

**Nepean Regional Taskforce on
Homelessness
Wednesday 27th January 2010 2-5pm
@ Penrith City Council**



Present: Indiana Black (NCAH -Adult Homelessness network), Stuart Duncan (SWAHS), Paula Webber (Centrelink), Michael Laing (Hawkesbury Council), Deborah Dare (Community Services), Stephanie Oatley (NCAH -Youth Homelessness network), Natasha McDermott (Blacktown Council), Richard Eastmead (Business Representative), Mary Waterford (Western Sydney Community Forum), Cr Karen McKeown (Penrith Council), Margaret Malkovich (Housing NSW), Felicity Reynolds (Chairperson – Mercy Foundation), Nick Sabel (Wentworth Community Housing), Trevor Clark (Homelessness Advocacy- Consumer Rep), Kenneth Hamilton (Homeless Voice), Maurice Brady (Blue Mountains City Council), Julie Page (SWAHS Needle and Syringe Program), Councillor Kathie Collins OAM (Blacktown City Council)

Observers: Madeleine Pusic (Centrelink) Stephanie Brennan, Tracey Gray, Eamon Waterford (NCAH), Lee Armstrong (NYHS), Teresa Luk-Leung, Tracy Leahy (Penrith City Council), **Guest:** Victoria Edghill, Parramatta City Council

Apologies: Robynne Cole (Community Services), Vesna Kapetanovic, Eric Weller (Penrith City Council), Janet Mays (Blue Mountains City Council), Wendy Maybury (Indigenous rep, FAHCSIA), Louie Griffin (Homeless Service Consumer)

Felicity welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially special guests, Trevor, Ken and Victoria. For the benefit of newcomers, introductions were made. Acknowledgement of traditional owners of the land was made by Councillor Karen McKeown on behalf of Penrith City Council.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Natasha asked that it be noted that Liz Jeremy is a Director not a Councillor. Karen McKeown moved to accept minutes from Previous Meeting held 16th December, 2009, seconded Deborah Dare.

Business Arising:

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

Felicity explained that she has not done this yet for a number of reasons. Wanted to discuss with a couple of people first. Letter is from Felicity's own perspective. It is not that she has issues with TA or Housing NSW in and of themselves but that longer term solutions need to be explored. Has discussed with Housing NSW and they agree that this is the case.

Action Arising: If anyone has any comments or suggestions they want included in her communication to the Minister please email Felicity (executive@mercyfoundation.com.au)

- Pro forma for asset audit prepared by Hawkesbury City Council was circulated to other Council reps. Penrith Council have prepared their own, this was tabled at meeting.

Action Arising: Representatives of Council to meet and discuss. Natasha from Blacktown City Council will facilitate. Recommended that a standard template be negotiated, based on those already circulated.

- October edition of Parity was distributed electronically. If anyone didn't receive, contact Steph Brennan.

General Business:

a) Parramatta Council Street Count

Victoria gave background to their forthcoming Street Count. Since mid 2009 established internal policy development team. Consultations with external Reference group since August 2009. Have received information and support from various organisations especially City of Sydney and Steph Brennan, NCAH.

Research partnership started with UWS early 2009. Hope to have policy document to Council in May 2010. Document includes a number of Strategic questions, will use Research to inform further development. Economic Development Team sent surveys to 2000 businesses to get an understanding of business perceptions and experiences of the homeless. Results included in UWS Research and tends to debunk the myths that business are against homeless people.

UWS researchers interviewed local services, Housing NSW, homeless families and individuals about their experiences. Research indicates that most of the homeless population in Parramatta have a 'place connection' to the City.

UWS are coordinating the Street Count- stringent safety audit performed. Safety is the priority- not covering some areas of LGA after consultation with Police, Council rangers etc. Thirty-three count areas will be covered by groups of three, minimum. Need at least 100 volunteers/staff recruited. Have 60 so far.

