

HACC & **Homelessness** **in Yarra**

Coordinating Services for Better Outcomes

Outcomes of the Second Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum 18 November 2009

On behalf of Yarra City Council and HomeGround Services with Funding from the Department of Health, NWMR.

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Speed Dating Session

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2008 45 people from twelve Home and Community Care (HACC) funded services working with homeless people in Yarra attended the first Yarra HACC and Homelessness forum. The LDC Group's report prepared for the Yarra City Council and HomeGround Services indicated that the forum was "successful in bringing together workers from the HACC and homelessness service sectors to discuss issues of mutual interest relating to referral pathways and work practices" (2008:11). A key outcome from the first forum was that participants were interested in continuing to build collaborative working relationships following the forum and a number of suggestions were put forward in the LDC Group report.

Resolve Community Consulting was contracted by the Yarra City Council and Homeground Services in May 2009 to conduct a survey to follow up with forum participants and gather evidence of the medium term outcomes from the forum eight-nine months after it was held; and to gather ideas for future work in improving service relationships between HACC and homeless services in the Yarra area.

In May/June 2009, Resolve Community Consulting conducted a survey of Forum 2008 participants to ascertain the outcomes of the Forum and to explore ideas for future collaborative work. In summary, the survey found that there was evidence of positive changed behaviour since the Forum such as increased referrals to other services, more effective and appropriate referrals and an improved knowledge base about services in the area.

Most respondents said that the forum had strengthened their knowledge of other services which in turn, enhanced the effectiveness of their referrals. Ten respondents said that the number of referrals they made to other services increased after the Forum. Three respondents said that the number of referrals they received from other services increased after the Forum. Nine respondents mentioned that referrals were easier, more appropriate, more informed or more effective after attending the forum. Most respondents said that they already had good working relationships with many of the services and that these were strengthened and continued after the Forum (Resolve Community Consulting, 2009a:5).

Other outcomes of the 2008 Forum mentioned by respondents included:

- the opportunity to talk to workers they already knew but who they were always too busy to talk to when conducting usual work;
- greater awareness and understanding of other services and their client eligibility criteria leading to more effective referrals;
- giving workers a greater range of ideas/options for their clients;
- putting faces to names;
- great way for newer workers to familiarise themselves with the local services;
- finding out about services they had never heard about or that they knew little about;
- increased joint case management and secondary consultation;

- better outcomes for clients because workers understood the services better; and
- reinforced existing networks (Resolve Community Consulting, 2009a:5).

The survey findings provide a rich source of information on which to base future collaborative activities. 15 out of the 17 survey respondents said they would attend another Forum and all respondents said they would recommend a future Forum to colleagues. This strongly demonstrates how worthwhile participants found the 2008 Forum.

The key conclusion from the survey was that participants valued both formal and informal face-to-face networking and wanted relationship building and networking activities to occur on a more frequent basis (i.e. more than once a year) and that this networking should be face-to-face.

There was very strong support for repeating the Forum in some form. However, it was felt by some respondents that the Forum should be used to obtain support and commitment to some of the other activities. A part of the Forum could be used to discuss further activities and to set up working groups of people interested in those activities e.g. developing a joint orientation process, developing interagency protocols or a identifying the key elements in a networking newsletter.

The survey respondents felt that the invitation list should be broadened to include more services working specifically with people experiencing homelessness and not only include HACC funded Yarra services. A list of proposed services is included in the Survey Report. However, consideration should be given to the optimal size for running a Forum effectively.

A range of other ideas for possible collaborative activities received support from survey respondents. These included: a regular newsletter, joint orientation for new workers, interagency protocols, informal/social activities and issues-focussed activities such as quarterly workshops or the establishment of task groups. Most of the people surveyed were concerned about the time and resource commitment when responding to ideas for future collaborative work. The survey report concluded that additional funding would need to be sought for most of these activities.

Based on the survey results, a submission for funding was prepared and presented to the then Department of Human Services North West Metropolitan Region for funding for a second forum in 2009, which was successful. In addition, based on the survey report, funding was successfully sought from the North Central Metro Primary Care Partnership (NCMPCP) to publish five editions of an email newsletter to further facilitate service coordination and to supplement the Forum project.

1.2 2009 Forum Planning

The Forum Planning Group was established to oversee the Forum planning and support Resolve Community Consulting. The Planning Group consisted of:

- Ro Roberts, Aged and Disability Services, Yarra City Council;
- Lorrinda Hamilton, HomeGround Services;
- Julie Fry, Royal District Nursing Homeless Persons Program
- Kerina Princi, North Central Primary Care Partnership
- Greg Bourke, North Yarra Community Health Service
- Bo Barney, North Yarra Community Health Service
- Kath Flanagan, Royal District Nursing Homeless Persons Program
- Byron Trevascus, the Cottage.

