](#) priorities, revitalise existing communities, and actively grow and manage the portfolio to meet the needs of residents now and into the future.

1.2 What is crisis accommodation?

Crisis accommodation:

- provides emergency accommodation for people escaping domestic and family violence and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- is intended to be short-term housing designed to help people arrange other permanent or transitional accommodation options
- includes refuges, shelters, motels, flats, boarding houses and caravan parks. An average stay at a refuge is usually between 6 and 12 weeks.

Traditionally, crisis accommodation has been designed to be relatively communal in structure and often used large domestic dwellings or boarding houses with shared facilities and common areas.

Crisis accommodation is different from transitional accommodation, which is designed as medium-term accommodation provided for 12 to 18 months to enable people to move to more permanent accommodation options.

Image: 'The Orchard' courtesy of Housing Plus.



1.3 Constraints with existing model

A recent review of LAHC's crisis accommodation portfolio identified persistent challenges with the existing model.

Existing challenges are:

Design constraints, including:

- **the impact of COVID-19**, with the need for social distancing affecting the already crowded crisis accommodation
- **insufficient bathrooms** to cater for the needs and number of residents
- **inflexibility/inability to adapt** existing dwellings to suit varying needs
- **heritage issues** – increased maintenance costs and the inability to make changes to existing crisis accommodation
- **Building Code of Australia** compliance issues
- lack of **sufficient storage**

Service constraints, including:

- **overcrowding** – not conducive to the support of sound mental health of the occupants
- **operational issues** – people needing access to assistance and specialist staff best provided on-site
- **not establishing independence** – families are not able to live in wholly self-contained units
- **lack of access** for clients with disability

Location constraints, including location of sites:

- **in hazard areas**, such as flood and bushfire prone land
- **next to noise disruptions**, such as major motorways and airports.



1.4

Methodology and best practice

1.4.1 Methodology

This brief draws on a vast evidence base, including a literature review, study of existing LAHC crisis accommodation, study of 'core and cluster' type precedents, and engagement with key stakeholders. The NSW peak bodies, as key stakeholders, provided insights on user experience. This included representatives from Homelessness NSW, Domestic Violence NSW, Women's Safety NSW and DV West.

LAHC held engagement sessions focussing on disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as select groups of specialist homelessness service providers, to gain on-the-ground feedback of key considerations.

The stakeholder feedback received has been collated in a document available on the LAHC website, [Functional Design Brief – Feedback from engagement sessions](#) (PDF 0.3MB).

A synthesis of all information from the research and engagement sessions helped to set out design principles and design criteria for the core and cluster model, which has been put forward as a preferred option to address issues with the current 'communal living' model. The core and cluster model revolves around collocating dedicated specialist staff and independent living units for accommodation.

1.4.2 Best practice

The core and cluster model is currently the preferred model in several Australian states:

- The South Australian Government has introduced the core and cluster model in all crisis accommodation.
- The Western Australian Government has committed to building new purpose-built core and cluster accommodation.
- The Victorian Government has committed to phasing out all communal crisis accommodation and adopting core and cluster principles by 31 December 2020.

The NSW Minister for Family and Community Services announced the core and cluster project for NSW in August 2017, committing \$4 million to trial the model in 4 regional areas. Public commitments were made to use Orange, Griffith, Armidale and Moruya as trial sites, with development recently completed by Housing Plus at Orange and by LAHC in Griffith. The site at Griffith is the first core and cluster project completed in NSW by LAHC and expands the crisis accommodation's current capacity by close to 50%.

In October 2021, the NSW Government announced a \$484.3 million investment in crisis accommodation, supporting construction that focusses on self-contained accommodation, which aligns with the core and cluster model detailed in this brief.

1.5

The value of good design

Good design is a key consideration in developing crisis accommodation.

The success of the new model of domestic and family violence crisis accommodation lies in the thoughtful design of the spaces, and the appropriate relationship between the spaces. Having appropriate spaces is instrumental in providing the necessary opportunities for healing for the residents who temporarily reside there, while also providing a positive and supportive environment for those who work there.

The goals and principles in the LAHC document [Good Design for Social Housing](#) (PDF 3.46 MB) underpin LAHC's approach to future social housing developments. These principles are also applicable to domestic violence crisis accommodation.

Image: 'The Orchard' courtesy of Housing Plus.



Better Placed – An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (PDF 2.58 MB), an overarching policy published by the Government Architect NSW in 2017, can also be used as reference when designing crisis accommodation. This policy defines good design as being healthy, responsive, integrated, equitable and resilient.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 also has good design as one of its planning objectives.

Figure 1. Goals and principles of good design for social housing



Figure 2. Outline of how the design responds to project objectives

Refer to Sections 3, 4 & 5 of this document for further details.



1.6

Draft Connecting with Country Framework

[The Draft Connecting with Country framework](#) (PDF 5.44 MB) is a set of pathways, commitments and principles for action intended to help inform the planning, design, and delivery of built environment projects in NSW.

Published in draft form by the NSW Government Architect in November 2020, the Framework is intended to help government, planners, designers, and industry embed an Aboriginal perspective in planning policy. It also aims to help project teams gain a better understanding of, and to better support, a strong and vibrant Aboriginal culture in our built environment.

The framework is for:

Community, to help them advocate their own project initiatives and find common ground, as well as acknowledging diverse perspectives and stories and relationships to Country

Local government, to help them respond to and advocate for community needs in local planning policies and projects

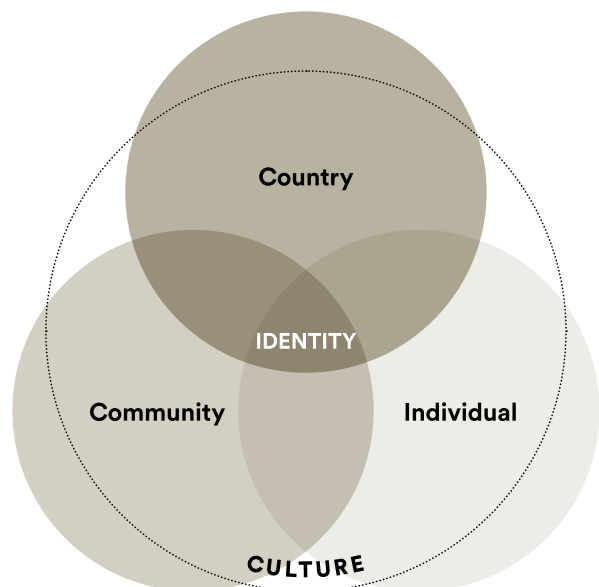
Government agencies, to be better service clients by building relationships with communities on Country

Industry, to support better work practices, relationship building, and delivery of better built environment outcomes that are informed and guided by Aboriginal knowledge and leadership

Developers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), to understand the unique value of Country and the reciprocal nature of that value.

To embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge and systems of respecting Country into work practices and behaviours, the 7 statements of commitment and principles detailed in the framework should be considered throughout all phases of project formation, planning, design, and delivery.

Figure 3. The inter-relationships between Country, community and individuals



1.7

Purpose of the functional design brief

The functional design brief is provided to help design crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

The following table identifies key stakeholders and the uses for this document.

