

Room to Grow pilot program

From July 2015 to June 2016, Mission Australia (MA) implemented and evaluated an intervention for hoarding disorder and domestic squalor across the central and eastern Sydney region. Named Room to Grow, this pilot program aimed to address the physical, cognitive and psychological factors contributing to situations of severe domestic squalor and hoarding disorder, thereby reducing the risk of tenancy loss and homelessness.

29 
participants in program

} **11** from Mission Australia's Common Ground Camperdown Support Service
13 from Housing New South Wales (Sydney and South-East Sydney districts)
5 from Eastern Sydney Partners in Recovery

At end of service delivery:



Tenancies

were maintained by
100% of participants



Wellbeing

of participants
improved: 61 to 68



Cleanliness

of living environment
improved: 16.6 to 9.6



Assessment

Better subjective view
of clutter: 4.7 to 3.7



Living skills

increased: 58% to
73% high functioning



Cognitive

functioning improved:
23.8 to 24.4

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Room to Grow service model

The Room to Grow service model embedded psychological and neuropsychological interventions within an intensive case management program. Interventions included:

adapted cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) run by clinical psychologists;

cognitive remediation sessions provided by a neuropsychologist;

home visits and intensive case management provided by case managers; and

peer support group run collectively by case managers and program participants

Key recommendations:



1 Social interaction should be central to program design – there is strong therapeutic value to social support throughout service delivery and supportive relationships between participants.

2 Adapted CBT is highly beneficial for those experiencing hoarding disorder – hoarding disorder is a mental health issue and requires psychological support.

3 Participants must be centrally involved in all decision-making – enforced cleans are likely to lead

to traumatisation and other negative outcomes, even with prior warning and consultation.

4 Home visits are essential – it is important for participants to be supported to organise and discard possessions in their own homes.

5 Ongoing support through peer support networks is beneficial – continuing support after 'formal' interventions sustains the behaviour change learnt throughout program.

 **Read the full report at:** www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications

 **For more information:** researchandpolicy@missionaustralia.com.au