Six planning group meetings were held between August and December 2009. Members of the Planning Group also provided invaluable support on the day of the Forum.

1.3 2009 Forum Aims and Outcomes

According to the ABS 2006 Census, Inner Melbourne (including the Yarra City Council) had the highest rate of homelessness in Victoria and in the NWMR with 129 homeless per 10,000 people compared to an average rate of 44 homeless per 10,000 for Melbourne as a whole. 58% of Inner Melbourne's homeless population were tertiary homeless, ie, living in boarding/rooming houses; 19% were staying with family and friends, 18% were in homeless services and 4% were sleeping rough (Resolve Community Consulting, 2009b: 57, 104).

There are many services in Yarra working with people experiencing homelessness in some form and with people in marginalised accommodation. The abundance of services is a blessing for clients; however it can make it difficult for workers to know who everyone is and what each service does, particularly for new workers.

The aim for the 2009 Forum was to provide an opportunity for networking and for workers to get to know each other better. It was also an opportunity for collaborative work on service coordination amongst services in the homelessness sector in Yarra.

The Forum Planning Group agreed on the objectives and desired outcomes of the 2009 Forum which were as follows:

2009 Forum Objectives

1. Share information on programs, eligibility, assessment and service provision pathways.
2. Build relationships between agencies, programs and workers in Yarra, through face-to-face networking and relationship building opportunities.
3. Better practice in accessing the range of services for HACC eligible homeless people
4. Use innovative creative methods of achieving the above aims that stimulate, engage and inform workers.
5. Link in with the newsletter project to promote the Forum aims and outcomes.

2009 Forum Outcomes

1. More effective referrals for clients.
2. Reinforcement of common commitment to homeless people and improving their service utilisation;
3. Increased shared knowledge about homelessness, HACC services, and clients and their needs.
4. Increased access to HACC services for homeless people in Yarra.
5. Increased access for HACC clients to homeless services in Yarra.
6. Establish mechanisms for ongoing service collaboration and gain staff commitment to this process.



Expo Stalls

2. 2009 YARRA HACC AND HOMELESSNESS FORUM

The second Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum was held at Richmond Town Hall on 18 November 2009. Yarra City Council kindly donated the use of the venue.

2.1 Forum Promotion

Resolve developed an extensive email contact list for use for Forum promotion and newsletter distribution. The Forum invitation was sent out by email (see Attachment A) and forum information was included in the first newsletter that was published two weeks before the Forum. Resolve asked contacts to pass the Forum invitation onto their networks. Ruth Gordon, from Resolve, attended the October Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network meeting to promote the Forum.

2.2 Forum Attendance/Participation

The Planning group agreed to open up the Forum participant to a wider range of agencies than the 2008 Forum which only targeted HACC funded agencies. The 2009 Forum invitation was extended to a broader range of services working with homeless people in Yarra. 70 people participated in the Forum from 27 different agencies (see Attachment B for list of participating agencies). This included a small number of consumers from the Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education and Support Program.

2.3 Forum Program

The Forum program was developed by Resolve in conjunction with the Forum Planning Group. The final program is at Attachment C. The Planning Group decided not to have agency presentations at the 2009 Forum for a number of reasons including that it would be repetitive for those who attended the 2008 Forum; the quality of the presentations at the 2008 Forum varied; and it would be too time consuming with 27 agencies attending. Alternative methods of conveying the agency information were selected including the case study panel discussions, the agency booklet, the expo and more time for speed dating and informal networking to allow participants to seek information they were specifically interested in rather than presenting the same information to everyone. All speakers and panel members were kindly given gifts supplied by Yarra City Council.

Forum Speakers

The speakers were strategically chosen to provide information about the current homelessness policy context; provide an overview of service coordination policy and tools; and to give something back to support workers and improve morale. The Forum was opened by the Yarra City Mayor, Cr Amanda Stone. The speakers were:

- Marian Pettit, DHS, Homelessness Strategy Team speaking about the development of the new Victorian Homelessness Strategy, *Homelessness 2020*;
- Kerina Princi, NCMPCP, speaking about service coordination; and

- Adrienne James, Adrienne James Consulting, presenting *Nurturing Your Happiness*.

All Forum presentations are accessible on the HomeGround website at www.homeground.org.au/page-8-100-2ndYarraHACCandHomelessnessForum.htm .

Speed Dating

The speed dating activity was retained from the 2008 Forum although the set up and management of the activity was improved. The aim of this activity was to speed network and find out a little bit of information about a lot of people in a short time. Participants were encouraged to pick up conversations later in the day and ample time was provided through the day for informal networking.

