

Nepean Regional Taskforce

Inaugural Meeting

Thursday 12th November, 2009 2-5pm

Passadena Room, Penrith City Council

Apologies: Nick Sabel, EO, Wentworth Community Housing; FaHCSIA; Doug Taylor, United Way

Facilitator: Steph Brennan, NCAH; **Chair:** Felicity Reynolds;

Minutes: Tracey Gray, NCAH

Eric Weller welcomed everyone on behalf of Penrith Council and acknowledged the hard work of many to get to this point. Eric spoke on behalf of the Mayor, Kevin Cramer and delivered the official statement of recognition of Indigenous people.

Steph Brennan introduced Felicity Reynolds, CEO, Mercy Foundation. Felicity will be the inaugural chairperson of the Taskforce.

Felicity welcomed everyone to the meeting. She congratulated the region for what has happened so far and described it as a leadership activity that is forging the way for Australia.

Felicity gave details of her background and role. Felicity has extensive experience in the area of homelessness, especially chronic adult homelessness. Felicity acts as an independent consultant due to her knowledge of ending homelessness using 'Housing First' approaches and also developing 'ten year' plans.

Any plan needs to be a 'living plan'- address and be proven to solve homelessness.

Felicity acknowledged the work of Nepean Campaign against Homelessness(NCAH).

Presentations

- **John McMillan, Housing NSW-** John gave what he described as a brief, generic presentation on the current context and to create open discussion on how Housing NSW can connect what they are doing as part of their Regional Planning process with Taskforce activities.
While data suggests that rate of homelessness unchanged, anecdotal evidence that there has been an increased demand for services. Irrespective of this it is clear that need to do something differently.
Outcomes are difficult to measure, need coordination.
The Federal Government leadership re: addressing homelessness has been the instrument for change.
Homelessness Action Plan(HAP) released August 6th.

Implementation underway- regional planning part of this.

Three key areas: Prevention, Effective Responses; and Breaking the Cycle
Targets for HAP match with National Partnership on Homelessness(NPAH)
It is about making everything more effective.

Housing First approaches have a significant role- totally different approach
Housing NSW will adopt Department of Premier and Cabinet Regional
Coordination program regions. Therefore nine large regions. Regional Action
plans will be developed by regional homelessness committees- reps from key
Government, non Government and wider community organisations.

NSW is the only state to develop only a plan for 2009/2010 as they want to do
more regional planning/consultation/communication.

Plans will allow Regional flexibility but at same time establish standards.

Regional consultations to commence from December 2009. Aiming for formal
consultations with key stakeholders in February 2010.

Start discussions with Federal Government around March after potential
projects identified.

Intention is to finalise well before June 2010 so can implement July 2010.

Changes to the system but at end of 2013, sustainable. \$280 million over four
years- much of it already committed.

Felicity thanked John for his contribution. It is a time of great opportunity as
everyone's 'agendas' are meeting. Involves some realigning of existing
resources.

Discussion about best way Taskforce can contribute to Regional Plan for
Greater Western Sydney. Establish how to develop plans and represent on
the Regional Homelessness Committee. Acknowledge that there will be
others at the table.

Taskforce has to develop plan. Consultations through Taskforce- therefore
these could 'piggyback' Housing NSW consultations.

questions about why particular projects selected for implementation in
2009/2010. John said that it was about what is happening in particular areas
and a lot of projects were funded in Western Sydney.

There are no other similar taskforces, however there is a Housing Forum at
Parramatta.

Greater Western Sydney region involves 14 LGAs.

Discrepancy of regions between partners, that is why Department of Premier
and Cabinet regions adopted.

NCAH have been trying to engage with Indigenous population reps. Have
invited rep from a local Land Council and FaHCSIA to help.

Want to acknowledge that Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the
homeless population in the Nepean. Want to ensure thorough
analysis/evaluation.

- **Katie Price, City of Sydney, Street Counts**

Need to get data collection right. Accountable to vision and plan.

Lee Armstrong(Nepean Youth Homelessness Service) and Steph Brennan were trained in Street Count process

Want to get more grounded info on where homeless people are.

Why? What's the point? What is involved?

2006 Census data 27000 homeless but consider lag time to results.

City of Sydney- Biannual street Count to define homelessness in given area
-targetted advocacy, resources

Allows richer analysis, establish goals, strategy- 25% reduction by 2014

August 2009 Street Count- 399 rough sleepers(includes those in 'shelters').

Therefore 25% = ~100

Homeless Persons Information Centre(HPIC) data- people in SAAP in an LGA

HPIC is a statewide referral and information line, keep stats on enquiries

NCAH have requested data from HPIC on homelessness in Western Sydney(300 suburbs).

Western Sydney very different to City of Sydney- more families than single people.

Hospitals now doing homeless data for example, St Vincent's drop by half in six months

Parramatta Council have given the go ahead to do their first street count on same night as City of Sydney- Monday February 15th, 2010

Recommendation:

It is recommended that a Street Count be conducted in the Nepean to run concurrently with those of Parramatta and City of Sydney on Monday February 15th 2010.

Methodology, manuals, training are already available. Involves an enormous use of volunteers. Occurs between 1 and 3am. This is the time suggested by rough sleepers- "homeless advisers"- the experts.

City of Sydney used 170 volunteers(including 25 homeless advisors, 20 City of Sydney staff). Covers two thirds of the LGA. Public Space Liaison Officer assists- excludes more industrial sites.

Each team has a map and walk every street in two hours.

