

Nepean/ Blacktown Regional Taskforce on Homelessness
Wednesday 27th October, 2010 2pm
@ Penrith City Council
Library Theatre

1. **Chair:** Richard Eastmead **Minutes:** Tracey Gray

Richard welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Acknowledgement of Country by Erich Weller on behalf of Penrith City Council.
Introductions made.

Attendance: Erich Weller(Penrith City Council), Madeleine Pusic, Paula Webber(Centrelink), Stephanie Oatley(BMYASS), Louisiana (Louie) Griffin(Homeless Consumer) Richard Eastmead(The Good Guys, Vice Chair), Vesna Kapetanovic, Katerina Tahija(Penrith City Council), Natasha McDermott(Blacktown City Council), Michael Laing(Hawkesbury City Council), Wendy Maybury(FAHCSIA), Margaret Maljkovic(Housing NSW), Stephanie Brennan, Tracey Gray(Wentworth Community Housing)

2. **Apologies:** Felicity Reynolds(Mercy Foundation), Cllr Karen McKeown(Penrith City Council)

3. **Acceptance of Last Meetings Minutes** Minutes accepted by Paula Webber(Centrelink), seconded Erich Weller.

4. **Business Arising:**

Before discussion on the Actions arising from the previous meeting, Richard referred everyone to the Recommendations from Felicity distributed prior to today's meeting. Discussion regarding Recommendation (a) That the Taskforce changes from monthly to bi-monthly, meeting between 2-5pm on the last Wednesday of every second month. Steph Oatley(BMYASS) moved to accept this recommendation, seconded Paula Webber. However it was agreed that the November meeting will proceed as planned on 24th November, meetings to commence on bimonthly basis in February 2011.

Action Arising: November meeting will proceed as planned on 24th November, meetings to commence on bimonthly basis in February 2011.

- a. **Wallet Card-** draft was distributed to Council Officers who provided feedback and additional data. It is now being printed. Card acknowledges that it is an initiative of the Regional Taskforce. It will be launched at the Blue Mountains Forum on November 17th. Additional copies will be printed and distributed through all Councils.

- b. Homeless Persons Protocol Erich Weller advised that this document has been reviewed by a number of different departments at Council. They will hold one more meeting to discuss draft protocol before arranging to table at a Council meeting. This should occur before the end of November. Once endorsed by Council, Penrith will distribute to the other Councils. Hawkesbury Councils policy as well as a couple of Victorian Councils were used in developing Penrith Councils draft protocol. Council's Legal Officer has reviewed and given Ok. Erich said they may send out to a couple of direct service providers for their comments.
- c. Mary Waterford has contacted Mary Perkins(Shelter) and invited her to present at Taskforce, waiting to hear back. Paula has contact details for Corrective Services State Planning Officer and will try to arrange for attendance at a future Taskforce meeting.

5. General Business:

a. Recommendations

Frequency of meetings was discussed prior to Business Arising.

Discussion about Recommendation (b). Wendy from FAHCSIA explained that as such their roles are not decision makers but more policy direction. This would apply to many Government dept representatives. Most other agencies are service providers, people that have delegated authority like representatives from Councils.

It was suggested that an endorsed list of attendance be compiled, starting with the person with the highest authority in each organisation etc. A draft list will be compiled between now and next Taskforce meeting. Richard will discuss further with Felicity.

Recommendation (c) no issues, recommendation endorsed by Taskforce.

Action Arising: An endorsed list of attendance be compiled, starting with the person with the highest authority in each organisation etc. A draft list will be compiled between now and next Taskforce meeting. Richard will discuss further with Felicity.

b. Hawkesbury Hub- next Hub is on 18th November at St Matthews Anglican Church

Centrelink, Housing NSW, Wentworth, all very supportive. Project 40 clients involved. Following last Hub, 20 people successfully led through housing application process. There was some media coverage and this was quite positive.