Speed dating groups were strategically mixed by using different coloured dots on participants' name tags. This was to ensure a good mix of people in each group and to avoid groupings with too many people from the one agency. The speed dating was conducted standing in eight groups of 8-10 people each. Some of the groups conversed together standing in a circle and in other groups, participants paired off for more private conversations. Each method seemed successful. Each person was given three minutes to speak before a triangle was rung for people to change partners. The conversations were avid and enthusiastic which participants seemed to enjoy.

Case Study Panel Discussions

Two case study discussion panels were held – one focussing on a single adult case study and the second focussing on a family case study. The panels were facilitated by Ruth Gordon from Resolve. Panel members were selected to represent the variety of service responses and expertise available in Yarra. The panel members for the single adult case study were:

- Mal Doreian, Turning Point
- Alecia Clowes, ALERT
- Gail Heidke, HomeGround Services
- Nga To, City of Yarra, HACC

The panel members for the family case study were:

- Marnie Dixon, RDNS Homeless Persons Program,
- Lindy Parker, Women's Housing Limited,
- Gareth Rego, Student Welfare Officer, Collingwood College
- Katrina Doljanin and Jane Britten, North Yarra Community Health

The panel instructions are at Attachment D. The aim of the panel discussions was to demonstrate how the different services in Yarra work with clients with complex needs. The case studies were based on real clients. The sessions were to be interactive session with audience participation expected. Firstly each panel member gave a brief two minute presentation on how their service would respond to the complex needs of the client case study. Then the facilitator opened up for questions and comments from the audience asking how their services would respond to the case study. These sessions worked as planned with strong participation from the audience.

Workshops

Ten workshops were planned for the last session. The sessions were kindly facilitated by volunteers from local services. The topics were:

1. Interagency Protocols
2. Service Coordination in Mental Health
3. Training Issues and Ideas
4. Housing & Homelessness Service Coordination
5. Indigenous Service Coordination
6. Service Coordination for Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers
7. Responding to Homeless Families
8. Homelessness & Ageing
9. Homelessness & Disability
10. Health & Homelessness

Unfortunately the number of participants dropped sharply by this session and the number of workshops was reduced to seven with disability and ageing combining, and health and mental health combining. The indigenous workshop was not held due to a lack of participants and a facilitator. Despite the low numbers, discussion was extensive and enthusiastic and many ideas were produced.

The workshop questions are at Attachment E. In summary, the questions were on the following issues:

1. How can service coordination for homeless people in Yarra be strengthened?
2. What needs to happen in order to strengthen service coordination?
3. Which agencies should be involved?
4. What are the next steps?
5. Make 1-2 key recommendations for future work on this issue

2.4 Other Forum Activities

To complement the Forum an Agency Information Booklet was produced to collect and present agency information in a useful manner. An agency booklet had been planned to be disseminated after the 2008 Forum; however this did not occur. The aim of distributing the Agency Booklet at the Forum rather than after the Forum was in part to replace the agency presentations and for efficiency reasons. The Agency Booklet is also included on the HomeGround website together with the Forum presentations.

This booklet was produced as a service resource, with information from the majority of agencies represented at the Forum. Resolve developed an agency template which all agencies submitting information were required to use (see Attachment F). Information includes target group, contact details, referral processes, partnerships and networks, etc. There was also space at the back for notes and space for recording the contact details of contacts made at the Forum.

To supplement the Forum and offer additional information to participants, an agency Expo was held in conjunction with the Forum. Eight agencies had information stalls at the Expo which were in the same room as the Forum. Each stall was staffed before the Forum and during breaks to allow participants to ask questions and gather more information about these services.



Homelessness 2020 Presentation



Mayoral Welcome, Cr Amanda Stone, Yarra City Council

3. FORUM OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the Forum were assessed through an evaluation form collected at the end of the Forum (see G for copy of the Evaluation Form). Resolve also emailed the evaluation form after the Forum for those who had forgotten to fill it in. In total 33 evaluation forms were returned.

The outcomes of the Workshop discussions are also included in this section and provide many ideas for moving forward to improve service coordination in a range of areas relevant to homelessness in Yarra. In addition, the evaluation survey for the Yarra HACC and Homelessness Newsletter will include a small number of questions about the Forum to assess longer term outcomes. The results of this survey will be available in June 2010 and will complement the findings of this report.