Not counting squats, cars or Parramatta Park. Parramatta Park Trust will provide estimate. Interviews UWS conducted with homeless have been helpful in determining where to count or not.

Transport being arranged by rangers. UWS are handling security. Volunteer insurance, UWS assuming responsibility, have conducted full safety audit. Parramatta Council are covering staff. Michael Darcy, UWS is Coordinator, plus another 2-3 staff, third voluntary. UWS Team also includes Roslyn Richards and Dennis Garland.

Policy team comprised of 5 representatives from Social Outcomes, Community Capacity and Library Teams.

Financially, Parramatta Council and UWS have contributed equally(\$20000).

Count will be done between 11.30pm and 1.30am on the evening of February 15th/16th.

Victoria is unsure of what is happening with Parramatta Homeless Interagency- Community Capacity Team holds responsibility for resourcing. Unsure but thinks business not involved yet but interested in pursuing. Focus group/research will inform implementing this. The plan is to get info/report from Parramatta Council/UWS in May roughly. Through the UWS interviews have also identified potential homeless advisors.

Developing a Homelessness Advocacy Network- Trevor Clark and Ken Hamilton

Steph introduced Trevor and Ken. Through Trevor and Ken, the Taskforce will have direct communication from homeless advisors. Lee Armstrong(NYHS) will coordinate Homeless advisor recruitment. Steph and Eamon Waterford are organising logistics of Street Count. The previous Street Count conducted for NYHS has provided lessons about what we need to do. Important to have input/contributions from those who have experienced homelessness.

Want to establish homelessness advocacy network- Council for Homeless Persons(Victoria) have established one- advocacy group- six consumers- recruited, trained, prepared so can present in the community, raise awareness. Develop opportunities to have a say.

Trevor will now be part of Taskforce. He advised St Vincent de Paul on their report "Known Territory". Ken has a long history with City of Sydney; "Homeless Voice"- trained as a media contact and Advocate. Trevor is a Blackheath resident but distributes "Big Issue' in the city.

Ken said that City of Sydney are one of the most pro-active, innovative councils regarding homelessness, always looking for 'best practice'. Ken sees the Advisors role as a way of giving back to Council, services, government- providing feedback for evaluations. Important for any Council to get as much involvement from homeless people as possible; a few minutes talking with homeless people provides invaluable info. Safety has to be primary concern; homeless advisors can tell where not to go.

Ken and Trevor are helping Lee develop relationships with potential advisors- several meetings arranged over next week or so.

Steph has put in a submission to United Way to have Homelessness Advocacy Network funded as a means of showing respect for their expertise. Ken hopes that will be able to formalise networks beyond the Inner City. Ken may be on the Premiers Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

Street Count Working Group Update

Street Count working group includes Natasha Mc Dermott, Michael Laing, Ryn Vlachou, Vesna Kapetanovic, Tiffany Stonestreet, Emma(from BMYASS), Lee Armstrong, Eamon Waterford and Steph Brennan.

Initially agreed to run concurrently with City of Sydney and Parramatta Councils on 15th/16th February evening. Have been working on staffing, recruiting volunteers, funding etc. However, all doing in addition to other work responsibilities. Other Council areas have dedicated staff, that are able to make this a priority. December/ January holiday period has also complicated.

Councils have done lots as far as organising transport, insurance, identifying hotspots etc. However network of homeless advisors not established, mapping is behind, data not finalised. Huge risk if only half hearted attempt.

Need to establish connections with advisors, this takes time, before can do Count. Insurances are under control, so could be ready but feel that it would lack depth. Volunteers- numbers- so far greater than 60.

Crucial that we do this right- in terms of advisors, volunteers, stats, hot spot mapping.

Discussion about when would be the best time to do Count. Need to get methodology more accurate. Propose that Count take place early May- 3rd/4th May.

Next meeting of Street Count Working Group is Tuesday 2nd February, 2010 11-12 at The Annexe

Action: Steph to contact Mike Fish, Public Space Liaison , City of Sydney and ask him to speak to/advise about Count at next Taskforce meeting.