Paula said that Centrelink weren't able to have much media presence at last Hub as it was during the Federal election campaign. However this Hub they will try and get their media unit involved. Donations of non-perishable food, hygiene packs, new clothing and so on are being requested.

c. Blue Mountains Homeless Forum and Ten Year Plan Consultation

Wentworth Community Housing, Project 40, Blue Mountains City Council and Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre are partnering to organise the Forum. So far have received over forty registrations from a variety of services including Neighbourhood Centres and Youth Centres. The morning session will include rough sleepers talking about their experiences; scenarios to look at issues and distribution of a kit that has ideas and resources on helping the homeless including the wallet card discussed earlier. The Homeless Person Choir will be performing. Phil Koperberg will do a keynote speech. Then after lunch, services will have opportunities to provide input to the Ten Year Plan.

Felicity will report back to the Taskforce at the next meeting as she is facilitating the consultation sessions in the afternoon.

Action Arising: Felicity will report back to the Taskforce at the next meeting on outcomes on BM Forum Consultations.

d. Accommodation Proposal for Blue Mountains from Louie Griffin and Steph Oatley

Louie discussed the proposal. She said that while many people may have spare rooms, they are not keen to help out if it is suggested they offer the spare room to a homeless person. Louie feels that community education or awareness is required to breakdown stereotypes. Taskforce members suggested that if we select a particular target group within homeless population to promote e.g./ older, single women, it may be easier than trying to promote a generic homeless person.

BMYASS allocated a worker, Julia, to help Louie with her proposal. Three tenancies have been arranged and sustained because of the relationship between the worker and the landlord. However, that being said, BMYASS have been rejected for several rental properties they are trying to find to replace Springwood House.

There is a possibility of establishing a similar project in the Penrith LGA through NYAS.

As part of the Consumer project, a number of people will be trained, resourced and mentored to provide support and advocacy to homeless clients.

One of the first Hawkesbury Project clients is now providing outreach to at least 20 rough sleepers. He has also established a group for pets of homeless people, "Cranky Creatures Association Australia". A register of homeless consumers who are media trained will also be established.

Clients in Community Placement need mentors who can support them to maintain tenancy. Regional Taskforce could coordinate project, Project 40 champion and support clients. One suggestion is an Open Day for interested people to meet homeless, meet support workers/agencies. Terminology change was required to sell the concept: instead of "homeless", "vulnerable". Concept needs to be honed down, including developing fact sheets for people considering renting out a room in their home.

A working party was established- Louie Griffin, Steph Oatley, Margaret Maljkovic and Richard Eastmead. Tracey will check if there are any resources archived from when Ross Aubrey at Wentworth ran a share accommodation register.

Margaret will liaise with Nick about involvement of Housing and working group will meet prior to next Taskforce meeting. Louie later suggested that this Working Party meeting be deferred till early February 2011.

Action Arising: Working party established- Louie Griffin, Steph Oatley, Margaret Maljkovic and Richard Eastmead will meet early in February 2011 to develop project.

Tracey will check if there are any resources archived from when Ross Aubrey at Wentworth ran a share accommodation register.

Margaret will liaise with Nick about involvement of Housing and working group will meet prior to next Taskforce meeting.

e. Nepean Blacktown Regional Research

Councils and Stephanie are meeting for preliminary discussions with UWS soon. The Research will involve a scoping exercise to identify issues and then may lead to further funding. Councils acquired funds for this project through CDSE funding applications. In Blacktown one issue is how to capture squatter numbers. This may also be an issue in Penrith, also people sleeping in cars. Numbers are difficult to quantify especially in Aboriginal and Refugee population. There is \$22,000 in funds available to start project, it is hoped that UWS may agree to match this. The research will also look at service system, gaps and so on and then how the data collected can contribute to Ten Year Plan. First meeting is scheduled for December.

f. Vulnerability Index

City of Sydney are conducting this survey next week. They are calling it Registration week. Felicity and Steph are running in Sydney next week through support from Mercy Foundation, City of Sydney and corporate organisations. Steph will be in Sydney from Saturday to Thursday, Vesna is attending too. Common Ground New York are running the training. Homeground Victoria and Micah Projects(Queensland) are going to help with education on how to run in Penrith and other LGAs.