Table 1. Functional use of this document by different stakeholders

Function	Stakeholder
Inform site selection	Project team
Inform future briefs	Project team
Inform cost estimates	Project team
Assess needs of the asset/future crisis accommodation	Project team
De-risk future options	Project team
Identify key design principles and supporting criteria to guide the design of new accommodation	Design consultant team
Identify different requirements and design responses for regional and metropolitan sites	Project team
Identify the key spaces and their relationships that respond to the design principles and supporting criteria	Design consultant team
Identify suitable dwelling types, in response to the location and the site	Design consultant team
Understand the size of the spaces required	Design consultant team
Determine applicability to a range of site conditions i.e., to be site agnostic	Design consultant team

The brief has been developed to optimise safety, independence, well-being, and amenity for the residents. It will be used in conjunction with a site-specific project brief, which will provide details of the project including site address, intended number of occupants and service providers.



2

Planning and design considerations

2.1 Planning considerations

‘Group homes’, as classified in Schedule 9 of the [NSW State Environmental Planning Policy \(Housing\) 2021](#) (Housing SEPP 2021), are currently used to provide crisis accommodation for people in need.

The [Standard Instrument Principal Local Environmental Plan 2006](#) defines the following two sub-categories of group homes.

Permanent group home means a dwelling —

- a. that is occupied by persons as a single household with or without paid supervision or care and whether or not those persons are related or payment for board and lodging is required, and
- b. that is used to provide permanent household accommodation for people with a disability or people who are socially disadvantaged,

Transitional group home means a dwelling —

- a. that is occupied by persons as single household with or without paid supervision or care and whether or not those persons are related or payment for board and lodging is required, and
- b. that is used to provide temporary accommodation for the relief or rehabilitation of people with a disability or for drug or alcohol rehabilitation purposes, or that is used to provide half-way accommodation for persons formerly living in institutions or temporary accommodation comprising refuges for men, women or young people.

and;



Given the complex needs and differing circumstances of people in crisis accommodation, either definition can be used, depending on management practices and intended use.

There is no distinct dwelling type associated with group homes – the parent definition of ‘residential accommodation’ covers available typologies able to be the subject of a change of use to group home. It is important to ensure any dwelling type proposed to function as a group home has the appropriate approval.

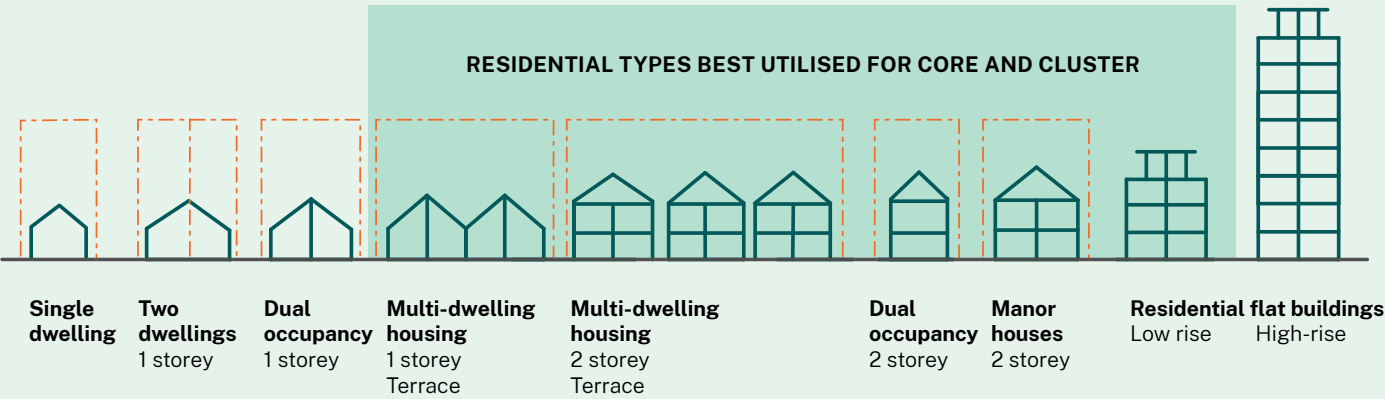
This crisis accommodation typology currently does not fit under the ‘boarding house’ definition because the definition limits the number of occupants within independent rooms to 2 people.

As detailed in Figure 6, the types of dwellings that could be used for crisis accommodation with a core and cluster model include:

- multi-dwelling housing – 1 storey terrace
- multi-dwelling housing – terrace type, 2 storey
- dual occupancy – 2 storey
- manor houses – 2 storeys
- residential flat buildings – low rise.

The Housing SEPP (2021) consolidates and improves 3 previous housing-related SEPPs, including the NSW Affordable Rental Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (ARHSEPP) 2009.

Figure 6. Residential accommodation of all types can be utilised for crisis accommodation. However, only the types shown shaded in this diagram lend themselves to use for the core and cluster model.



2.2 Planning pathway

There are three different pathways for approval of group homes under the Housing SEPP.

The choice of planning pathway depends on the proposed size, ownership and typology of the group home. These are the pathways:

Development without consent (Part 5):

Group homes with up to 10 bedrooms on one site, carried out by or on behalf of a public authority can be carried out without consent.

Complying Development (Part 3):

Group homes with up to 10 bedrooms on one site, that are not in a heritage area and satisfy the requirements for complying development specified in [State Environmental Planning Policy \(Exempt and Complying Development Codes\) 2008](#) clauses 1.18 and 1.19 (excluding clauses 1.18(1)(h) and 1.19(1)(b)), can be assessed as complying development.

Development with consent (Part 4):

Group Homes with more than 10 bedrooms on one site, or which are not compatible with either complying development or development without consent pathways, are required to get consent from the Local Council (Part 4).

2.3 Considerations to help determine pathway

To assist with identifying the appropriate planning pathway, it is recommended that consideration is given to the use of the dwellings being constructed by investigating the below factors:

- Length and type of tenure, i.e. will residents stay for less or more than 3 months?
- Will there be a formal rental/tenancy agreement?
- Will there be on site services?
- How many bedrooms?
- Amount of parking required?

2.4 Design considerations

This brief outlines design principles, key spatial relationships, and design criteria explicitly for this development typology.

This document will sit in the following hierarchy for future LAHC crisis accommodation developments:

1. [Draft Connecting with Country framework](#) (PDF 5.44 MB)
2. Project-specific brief
3. Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation Functional Design Brief.

The following lists provide a snapshot of policies, codes and design guides that need to be referenced during the detailed design process and outlines the reason for the reference.

To understand LAHC design objectives, criteria, requirements and specifications, reference:

- [Good Design for Social Housing](#) (PDF 3.46 MB)
- [LAHC Dwelling Requirements](#) (PDF 422 KB).

To understand urban design and statutory requirements and departmental guides associated with residential dwelling typology (and informed by a SEPP), reference:

- [Low Rise Housing Diversity Design Guide \(Complying Development SEPP\)](#) – for low rise development
- [Apartment Design Guide](#) (ADG) – SEPP 65 – for 3 or more storey developments
- [State Environmental Planning Policy \(Housing\) 2021](#)
- [Disability and Discrimination Act 1992](#).

To understand universal design principles from Livable Housing Australia (LHA), reference:

- [Livable Housing Design Guidelines](#) (PDF 2.77 MB)

2.5 Construction considerations

The dwelling typology will need to comply with the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.

2.3.1 National Construction Code

The building classification options for these dwellings could come under Class 1a, 1b, 2 or 3. The administrative/office component could be classified as Class 5, depending on the type and configuration of the building.

Some of the key areas that need to comply with the National Construction Code are fire safety and accessibility.