Melbourne and Adelaide- use different methodology- a survey. Sydney is simply a head count so don't disturb. No demographic data collected(i.e. age, gender etc)

Training- started first with homeless advisers- develop protocols etc. Then for OH and S reasons train Team Leaders, develop teams. Two hour training session for volunteers.

Many volunteers from unrelated sectors. Promote through distribution list within sector, some press but minimal and word of mouth.

383 different volunteers over last three counts; 23 have done all three.

So how could we do this in the Nepean?

Recruit through Taskforce

How do we ensure we get qualitative data also? Anecdotal and qualitative stuff maybe survey on one day.

Consider various methodologies but need to identify hotspots.

Parramatta are conducting surveys if services the following day.

The advantage we have in the Nepean is a well-connected service system

Intelligence gathering part of methodology

Geographic differences- need to consider to work out how many volunteers will be needed

Target in each LGA

Trying to establish our networks of homeless advisors to do scoping of squats, hotspots etc

Census of homelessness agencies, hospitals, jails etc

Possibly hotels, backpacker hostels etc. Think there is a worker in Blue Mountains that works with that population.

May be able to access Housing NSW Temporary Accommodation stats- need to differentiate between those coming from out of the area.

NCAH- interim management team and reps from the four councils to participate in Working Group.

Establish methodology in next couple of months

Capital city Councils of Lord Mayors- endorse coordinated Street Count
Council staff- know areas, resources, rangers etc- teams that have the intelligence on homeless people.

Draft Terms of Reference

Amendments:

Role: Link to Housing NSW- develop and 'implement'

The Taskforce will provide representation to Housing NSW Regional Consultations on the Homelessness Action Plan.

Monitor progress on agreed outcomes and be accountable

Principle function

Add:

- Represent and have input to the State Government planning processes on development of Regional Action Plans
- Advocate to all levels of Government in regard to ending homelessness in the region- including advice to each entity, Government department
- Implement priority projects through collaboration

What does "To provide direction on policy for strategic issues" mean?

Members vote and set directions, for workers, teams to follow those directions

What does ending homelessness look like?

Zero rough sleepers by 2020

Prevention

Access to crisis services and permanent housing as soon as possible.

Literature review on what is happening overseas- reduction in stats is about rough sleepers.

Definitional- what will it mean for the Nepean?

Is purpose of Taskforce that in 1-2 years time the Taskforce becomes the 'expert' on homelessness in the region?

Yes, principle authority on homelessness in the Nepean.

Need to distinguish between what will be in the plan; what will do in group and operating principles- this is part of the plan

Mission Statement, aspirational

Working Group- dot points

implement 'agreed' outcomes- use common language

Membership- missing- Police, DADHC

Quorum

Need to know total membership- about 20- each org has one voting member but can have observers. Therefore quorum is ten voting members.

Structure

Inaugural chair person- wanted leader and expert in the area, so that is why Felicity chosen. Role will be passed on to Richard Eastmead, currently deputy chair, in about twelve months time.

Karen McKeown endorsed Felicity Reynolds as Inaugural Chairperson, Richard Eastmead as Deputy Chairperson of the Nepean Homelessness Taskforce; seconded Michael Vasilli.

It was agreed that staff of NCAH would provide secretariat.

Any feedback should be sent electronically to Steph Brennan.

An email discussion will occur re definitions of 'ending homelessness'

Time frames and Work Plan

Regional plan by end of next year. However need to keep in mind Housing NSW timelines so can make recommendations to their planning process before March 2010

NCAH through the Consortium have submitted a proposal to Housing NSW regarding the Nepean Wentworth Supportive Housing Unit. Project 40 Blue

Mountains is the start of this. Case will be considered for implementation in 2010.

Service system in agreement about new service model.

Key Actions

- **Data Collection-** Working Group- methodology etc
- **National Alliance to End Homelessness-** plans like this to be used as template- another Working Group to develop this template for the Nepean ten year plan. Email contact between meetings
Project 40 to be included.
- **Identifying Assets-** that can be used- possibly under-utilised and work out what isn't known about
Councils to go back to their offices and arrange Asset audit. Template to determine exactly what a complete asset audit for each organisation entails. Councils- social planners meet and determine council assets etc. Zoning/affordable housing rules etc
Centrelink will be using "homelessness indicators' from January 2010 to indicate vulnerability
- See if someone from **State Department of Planning** can speak on their report on Supporting Affordable Rental Housing
- **Supply of housing and appropriate housing-** Working group- councils already working on this- tap into work already done through Council reps/ Mayors
- **Boarding Houses-** DADHC responsible for some but many have closed- Council could possibly help identify these.
- **Identify initiatives that require new resources, not just realignment.** Summary of Nepean Wentworth Supportive Housing proposal to Regional taskforce. Develop something substantial regarding Regional Plan by March 2010. Map timeline of key dates for planning process.
- **Communications plan**

Other Business:

Political and community will- from ground swell- access to Newspapers- creating awareness- principle of plans here and overseas- stories via Richard Eastmead
Raise awareness of economic argument for Housing First approach.

Steph to email contact list- BCC

Mercy Foundation- Roseanne Haggerty Forum Thursday 19th, 3-5 pm at Mallesons Stephen Jaques, Level 61, Governor Philip Tower, 1 Farrer Place Sydney. RSVP to Mercy Foundation : 0296998726 or email office@mercyfoundation.com.au

Next Meeting: Wednesday 16th December, 2-5pm, Pasadena Room, Penrith City Council