

**Nepean Regional Taskforce on  
Homelessness  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010 2-5pm  
@ Penrith City Council**



**Present:** Indeana Black (NCAH -Adult Homelessness network), Robynne Cole(Community Services), Paula Webber (Centrelink), Michael Laing (Hawkesbury Council), Deborah Dare (Community Services), Stephanie Oatley (NCAH -Youth Homelessness network), Richard Eastmead (Business Representative), Mary Waterford (Western Sydney Community Forum), Cr Karen McKeown (Penrith Council), Trevor Clark(Homelessness Advocacy- Consumer Rep), Kenneth Hamilton(Homeless Voice), Lorenz Heufr(FAHCSIA), Alison Shearer(Housing NSW), Sandy Quealey(Wentworth Community Housing), Ron Alder(Blacktown City Council), Louie Griffin(Homeless Service Consumer)

**Observers:** Madeleine Pusic (Centrelink) Stephanie Brennan, Tracey Gray, Eamon Waterford (NCAH), Erich Weller, Vesna Kapetanovic(Penrith City Council), Patricia Darvall(Community Services), Tiffany Stonestreet(Project 40) **Guest:** Donna Mosford, Parramatta City Council

**Apologies:** Robert (United Way), Nick Sabel(Wentworth Community Housing), Wendy Maybury( Indigenous rep, FAHCSIA), Corrective Services Rep, Margaret Malkovich(Housing NSW), Michael Vassilli (Blacktown City Council), Felicity Reynolds( Mercy Foundation), Lee Armstrong(NYHS)

**Chair:** Richard Eastmead

**Minutes:** Tracey Gray

Richard welcomed everyone to meeting. Introductions made. Acknowledgement of traditional owners of the land was made by Councillor Karen McKeown on behalf of Penrith City Council.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Minutes accepted by Karen McKeown, seconded Michael Laing.

**Business Arising:**

**a) Felicity was to draft letter to Minister Borger regarding temporary accommodation (TA).**

Felicity met with Minister Borger prior to going overseas.

**Action Arising:** Felicity to report back at next Taskforce meeting.

**b) Asset Audit**

Reps from all four Councils have met once, follow up meeting next week. Looking at ways each can contribute, develop general template.

**c) Mike Fish, City of Sydney**

Mike unable to come today, however Commander Ben Feszczuk will speak during General Business. Mike to attend next Taskforce meeting.

**d) Treatment of Homeless People**

- Vesna distributed fact sheet and link to fact sheet. It is a NSW Government initiative- yet to locate longer document. Local Government aren't a signatory but Police are.
- Councillor Karen McKeown has contacted Blue Mountains and Blacktown Councils, hasn't got a contact at Hawkesbury but will liaise with Michael Laing. Erich Weller (Penrith City Council) reported that a number of different departments have met with a view to developing protocol. Involve rangers, private contractors. At the stage of investigating. Looking at Hawkesbury's protocol and hope to present draft at a future meeting, hope to have good draft to take to Council within 2-3 months. Will include discussion with homeless advisors, services, internal systems and later Local command police (St Marys ad Penrith). Karen said that once developed can offer to other Councils
- Police rep on Taskforce- Local Area Commander Ben Feszczuk.
- Ken met with Michael Laing and introduced him to some of the local homeless people- Ken feels this was very positive overall. Michael was able to engage with them, hopes to engage Police at same level.
- Awareness Training package- has been forwarded to Steph by Felicity. When all documents collated will tweak and convert to appropriate training package. Train stakeholders, agencies- practical strategies, bring homelessness to wider community. Mixed training- council, Police, services etc

**Action Arising:** Steph to forward to Council reps for use in developing protocol. Steph and Felicity to meet with Councils to develop Training Package and then bring back to Taskforce.

**e) Project 40-** solving homelessness fact sheet has been emailed to Kevin Rudd and Tanya Plibersek and also added to website

**f) Ten Year Plan-** have started to bring together all the action we have started. Will base our plan on pro formas. It will be a 6-8 month process, involve consultations

**Action Arising:** Steph to redistribute info on Ten Year Plans. Steph and Felicity to prepare draft

**g) Steph to send letter of acknowledgement to Hawkesbury Council for signing MOU**

**Guest Speakers**

**Donna Mosford, Parramatta City Council**

Donna reported on their recent Street Count. Acknowledged the collaborative approach between councils, areas. Also acknowledged Ken for his help with Homeless Advisors.