2.3.2 Australian Standards – design of ramps and other fixtures

Design of ramps, parking, bathrooms, and adaptability are some key aspects that need to comply with the Australian Standards.

2.6

Site selection considerations

This section outlines the criteria the project team need to consider when selecting sites prior to the design process.

Site selection is an important aspect for 'core and cluster' crisis accommodation. When choosing the site, the project team needs to consider elements such as context, location (urban/regional/rural), zoning, and proximity to public transport, local amenities and mainstream and Aboriginal support services. The aspect of the site will have an overall impact on decisions to acquire new sites.

All sites would need to have:

- proximity and connections to local amenity including public transport, local shops, social and logistical support services (Aboriginal and mainstream), schools, parks, and local community
- wide lots or amalgamated lots for single storey models
- a core building to contain the administrative and support entity along with the communal spaces
- cluster buildings – independent living units of studio units, and 1-, 2- or 3-bedroom configurations
- common open space – landscaped areas are important features of a site. These should be accessible from both the core and the cluster building, both visually and physically
- car parking for staff and tenants (subject to space availability).

3

Project objectives and design principles

Spatial relationships are integral to these design principles and the supporting design criteria. Spaces, their collocation and requirements are described in detail in section ‘5. Design criteria and spatial relationships’, with diagrams to help illustrate the key adjacencies.

Table 7. How design principles support project objectives

Project objectives	Design principles	
A. Women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence are better supported and provided greater privacy, safety, and independence to enable healing, well-being and belonging	Site scale (includes site, core and cluster)	A1. Ensure dwellings are designed to allow independence and self-containment.
		A2. Respond to street context by designing the built form and landscape to be compatible with the existing streetscape.
		A3. Ensure there is clear visibility within the site to optimise safety for the occupants.
	Core scale	A4. Ensure there is spatial allowance to facilitate presence and support of specialist staff onsite to help cater to the needs of the women and children.
B. Greater capacity for service providers to respond more flexibly to clients with different needs and cultural backgrounds and with varying family composition, including women with teenage sons	Site scale (includes site, core and cluster)	B1. Include communal and private spaces which are flexible, inclusive, and diverse to cater to women, children of all ages and pets of all types.
C. Ability to develop a routine in their own space, without disruptions to school and work	Site and core scale	C1. Optimise safe and secure access to local community facilities, medical facilities, support services and school/s.
	Cluster scale	C2. Create spaces with a domestic feel to promote wellbeing, independence, and dignity.
D. Increased capacity for women and children	Core scale	D1. Create child-focused spaces in communal areas (with visual connections) and central multi-functional communal open space (garden/ courtyard).
E. Meeting the needs of the women and their children that may not be met under the current communal living crisis accommodation system and providing increased access to people with disabilities.	Site scale (includes site, core and cluster)	E1. Ensure Equity of access for people of all ages and levels of mobility to ensure easy and dignified movement between spaces.
	Core scale	E2. Provide clear and flexible separation between private living spaces and shared/ communal spaces to optimise physical safety, cultural safety, independence, and amenity.
	Cluster scale	E3. Incorporate each dwelling as a purpose built, contemporary unit that is able to be adapted to cater for women with children of different age groups and women and children with disabilities.

4

Design criteria and spatial relationships

The following sections describe the key design criteria and the functional relationships between spaces, and specifically focus on which spaces must be adjacent to each other in order to function effectively. The indicative diagrams explain the key relationships.

The design quality, type and mix of cluster dwellings to be built, as well as the base spatial considerations for the core building, landscaping, dwelling typology, floor space ratio and parking requirements, will all have an overall impact on design decisions for the sites.

4.1

Site scale – design principles and design criteria

Table 8.
Design criteria to support site-scale design principles

Design principle	Design criteria
A1 Ensure dwellings are self-contained and designed to allow independence	<p>Individual entrances to self-contained dwellings</p> <p>Separate the self-contained units from car parking and entry</p> <p>Garden/courtyard at centre or rear – away from the main entry</p> <p>Visual and physical connection to the garden and children's play area from the dwellings</p> <p>Provide good amenity to the semi-private movement spaces between core and cluster buildings on site</p>
A2 Landscape and built form to respond to the street context so the accommodation blends in and does not 'stand out'	<p>Built form should 'blend in' and not compromise character and context</p> <p>Landscaped gardens to improve privacy from neighbours</p> <p>Vegetable patch in the garden</p>
A3 Ensure there is clear visibility within the site to optimise safety of the occupants	<p>A single, clearly identifiable, main entry to the site</p> <p>Car parking facilities to be integrated discretely within the site, away from the main street</p> <p>Parking within sight of the reception/office area</p> <p>Layered security by utilising different types of security measures at the site boundary, main entry, and reception area to protect the safety of the residents</p>
C1 Optimise safe and secure access to local community facilities, medical facilities, and schools	<p>Site to have easy access to public transport, grocery stores, schools, support services and economic opportunities</p> <p>Optimise safe connections to local communities</p>
E1 Equity of access for people of all ages and levels of mobility to ensure easy and dignified movement between spaces	<p>Separate pedestrian and vehicular entry to the site</p> <p>Visibility of main entry/ parking from the office</p> <p>Parking required for staff, visitors, and residents with varying access needs</p>

Site-scale relationship diagrams

Figure 7.
Single storey
model on larger
site (regional/rural
areas) – spatial
relationships

- Connection to garden
- Key connections
- Front doors
- Secure boundary
- Safety line/barrier
- Landscape buffer
- Adjoining property