6. Reports

a. Regional Homelessness Committee and HAP Projects

The Committee has carriage of nine HAP projects.

Western Sydney Community Forum(WSCF) have received funding to set up similar projects to Project 40 in South Western Sydney. They are interviewing for Regional worker next Monday.

Committee has lots of members and are requesting regional input on how to change the service system. While we have funds for Project 40, biggest task is service system reform.

b. Project 40

Discussed benefit of Common access point because of Housing Pathways. Working with a number of supportive housing clients and trying to connect with every rough sleeper. Immediate link to housing applications is achieving great outcomes but also facing clients in very difficult situations. Funding is now coming through and Steph would like to acknowledge the work of Alison Shearer(Housing NSW) and Robynne Cole(Community Services) in this outcome. Project 40 is in the process of negotiating to get 5-10 MA Housing properties.

Karen is in process of establishing Coordination groups in Blacktown and Penrith, should meet in early December.
Blue Mountains clients are under review.

c. Nation Building Stimulus Roll out

Stage two, MA Housing is the provider. They are managing approximately 500 new properties that will be ready between now and December 2011. Many will become available between now and early in the New Year. Wentworth are working in partnership with MA housing to support Housing NSW in portfolio management: rehousing clients who need disabled or smaller housing and so on.

Margaret Maljkovic gave an overview of Housing Pathways. Essentially it means no wrong door, common waiting list. Clients however can nominate not to go on Community Housing waiting list. Next phase of Housing Pathways in process now, that is, working towards aligning policies, processes especially regarding priority dates and allocation systems.

7. Other Business

a. Participation of Aboriginal Community

There are issues of factionism within the Aboriginal community which complicates involvement. Services often have Indigenous staff but they are often in lower paid, direct service delivery roles. There are few links between Indigenous workers within different services. All services are inclusive but realistically unless relationships are built up with the Community, providers or individuals are not going to achieve buy in.

Therefore Wendy recommends engaging with Aboriginal people in Aboriginal specific services.

Further a number of Indigenous workers from a range of services should be seconded to form a sub committee of the Taskforce. Should funding be sought for an Indigenous Project 40 worker? Paula suggested that an Indigenous worker from Centrelink could facilitate sub committee. It is imperative that those 'at the table' are genuine representatives of the Aboriginal community. Centrelink Indigenous worker and Wendy from FAHCSIA could mentor till the community representatives feel strong enough to sit on their own.

Steph said that there are a number of services that have Indigenous specific services- Men's Shed, PHaMS etc. Paula, Wendy and Steph will liaise, Housing NSW could also send Indigenous specialist(Coralie). Wendy will work with Steph and try and negotiate a meeting for some time in November. There will be a report back on progress at next Taskforce meeting.

Action Arising: Paula, Wendy and Steph will liaise and try and negotiate a meeting for some time in November. Housing NSW could also send Indigenous specialist(Coralie). There will be a report back on progress at next Taskforce meeting.

b. Showers

Richard asked what was happening with this project. Vesna explained that as PCYC had other maintenance issues requiring more urgent attention and without any other obvious suitable venues, this project was on hold for the time being. There are a number of other O, H & S issues- staffing etc. Richard

suggested that we ensure this project is reviewed again in February/March 2011.

Action Arising: Tracey and Vesna to facilitate meeting of Showers Working Party in early February 2011 and report back to Taskforce.

c. **National Park**

Paula advised that the Community Engagement Officer at Centrelink Illawarra has been liaising with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) regarding homeless people living in caves and so on in the National Park around a range of issues including syringes etc. Paula will get contact details as they may be able to help in regard to count details in Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury. NPWS also have concerns regarding fire risk, safety of homeless due to possible back burning, hazard reduction.

Action Arising: Paula to pass contact details for NPWS to Steph for follow up.

Meeting closed at 5pm.

Next Meetings:

Wednesday 24th November, 2010 Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre