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Holding the Middle
Where Systems Collide

Building workforce capability between housing and homelessness and MHAOD in the NT

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Acknowledgement

AADANT proudly acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our office stands and the waterways we view. We extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



Why this work matters in the NT

1

Housing instability, homelessness, mental health and AOD needs frequently intersect.

2

Services are often delivered through separate systems with different roles, eligibility criteria and priorities.

3

Frontline workers are often left “holding the middle” as they respond to complex, overlapping needs.

“People do not experience housing, mental health and AOD issues in silos.”

This project focused on building shared understanding, practical capability and cross-sector alignment.

Sector leaders on the intersection

Short video – why collaboration matters



Stephanie Holmes | Annie Taylor | Ira Racines

What the video highlights

- Why housing, homelessness, mental health and AOD services need to work together
- What workers need to better understand about each other's sectors
- What the cross-sector training was designed to achieve

What we developed

Training package 1

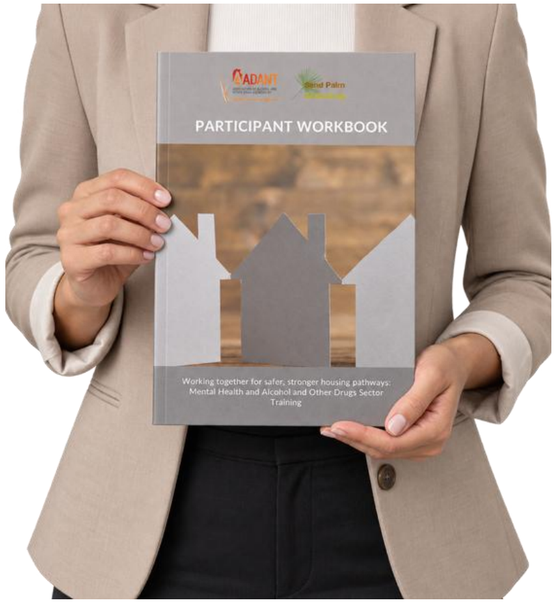
Housing and homelessness workforce

- Mental health and AOD literacy
- Early identification and response
- Referral and coordination skills
- Trauma-informed and culturally safe practice

Training package 2

MHAOD workforce

- Housing system literacy
- Housing pathways and navigation
- Referral pathways and coordinated responses
- Trauma-informed and culturally grounded practice



Shared focus across both packages

- Cross-sector understanding
- Practical capability
- Person-centred responses
- Collaboration
- Role clarity

Delivery across the NT

Who participated

Training delivered February to September 2026

Locations

- Darwin
- Katherine
- Alice Springs

140
participants

94 H&H | 46 MHAOD

85.7%
client-facing roles

73%
had 5 years or less sector experience

53%
reported prior experience in another represented sector

KEY TAKEAWAY

The training reached a predominantly frontline and relatively early-career workforce operating in a high-demand environment.

What did the evaluation show?

Strong capability gains

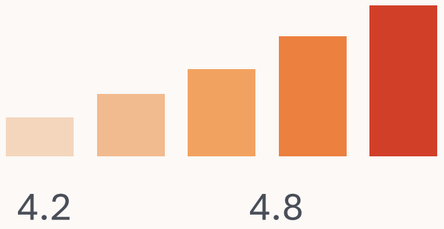
All post-training focus area averages were above 4.0 out of 5 across both training cohorts.

4.0+

average across all focus areas

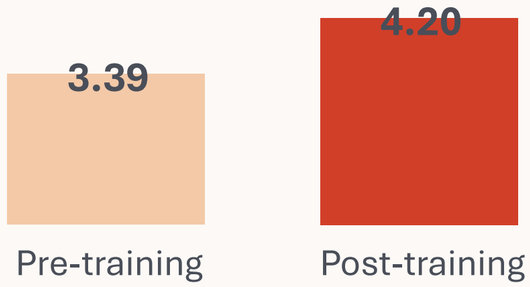
High relevance and application

Participants reported strong relevance to role and strong intent to apply learning in practice.



Confidence improved

For the one directly comparable item, confidence in identifying early signs of mental health distress or AOD issues increased from 3.39 to 4.20 (+23.9%).



What workers told us

Key qualitative learnings

Interconnected needs

Workers described housing, mental health and AOD issues as deeply linked in people's lives.

Better cross-sector understanding

Participants reported stronger understanding of partner roles, service constraints and referral pathways.

Practice reinforced

The training strengthened trauma-informed, culturally responsive and strengths-based approaches.

Relationships matter

Trust, communication and professional relationships were seen as central to successful collaboration.

Training strengthened workforce capability, but collaboration still depends on the wider service environment.

What have we learned — and where to next?

What training can do

- Strengthen knowledge and confidence
- Build shared language and cross-sector relationships
- Improve referral practice and coordinated responses

What training cannot do alone

- Solve housing shortages
- Remove workforce pressures
- Fix fragmented service systems

What next?

Currently developing online modules to improve accessibility and reach across the NT.

PEOPLE | PARTNERSHIPS | STRONGER COMMUNITIES

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Thank you

Watch the AADANT website for more news on the development of the online modules

www.aadant.org.au