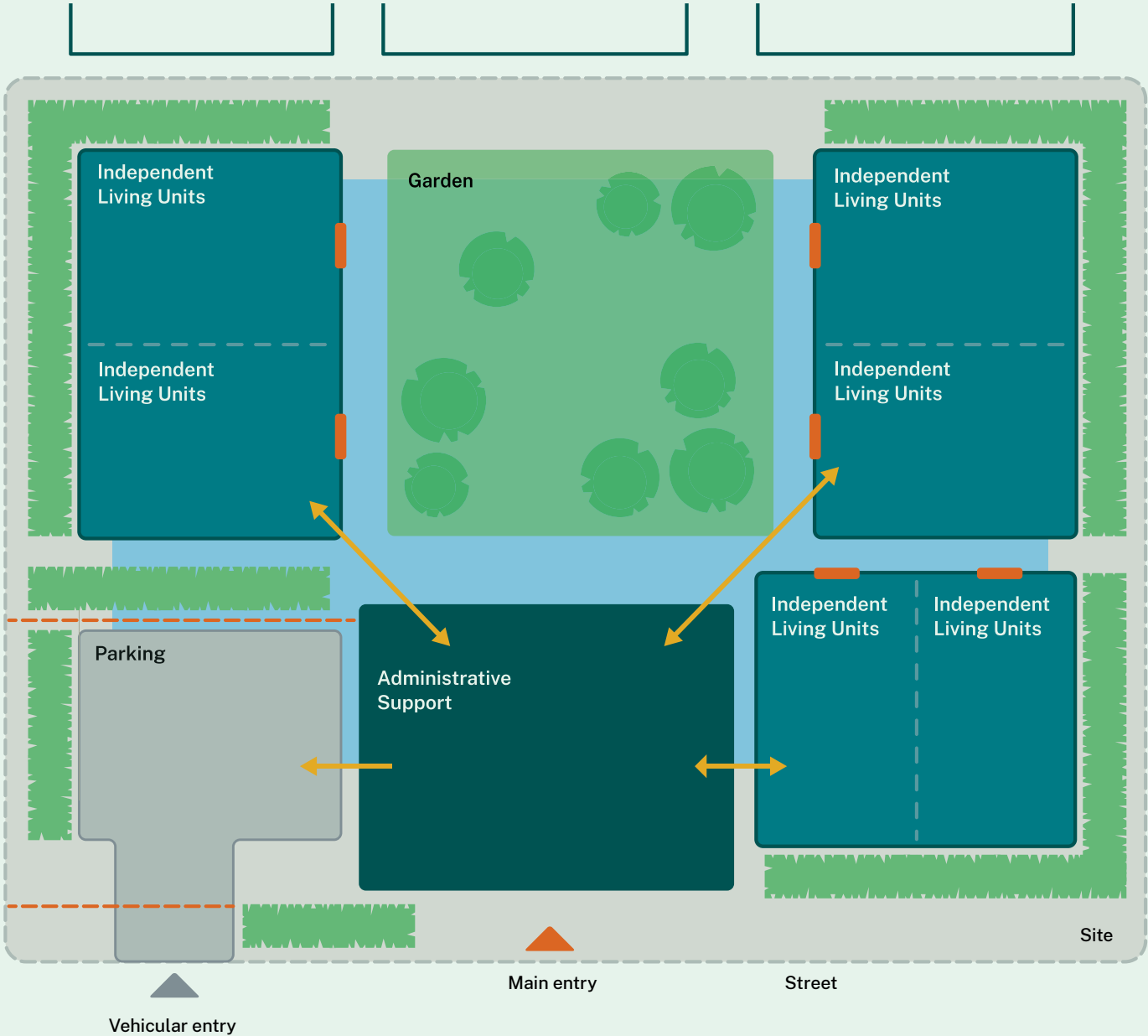
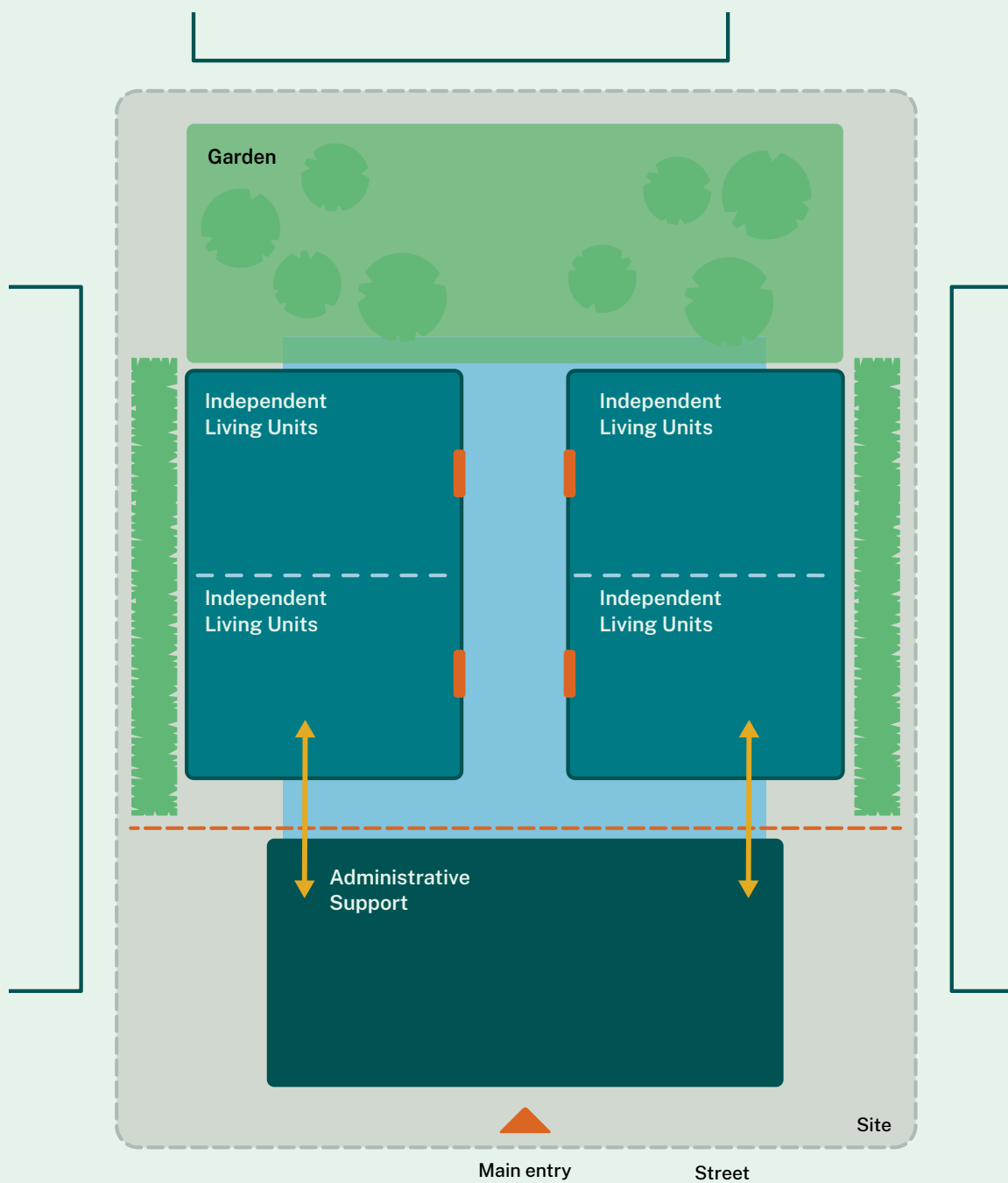


Figure 8.
Two storey model
on small site –
spatial relationships

- Connection to garden
- Key connections
- Front doors
- Secure boundary
- Safety line/barrier
- Landscape buffer
- Adjoining property



4.2 Core building criteria

The core building is located on the same site as the cluster buildings. This houses the office and administrative spaces for support staff and the communal spaces for staff and residents. The ability to provide on-site support services for women and children is an important function of the core building.

Table 9. Design criteria and requirements to support the core building design principles