Street Count developed out of work on Homeless Management Plan process. Successful in accessing \$25000 research funding, used to leverage UWS, also contributed \$25000.

Research- voice of homeless people- struggle- how to make happen; voice of business people- especially because of potential projects like Common Ground which require a whole community approach- gauge role business could play. Street Count- if want to develop solutions need a more accurate picture.

Started with business surveys/focus groups- .UWS. Another researcher approached local services. Thirty five homeless clients (9 women. rest men) and Housing NSW staff. Homeless women not as visible.

Street Count occurred 15<sup>th</sup> February- 81 rough sleepers; 285 SAAP (primarily) but also some non-SAAP includes some people in Cumberland Hospital. Couldn't get Westmead Hospital data- ethics issue and didn't find out till too late that problem was sorted out. Didn't include squats, cars, and some geographically difficult locations.

UWS organised logistics.

Parramatta Park- anecdotally know they have a number of rough sleepers= Ken linked up with them and one of them, "Ross"- did count in Parramatta Park on Street Count night on their behalf.

Council provided maps

Rigorous training- UWS insurance covered event- two training sessions- compulsory to attend at least one.

130 volunteers. Teams of three- Headquarters: Parramatta Town Hall 11.30pm- 1.30am as Parramatta quieter than city.

Volunteers taken to their Count area by car/community bus. Teams had to ring in every half hour, if don't ring Headquarters call Police.

Great support from Rangers- four on the night

First aid on site. Use of Council vehicles.

Lots of volunteers from Parramatta Council who wouldn't normally have role in developing social policy

Rangers, cleaners- source of knowledge- most don't know what to do- so training/protocols essential. Therefore developing policy by end of financial year, internal project development team plus external reference group. Looking at other research etc in developing Parramatta model.

Were the numbers what they expected? There was some research done with services four years ago, to see what they thought. Numbers were slightly higher than anticipated by that research.

Were any hotspots missed? Possibly so add 25% to allow.

LGAs (Parramatta vs. Nepean) much different- Nepean so spread out- most aren't in CBD- in bush, caves, near rivers. Therefore rely on local knowledge, people on the streets in areas. Talk to local service providers too- Salvos estimate 226 in Katoomba alone- anecdotal- couch surfing a big issue.

Steph has met with Blue Mountains Council re quantifying couch surfing especially by Young People.

Parramatta Local Police also identified a couple of hotspots not previously identified.

Street Count was not able to provide any stats on ages, gender etc, not intrusive.

Had enough volunteers.

What could they do better/differently? Build relationship with local homeless people- realise that it is an integral part of the process and part of a number of other activities.

Were there any incidents? No.

Nepean Street Count- Graham Pringle is liaising hospital ethics clearance. Will help access stats. Anecdotally in Penrith on any given night- 100 who would normally

rough sleep access the Health system. However, still working out as there is a problem with computer system in that if you put no fixed address it automatically defaults to hospital address- may need manual collation.

Dr Steven Boyages, CEO, Sydney West Area Health Service and UWS developing protocol.

Centrelink- Community Engagement officers only find out someone homeless if Social Worker identifies.

### **Commander Ben Feszczuk, Local Area Police. - Penrith**

Discussion about issues around treatment of rough sleepers by Police. Need to consider:

- Incident reported by Ken regarding young people squatting;
- Involvement of Police in Taskforce; and,
- Involvement in Street Count.

As discussed at previous meeting, Ken reported that homeless people are fearful of local Government and Police. Ken said he was sceptical at first, but keeps hearing same message.

Ben gave overview of grounds that police may have for arresting a homeless person e.g. drunkenness- if homeless- detain for four hours, feed and release. Squatting- if owner makes a complaint, Police check out and encourage to move on- may give barring notice which means if found there again can be charged with trespass.

Protocol for Homeless People- Ben not aware but will find out.

Referral to other agencies- not aware if this is common practice but will ensure follows up.