Taskforce Input into Consultations on Regional Plans

Margaret Malkovich advised that consultation for Greater Western Sydney will be on 8th February, covers 14 LGAs

Consultation process has changed- split into two areas.

Discussed preparation of Written submission on behalf of Taskforce.

Submission is via template.

Action: Steph will compile with assistance of Tracey, Lee and Michael, then circulate draft for comment.

Regional plan needs to adopt visionary approach- aim to solve homelessness over long term, short term strategies that feed into this. Needs to provide options for people in this area. There is a lot of homelessness- therefore need more housing and more supportive housing options. Identifies at risk or dominant groups- newly arrived families(migrants, refugees etc) especially women and children- this is a growing problem. Paula from Centrelink will send through some dot points. Can't forget those who are living in overcrowded situations. SAAP turn away stats, unmet demand. It is not about funding but about strategies, visions.

Action: It was agreed that the Taskforce will have representation on the Regional Consultations and also contribute to the written submission. Moved Steph Oatley, seconded Mary Waterford.

Update on Supportive Housing Model

Consortium of local Government and non Government agencies, not just Homeless Services developed and grown since April 2009; also includes business and philanthropic organisations. Aim of the Consortium is to establish a Supportive Housing Model. Lobbying for funding under National Partnerships on Homelessness. Nick and Steph, on behalf of Consortium, developed Business Case, lobbied for funding. Explored a number of models, identify what is possible. Wanted to display the 'goodwill' expressed. Each LGA is different- therefore establish local 'chapters'. Taking advantage of National Building Economic Stimulus(NBES) funding for social housing and Property Transfer program and in partnership with Wentworth, target the most vulnerable- sleeping rough, those we want to connect with through Street Count, advisors- most have no involvement with homeless services. Supportive Housing means housing without strings attached but support to sustain housing- focus is on the individual and their needs(there are some minimum requirements regarding visits etc). Aim to utilise 150 properties across region but also support a further 1689 that are in housing crisis- due to unemployment, family health crisis, eviction, mortgagee repossession. Aim to provide quick help through housing system to minimise use of expensive housing options. Project 40 Blue Mountains- collaborative demonstration project. Modelled on NYHS/brokerage. Major change in service delivery approach- many services meet together, collaborate to develop case plan, support in 'Whatever it Takes" approach to maintain tenancy. About to start similar project in Hawkesbury. Pitch to funding bodies- lots of money needed for brokerage. Trying to bring about cultural change sensitively. Funding requested is \$1.3 million per year for three years. Wentworth are in the midst of tendering for additional properties under NBES. Package of about 550 units in Blue Mountains, Penrith and Blacktown- can't just apply for part, but all. Wentworth applying as part of involvement with BlueCHP and also separately. No guarantee that will be successful but are doing everything they can to ensure success. Up to 40% of properties must be allocated to homeless or priority housing approved clients. Wentworth have to work with Service System to ensure tenancies can be supported and sustained. View this as an opportunity to have a real impact on solving homelessness in this area. Two tenders currently due for submission- 12th and 26th February respectively. Refers to Taskforce/ Consortium to show how region is working together collaboratively to solve homelessness. By the end of March/ early April will probably know outcomes.

Phil Koperberg's Taskforce

At last Taskforce meeting it was agreed that this would be a standing agenda item. There hasn't been a meeting since last Taskforce, however, Phil Koperberg's Taskforce will be coming up with recommendations soon. It is suggested that Regional Taskforce ensure they provide input to it and our objectives stay aligned.

Other Business:

Questions about what is happening in South Western Sydney.

Action: Felicity to speak to John McMillan to find out how Regional Homelessness Action Plan Implementation Committees will be established

**Next Meeting: Wednesday 24th February, 2010 2-5pm Pasadena Room,
Penrith City Council, High Street Penrith**