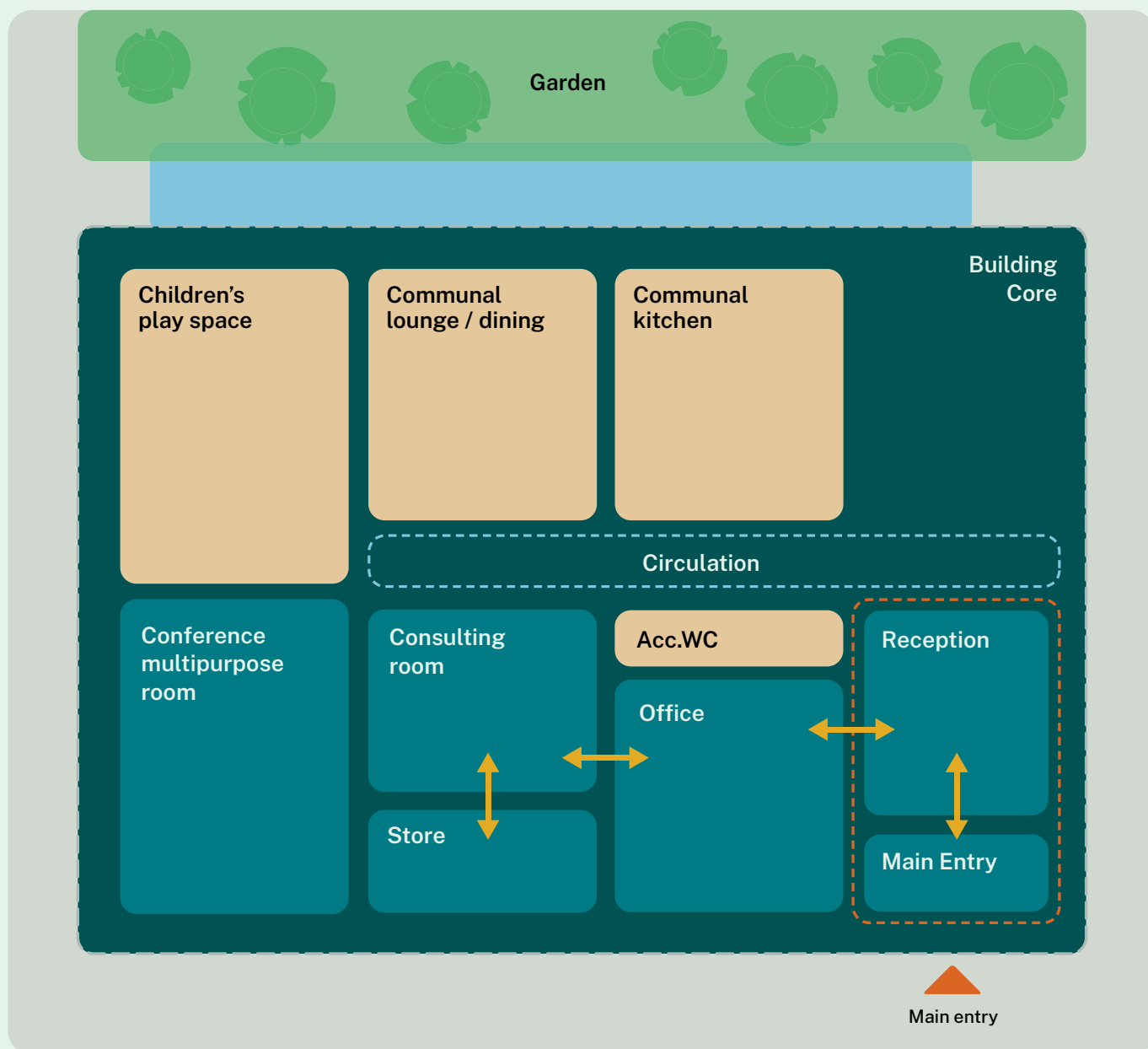
Design principle	Design criteria and requirements
A3 Ensure there is clear visibility within the site to optimise safety for the occupants	<p>Main entry directly accessed from the street into the reception area and visible from the office.</p> <p>Reception area to have visibility towards the street and car parking, and towards the access door leading to private accommodation.</p> <p>Office/administrative hub (for support staff) to be oriented to the front of the core building, facing the street and with visibility to people entering through reception.</p>
A4 Ensure there is sufficient space to facilitate presence and support by specialist staff onsite to help cater to the needs of the women and children	<p>Administrative hub in the core building with dedicated resources/ specialist staff providing residents 24/7 access to assistance.</p> <p>Reception area for meeting and immediate support accessed from the main entry and adjacent office – consider cultural safety/separation.</p> <p>Storage room for storing files, records, and administrative equipment to be located close to the consulting room and office.</p> <p>Administration spaces to have privacy from communal areas.</p> <p>Caretaker's accommodation – This is optional (depends on the service provider and location of the site. If caretaker accommodation is required, then it is preferred in or adjacent to the core building.</p>
B1 Include communal and private spaces that are flexible, inclusive, and diverse to cater to women and children of all ages and pets of all types	<p>Communal open space (garden) to allow for passive and active recreation, vegetable garden and areas for diverse age groups of children to play.</p> <p>Create connection between internal and external private areas to minimise any sense of enclosure.</p> <p>Conference room/multipurpose space to facilitate court hearings through video links, up-skilling or for conducting group programs for women – to be in a quieter zone of the core building.</p> <p>Communal spaces to be designed to enable re-purposing for different uses.</p> <p>Use of communal kitchen for group activities.</p> <p>Provision for pets inside the building and outside.</p> <p>Combination of communal areas and 'quiet' nooks to cater to different needs.</p>
C1 Optimise safe and secure access to local community facilities, medical facilities, and schools.	<p>Meeting/consultation space with access to digital technology to enable virtual dial-ins for consultations with lawyers, medical practitioners, and counsellors, etc.</p> <p>Consultation room for visiting medical, counselling personnel to cater to resident needs – consider cultural safety.</p>

Table 9. (continued)

Design principle	Design criteria and requirements
D1 Create child-focused spaces in communal areas and central multi-functional communal open space (garden)	<p>Children's play space to be in communal zone, cater to the different age groups and visually connected to communal lounge.</p> <p>Children and parents to have separate spaces in communal areas while still maintaining visibility of children by mother.</p> <p>Communal open space (garden) to allow for passive and active recreation, vegetable garden and areas for diverse age groups of children to play.</p>
E1 Equity of access for people of all ages and levels of mobility to ensure easy, safe, and dignified movement between spaces	<p>Accessible toilet/bathroom for staff and residents to be located off central circulation and close to entry.</p> <p>Physical and visual connection to communal open space (garden).</p>
E2 Provide clear and flexible separation between private living spaces and shared/communal spaces to optimise safety, independence, and amenity	<p>Consulting room to conduct private and confidential meetings to be immediately adjacent the office space in a quiet area.</p> <p>Communal areas set back from and visually screened from administration, reception, and entry areas.</p> <p>Separate spaces to cater for older and younger children in the communal areas – consider genders.</p> <p>Individual dwellings set away from communal spaces.</p> <p>Separate consulting room to conduct private and confidential meetings – consider cultural sensitivity and safety.</p>

Figure 9.
Core building spatial
relationships

- Connection to garden
- Key connections
- Building core
- Secure zone
- Core – administrative support
- Communal spaces