Ben stressed that homeless people have no reason to fear Police- Ben hopes to report back at next meeting.

Ben agrees that Education or awareness training for frontline staff critical.

**Action Arising:** Ben, Ken, Crime Prevention officer, Steph Brennan and Tracey Gray to meet and discuss further opportunities to raise awareness and build relationships.

Loui said stereotyping is common- need to make sure Police aware that just because homeless doesn't mean must be a drug addict or alcoholic. Homeless people have often experienced violence and/or trauma so very important they don't feel intimidated or frightened.

Police may be able to help identify hotspots

Further on the Protocol for Homeless People, Ben will ensure awareness or questions about awareness raised at State level as Fact sheet was only released in 2007.

Alison Shearer said that the document/protocol was initiated prior to the 2000 Sydney Olympics- so many agencies not aware, so need to review at all levels.

Tracey suggested that may be able to talk with UWS about incorporating awareness in to Bachelor of Policing course run by UWS.

## **General Business:**

### **a) Housing NSW HAP Regional Committee**

Mary reported that Hap Committee met last week for first time. Have endorsed TOR, looked at Regional Action Plan. Looked at proposals through consultation process. Project 40/Supportive Housing model has been endorsed by region as one to be developed further.

Nine regions as described by Department of Premier and Cabinet- Greater West includes Western and South Western Sydney.

Alison said that HAP implementation draws on recommendations of White and Green papers on Homelessness. A number of projects already funded. \$45million across NSW- funding only small part of process.

Consultations and submissions collated and three proposals deemed well developed. Now at next stage- State level Interagency- wait and see what happens\Regional HAP Implementation committee quite big- 21- added CALD rep. Meeting bimonthly, feedback by next meeting from State group and then refine proposals further.

Key objectives:

How to do systems reform? Better service delivery.

Projects like Project 40 are about changing the system.

Committee will have ongoing role over next four years.

Lots of submissions with great ideas, not for funding necessarily.

Ideas have come from "public" forums- so nothing really to stop these ideas from being feedback. Are there ways these ideas can be implemented?

Use our knowledge/systems to resource other services, especially Aboriginal projects- Wendy Maybury (FAHCSIA) keen for this to happen.

Funding source? Important to know where from, what purpose can be used for? On the ground may not be aware

Project 40 Business Case- does include Early Intervention/Tenancy Support  
Different way of providing support. Keep in housing or rapidly rehouse.

Loui suggested that so many people don't know what supports are available to them.

? Free service for people who can't manage- also need to look at in context of broader issue of poverty.

State Planning policy changes to allow people to share accommodation.

Basic info on services available.

Include ideas in ten year plan- give people access to financial support- share info.

Loui to talk with Steph O and Tiffany (BMYASS) about resources etc to include in service model for ten year plan.

**b) Mapping of Hotspots**

A couple of guys in Katoomba are helping identify hotspots and will help with Street Count.

Sense of urgency- 4 weeks to go- have to show ready to go.

Getting rough ideas of numbers, hotspots. Projections for target numbers.

**c) Training**

- PIAC/HPLS- Ken, Steph, involved in establishing Consumer group to report to Premiers Council on Homelessness
- Training at HPLS/PIAC tomorrow- three homeless consumers, Ken, Steph- resourced to work with others- like Trevor and Loui (both on Regional HAP Implementation Committee) and therefore consult with consumers etc.
- HPLS/PIAC will train over next three months- run through current resources etc irrespective of corporate funding

**d) Project 40 Hawkesbury**

Have set up Coordination group- ten services on board.

Steering Committee- one instead of four across region (all four LGAs)

First CG meeting 7<sup>th</sup> April- services keen, a little resistance- keen to do something about homelessness before the end of April.

**Other Business**

Housing NSW are providing some funding to support Street Count- UWS researcher (Dennis Garland) and Eamon employed as Project Coordinator Can also pay advisors. Will streamline process.

Steph expressed appreciation for this support partnership.

**Next Meetings:**

**To be held @ Pasadena Room, Penrith City Council, 2-5pm**

**On Wednesdays 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2010; 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2010; 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2010; and 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2010.**