4.3 Cluster building criteria

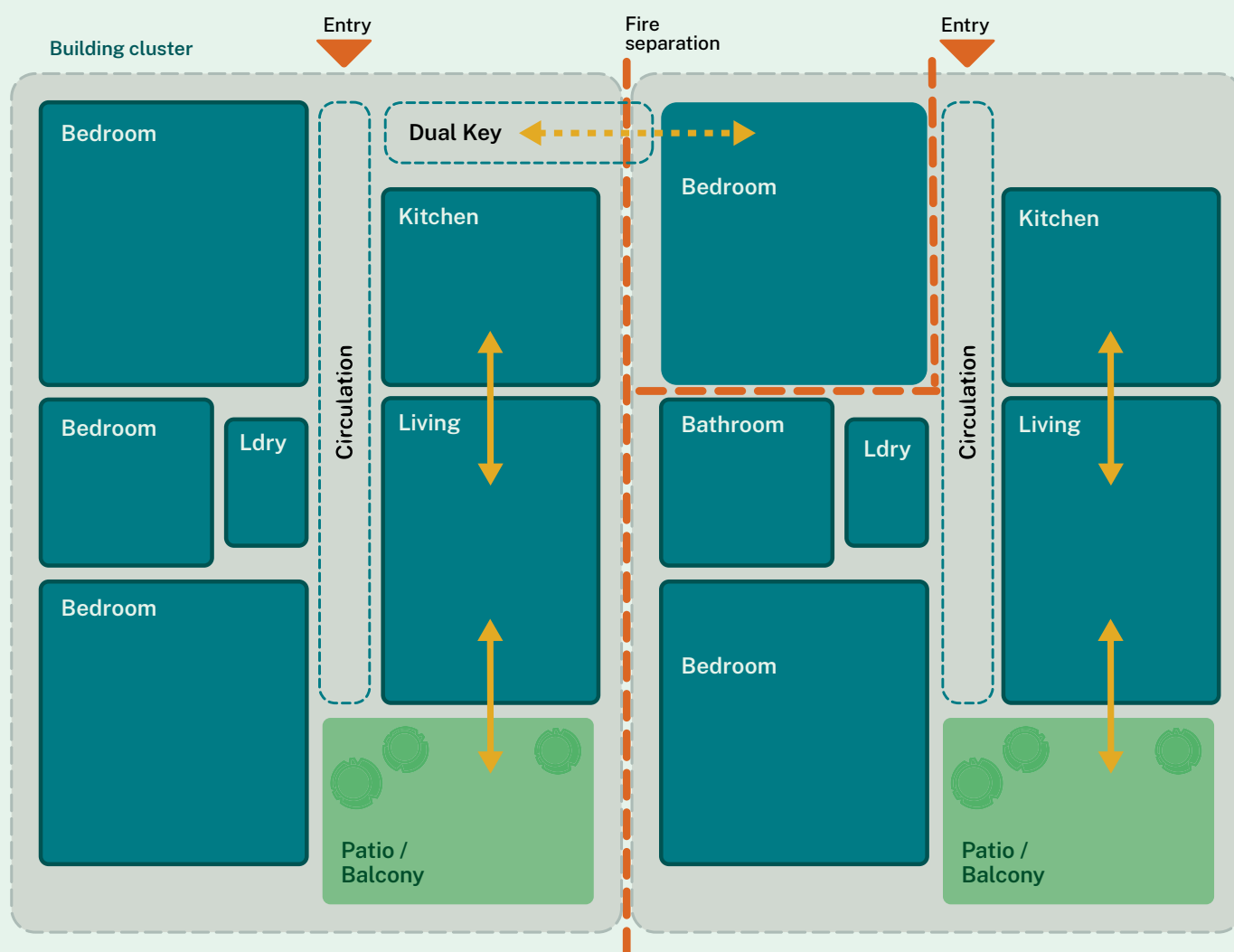
The core and cluster model ideally has 6 self-contained units on one site. One site could have 12 to 20 people in residence at a time. The cluster models cater for short-term accommodation of approximately 3-months duration, depending on individual/family need.

Table 10. Design criteria and requirements to support the cluster building design principles

Design principle	Design criteria and requirements
A3 Ensure there is clear visibility within the site to optimise safety for the occupants.	Cluster – self-contained units away from communal areas Individual entrances to private accommodation Secure front door opening into the living/dining area – could be visible from the core building for security and passive surveillance
B1 Include communal and private spaces which are flexible, inclusive, and diverse to cater to women, children of all ages and pets of all types.	Bedroom to be located directly off the main circulation space and slightly apart from the living/dining and kitchen areas for privacy
C2 Create spaces with a domestic feel to promote wellbeing, independence, and dignity.	Visual and physical connection to the common open space (garden) from the dwellings Avoid look and feel of being 'institutional' Building to have a 'homely feel' Open plan layout for kitchen, dining and living area large enough for family to sit and eat meals together Visual connection from kitchen to the common open space (garden) to enable mothers to watch kids playing outside/passive surveillance Private open space/patio/balcony to be located directly off the living area large enough for family to sit together/eat a meal etc.
E1 Equity of access for people of all ages and levels of mobility to ensure easy and dignified movement between spaces.	Allow for accessible dwellings Consideration to be given to those with a sensory disability
E3 Each dwelling to be purpose built, contemporary and adaptable to cater to women with children of different age groups and for women and children with disabilities.	Built form should 'blend in' and not compromise character and context Choice of unit sizes to cater to different needs Bedrooms set away from living areas in dwellings Allow for flexible bedding options/ layouts in bedrooms (e.g., trundle beds) Bathroom located between bedrooms/outside bedrooms for ease of accessibility and privacy Laundry adjacent to the bathroom and accessed from circulation zone with direct access to outside for drying clothes. Dual key option to create flexibility for large families, in some units by increasing a bedroom space if required. This bedroom could be secured off at other times when not required.

Figure 10.
Cluster building
spatial relationships

-  Key connections
-  Optional connections (dual key)
-  Cluster – Private accommodation
-  Patio / Balcony / Garden



5

Size and finishes considerations

5.1 Site

This section lists some of the recommended configurations, sizes and considerations for key elements related to the site.

The information is sourced from the Housing SEPP (2021) and Low Rise Housing Diversity Design Guide. Additional requirements are subject to the location of the site and the governing local environmental plan and development control plan requirements as well as the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.

Site considerations General

Qualitative elements:

- Consider contextual elements such as neighbouring buildings, heights, setbacks, and access
- Site analysis to include consideration of Country and consultation with local Aboriginal community / knowledge holders
- Check if site is located on flood or bushfire prone land
- Site coverage and plot ratio to local council requirements
- Site setbacks (front, side, and rear) to local council requirements
- Private open space to local council requirements
- Perimeter fencing and clearly defined boundary
- Review overshadowing and adverse impact on neighbouring properties (especially for 2 storey buildings)
- Separate pedestrian and vehicular access to the site, for safety and security
- Cater to accessibility requirements by including ramps etc., preferably at the rear of the site
- If the site is adjacent to major freeways/ airport, additional acoustic requirements apply.

Services:

- Allow space for bin storage
- Secure gate and alarm systems to ensure safety
- CCTV cameras to be installed in external areas for security
- Lighting to external areas of the site for security and safety
- Regional areas require higher security measures and back-up power generator

Population capacity:

- 12 to 20 residents
- 2 to 3 staff (varies)
- Support staff preferably on-site during business hours and on-call support after hours.

Landscape/common open space (garden)

Qualitative elements:

- Garden located centrally to enable optimum visual and physical connection from independent dwellings
- Private open space/garden belonging to independent living units, to be directly accessible from habitable room other than bedroom
- Landscaping to be designed for maximum privacy for residents
- Planting to be drought resistant and native species appropriate to area
- Garden area to have lighting and CCTV camera
- Sensory play area for younger children
- Fruit and vegetable garden to encourage community engagement and sustainability initiatives
- Separate spaces for children's play and passive recreation
- Separate area in garden for pets
- Designated smoking area in garden
- Plentiful outdoor weather-appropriate seating options
- Adequate storage for outdoor garden/play equipment

Car parking

Qualitative elements:

- Car parking to be screened from street view or set back from the main street
- Minimum 2 off-street car parking spaces for staff/service vehicles/residents
- Lighting to car park area for increased safety and security
- Visibility to car park area from reception/office area

Services:

- CCTV cameras to monitor car park

5.2 Core building

The core building is to be located to the front of the site, facing the main street entry. This section lists out some of the recommended configurations, sizes and considerations for key elements related to the core building.

The spatial dimensions are approximate and subject to the Concept Design Brief. The information provided below is intended as a guide and sourced from the [Housing SEPP \(2021\)](#), [LAHC Dwelling Requirements \(PDF 422 KB\)](#), [Low Rise Housing Diversity Design Guide](#), stakeholder engagement, precedent studies and literature review.

There may be additional requirements, based on the location of the site, classification of the building, service provider requirements, the governing local environmental plan and development control plan, the National Construction Code and the Australian Standards. Documents that will need to be referred to have been outlined in sections '2.2 Design context' and '2.3 Construction context'.

Table 11. Space requirements for different functions of the core building

Space	Minimum floor space	Notes
Main entry	10 m ²	To suit proportion of building and access requirements
Reception	12 m ²	Space for one to two people at counter and 2 to 4 clients
Office	30 m ²	10 m ² per staff as per the Building Code of Australia requirements. Staff numbers can vary between 2 to 3 people at a time
Consulting room	12 m ²	Consulting room could have one or two support staff and one client at any one time
Store	30 m ²	Can vary depending on requirements
Accessible toilet	6 m ²	Based on Australian Standards AS1428.1
Conference/ Multipurpose room	24 m ²	To contain 8–10 seats, provide audio visual links to court, may be required for group events, community programs, craft work, etc.
Communal kitchen	12 m ²	Assuming 2–3 people using the space at any given time
Communal lounge/dining	60 m ²	5 m ² per person approximately. Assume 10–12 people using the space at any given time
Children's space	40 m ²	Larger numbers of children than adults in the accommodation
Caretaker's accommodation	35 m ²	This is optional – dependent on the brief and service provider requirements
Circulation	—	Assume approximately 15% of floor area
Walls/Services	—	Assume approximately 10% of floor area

Administrative spaces

Main entry

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Single entry point facing main street and site access
- Entry to be clearly defined
- Security screens to entry door
- Lighting to entry area
- Screening devices to minimise visual access to communal spaces

Services:

- Requires CCTV camera at entry

Other:

- Admin area to look like a 'house' from the street

Reception

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Facing main entry door
- Natural lighting to create a welcoming and pleasant ambience
- Accessible and spacious to cater for prams, bikes, wheelchairs, etc.
- Screening devices to minimise visual access to communal spaces
- Artwork/s to create a sense of 'home' – include Aboriginal art with appropriate IP (local)

Services:

- Security features such as alarms and panic buttons

Other:

- Capacity 2 (varies)
- Ensure staff are culturally sensitive to provide culturally safe services

Office

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent reception area
- Acoustic treatment to office space to provide privacy between staff and residents
- Spacious workspaces for staff comfort and wellbeing

Services:

- Access to wi-fi
- Provision for air-conditioning – at a minimum allow for suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location

Other:

- Capacity 3 (varies)
- Ensure staff are culturally sensitive to provide culturally safe services

Consulting room

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent office area
- Acoustic treatment to ensure privacy of residents
- Natural lighting to space
- Artwork/s to create sense of 'home' – include Aboriginal art with appropriate IP (local)

Services:

- Access to wi-fi
- Digital technology enabled
- Provision for air-conditioning – at a minimum allow for suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location.

Other:

- Capacity 2 people

Store

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent consulting room
- Large and secure storage for keeping case files and other important documents

Services:

- Security access by use of electronic fobs

Other:

- Capacity 2 people

Accessible toilet

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent to the reception/entry

Other:

- Additional toilet/s for staff can be added – depending on requirements and availability of space

Conference Room

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Located in quieter end of the core building
- Acoustic treatment to ensure privacy of occupants
- Modular furniture for flexible use of space
- Space to cater for a variety of uses such as dial-in to courts/training/tutoring for children/up-skilling for residents/community activities/healing space/cater to culturally diverse needs of residents
- Maximises natural lighting to space where possible
- Resilient and easy-to-clean floor and wall surfaces
- Durable and low maintenance furniture

Services:

- Access to wi-fi
- Digital technology enabled
- Provision for air-conditioning – at a minimum allow for suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location

Other:

- Capacity 4 to 8 people

Communal spaces

Children's play area/other

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Visible from communal lounge/kitchen area
- Spaces to cater to different age groups
- Separate older children from younger children
- Maximise natural light with connectivity between inside and outside space
- Colourful and sturdy furnishing
- Teenage retreat spaces, for example computer room/space
- Space for homework/study nooks
- Resilient and easy-to-clean surface finishes to floors and walls
- Acoustic treatment to space
- Include child safety features to power points and other areas as required
- Home-like feel to the space
- Modular and movable furniture to enable flexible use of space
- Adequate storage for toys and books
- Sturdy and durable furniture and fittings
- Versatile furniture to double as storage space
- Allow for thermal comfort

Services:

- Access to wi-fi

Other:

- Capacity 5 to 15 people

Communal lounge/dining

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent communal kitchen
- Acoustic treatment between communal spaces and administrative spaces
- Interiors to maximise natural light
- Bright, cheerful, homely furnishings that can be therapeutic
- Resilient and easy-to-clean floor and wall surface finishes
- Sturdy and durable furniture and fittings
- Modular and movable furniture to enable flexible use of space
- Visual and physical connection to outdoor area/garden
- Allow for thermal comfort

Services:

- Security TV monitoring of building to be visible to residents
- Provision for air conditioning – at a minimum allow for suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location

Other:

- Capacity 2 to 8 people

Communal Kitchen

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent to communal lounge/dining
- Interiors to maximise natural light
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surface finishes
- Visual and physical connection to outdoor area/garden

Other:

- Capacity 2 to 4 people

Circulation

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Clear, safe, and equitable access to administrative and communal spaces

5.3 Cluster building

The cluster building is to be set back from the front of the site. This section lists recommended configurations, sizes and considerations for key elements related to the cluster building.

The spatial dimensions are approximate and subject to the concept design brief. Information provided below is intended as a guide. It is sourced from the [Housing SEPP \(2021\)](#), [LAHC Dwelling Requirements \(PDF 422 KB\)](#), [Low Rise Housing Diversity Design Guide](#), [Apartment Design Guide](#), stakeholder engagement, precedent studies and literature review.

There may be additional requirements, based on the location of the site, classification of the building, service provider requirements, the governing local environmental plan and development control plan, the National Construction Code and Australian Standards. Documents that will need to be referred to have been outlined in sections ‘2.2 Design context’ and ‘2.3 Construction context’.

Table 12. Space requirements for different functions of the cluster building.
Note: accessible cluster units will need to be larger to accommodate required circulation

Space	Minimum floor space	Notes
1-bedroom	50 m ²	—
2-bedroom	70 m ²	—
3-bedroom	90 m ²	—
Studio	35 m ²	—
Dual key (twin units)	120–160 m ²	Varies – depending on the combination of unit layouts, for example 2 x 2-bedroom units



Spaces

Main Entry

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Secure private entry point facing away from the main street and site access.
- Entry to be clearly defined
- Security screens to entry door

Services:

- Security access by use of electronic fobs
- Sensor lighting

Other:

- Compliant entry door widths to accommodate disabled access

Bedroom

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Located directly off circulation space
- Privacy screening to windows to reduce visibility into rooms from the street/outside
- Carpet floor finish

Services:

- Access to wi-fi
- Provision for air-conditioning – at a minimum allow for suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location.
- Refer to [LAHC Dwelling Requirements](#) (PDF 422 KB)

Other:

- Studio unit – 35 m²
- one bedroom – 50 m²
- 2 bedroom – 70 m²
- 3 bedroom – 90 m²

Family bathroom

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Located outside bedrooms for accessibility
- Provision of a bathtub
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surfaces

Other:

- Provision for accessibility for mobility impaired people

Laundry

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adjacent bathroom
- Include washing machine
- Direct access to outside space for drying clothes
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surfaces

Kitchen

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Open plan layout with good visual connection to communal open space/garden space
- Fully supplied with basic, quality appliances
- Storage for food
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surfaces

Services:

- Access to wi-fi
- Access to security – alarms and panic buttons
- Telephone connection

Living/dining

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Open plan layout with direct access to outdoors/garden space
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surfaces

Services:

- Security TV monitoring of building to be visible to residents
- Access to wi-fi
- Provision for air-conditioning – at a minimum suitable provision in load calculations, conduit, and future location.
- Refer to [LAHC Dwelling Requirements](#) (PDF 422 KB)

Private open space/patio/balcony

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Open plan layout with direct access to outdoors/garden space
- Resilient and easy to clean floor and wall surfaces

Other:

- Studio or one-bedroom unit – 8 m²
- 2-bedroom unit – 10 m²
- 3-bedroom unit – 12 m²

Storage

Qualitative elements and finishes:

- Adequate storage to be provided by means of wardrobes, linen cupboards, and kitchen cupboards.

Other:

- Studio and one-bedroom unit – 6 m³
- 2-bedroom unit – 8 m³
- 3-bedroom unit – 10 m³

6

Evaluation

To provide a firm evidentiary basis for the continuation and improvement of the core and cluster model, it is important to review the outcomes from the application of the functional design brief and update the brief to capture lessons learnt.

[Evaluating Good Design \(PDF 1.27 MB\)](#) is a 2018 discussion paper by the Government Architect NSW. It presents a set of requirements that can be used to evaluate design proposals and completed works, both large and small, throughout the life of a project.

Design evaluation should happen at several stages throughout a project, from early design concepts to highly resolved proposals and completed works. The evaluation of a design is important because it ensures that a design is in line with the core design principles and allows for the functional design brief to be updated when required.

The evaluation of the application of the functional design brief for a core and cluster design should cover:

- alignment with the functional design brief principles
- review of service outcomes.

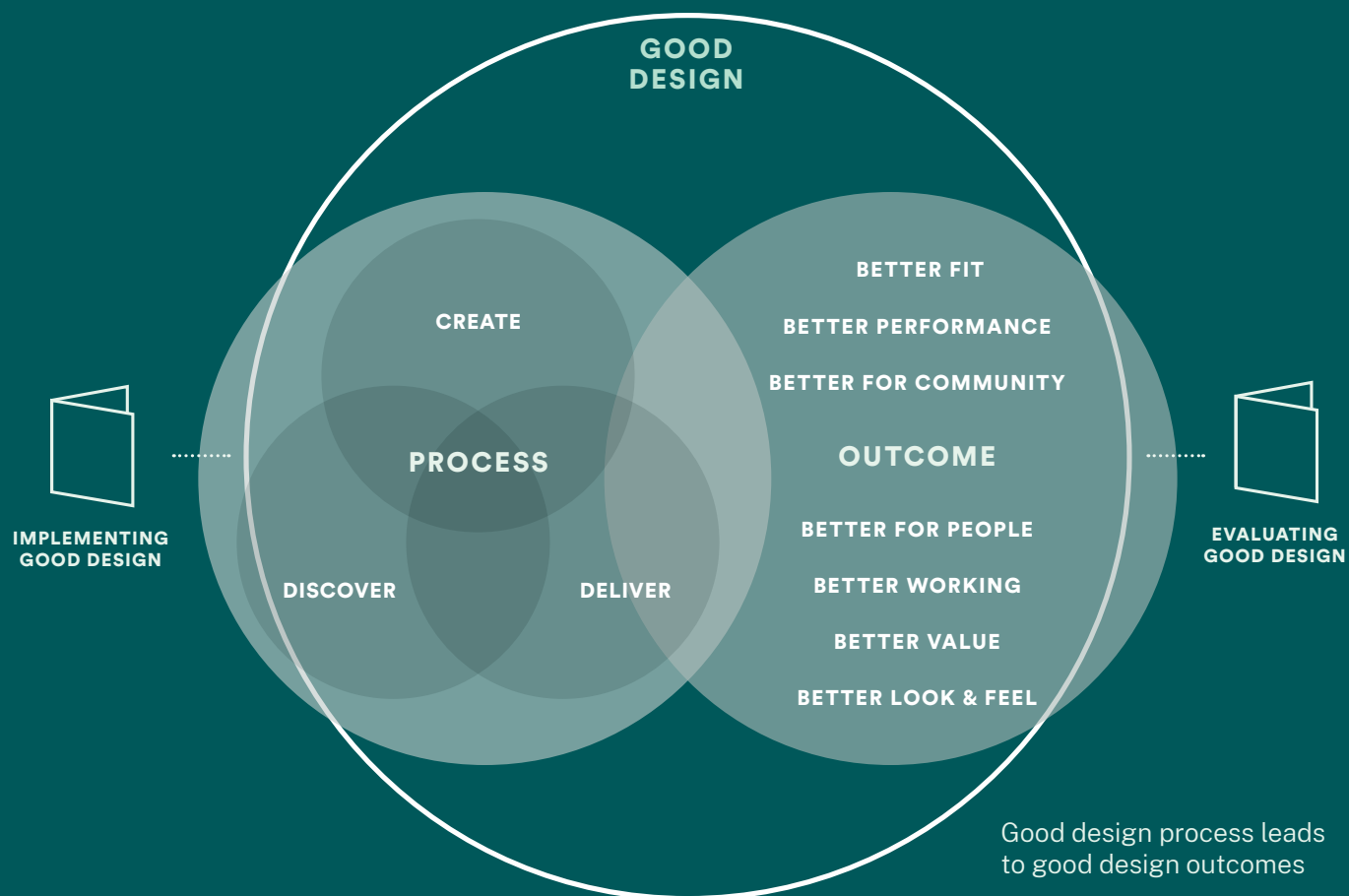


Figure 11. Evaluating and implementing good design

6.1 Alignment with the functional design brief principles

In order to determine the success of a new core and cluster crisis accommodation project, quantify how the project has met the design criteria identified in the functional design brief – the site scale, core criteria and cluster criteria.

The preferred approach is to assess the outcomes against each design principle with the project working group at budget stage, project completion, and one year following the completion of the project. Through the use of the crisis accommodation, the positive and negative aspects of the design will become apparent, which makes the lifecycle analysis one year following occupation of the building vitally important to share with the project working group.

6.2 Review of service outcomes

When implementing a new core and cluster design, the client outcomes of the project may be measured against the client outcomes measured in the previous form of the service. Department of Communities and Justice uses 'client outcomes surveys' and 'personal wellbeing indexes' to standardise the types of information that are received from clients³.

While it is recognised that many outcomes data collection methods with vulnerable cohorts are subject to the risk of positive client bias, client feedback can be aligned with data received from existing crisis accommodation, to establish a comparative baseline.

3. [Specialist Homelessness Services – Outcomes Framework Guide](#). DCJ, June 2021, PDF 797 KB



7

Glossary

In the context of this document the following terms are defined:

LAHC	NSW Land and Housing Corporation
Core	Building containing onsite support and communal spaces
Cluster	Self-contained, independent living units
Secure line	Barrier or fence with security cameras for surveillance.

8

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