3.1 Evaluation Results

General

- 73% of Forum 2009 participants had not participated in the 2008 Forum and 27% had participated in the 2008 Forum.
- 52% of respondents said that the Forum had increased their understanding of homelessness and HACC services in Yarra a great deal. 42% said their understanding had improved a little and 6% said the Forum had not improved their understanding of homelessness and HACC services in Yarra.
- 100% of respondents said they had met and got to know workers from other services at the Forum.
- 45% of respondents said that information from the Forum would assist them a great deal to make more effective referrals to other agencies in Yarra. 48% of respondents said that information from the Forum would assist them a little and only one respondent (3%) said the Forum would not help them at all to make more effective referrals.
- 22 respondents said they would like to receive the Yarra HACC and Homelessness newsletter and 2 said they would not like to receive the newsletter.
- 27 respondents (96%) said they would attend a similar Forum in 2010 and only 1 respondent (4%) said they would not attend a similar Forum in 2010.



Single Adult Case Study Discussion Panel

Forum Activity Ratings

Respondents were asked to give a score out of three for all of the Forum activities where 1 = very valuable, 2 = satisfactory; and 3 = unsatisfactory. The results are presented in the table below.

Forum Activity	Very Valuable	Satisfactory	Un-satisfactory
Homelessness 2020 Presentation, DHS	10	17	4
Service Coordination Presentation, NMPCP	10	12	9
Nurturing Your Happiness Presentation	17	4	4
Speed Dating	23	7	1
Case Study Panel Discussion – Single Adult	23	8	
Case Study Panel Discussion – Family	22	9	
Workshops	6	4	
Networking	23	7	
Expo	7	17	1
Agency Information Booklet	22	7	

The most valuable activities were Speed Dating, Networking, the Case Study Panel Discussions and the Agency Information Booklet all with 29-31 respondents finding these activities very valuable or satisfactory. The Forum presentations and Expo were generally satisfactory with 21-27 respondents finding these activities either very valuable or satisfactory. Unsatisfactory scores were few with nine respondents scoring the Service Coordination presentation unsatisfactory and four respondents finding the Homelessness 2020 and Nurturing Your Happiness presentations unsatisfactory. Ten respondents found the workshops valuable or satisfactory reflecting the low participation numbers in this final session.

Positive Aspects of the Forum

Forum participants were asked what they found most useful about the Forum. Responses included (number of respondents mentioning this issue in brackets):

- Time to network/networking (13)
- Case study discussions (9)
- Nurturing Your Happiness presentation (6)
- Speed dating (5)
- Agency Information Booklet (3)
- Meeting other workers (3)
- Learning about other services (3)
- Meeting people face to face who you knew over the phone (2)
- Number and range of different services (2)

- Expo (2)
- Meeting new workers and finding out about new services
- Homelessness 2020 discussion (2)

Some quotes from the feedback include:

The speed dating was better facilitated than last year.

The whole Forum was very useful

The Happiness workshop – good to have something light-hearted and uplifting.

Getting to know other services – how they work and what they do.

Speed dating – organised but relaxed easy communication.

Panels were fantastic.

Least Useful Aspects of the Forum

The least useful aspects of the Forum raised by respondents varied greatly. The least useful aspects were mainly:

- Service Coordination Presentation (9)
- Nurturing Your Happiness Presentation (2)
- Homelessness 2020 Presentation (2)

Some quotes from the feedback include:

(Re: Service Coordination Presentation) This information is readily available elsewhere and the content is familiar to many of us.

Re: Service Coordination Presentation) found it hard going at that time of the day – a lot to cover in that time and I am already aware of this as are most of the workers here.

I didn't feel like I learnt anything new.

Liked it all- was well balance

Case Conference panel wasn't particularly insightful.

Nurturing Your Happiness was sort of enjoyable but it was a strange mixture of evidence and superficiality. If I wanted to go to a personal development workshop I would have. It was an hour I could have been learning about addressing homelessness – it was not helpful.

Manu of the services who perhaps should have been here weren't.

Not enough about "homelessness". Too much emphasis on service coordination and care planning – implies that if services and clients worked more efficiently they could find housing but they can't.

(Re Homelessness 2020 presentation) DHS person left the Forum – it is important that they hear the discussion at the grass roots level. There was a lot of experience and knowledge in the room and she left.

Constructive feedback included:

- Having a shorter day with more interactive activities as it was a lot of information at once
- Need more balance - too much time for networking in the morning and too many back to back presentations in the afternoon.
- Shorter breaks.

Other Services that should be Involved in a Forum

16 respondents said that other services should be involved in such a Forum and two respondents said that other services should not be involved. Services that should be included:

- St Mary's House of Welcome (4)
- Police (2)
- Broader representation from HACC services and some complementary service providers;
- St Vincents Mental Health/Clarendon Clinic (2) Case Managers, MST, CAT and PDRSS;
- Centrelink, RecLink, YSAS, Good Shepherd (2), Hanover, Office of Housing, NW DoH HACC (one representative did attend), community legal centres, Wintringham, ARBIAS, NW Homelessness Network, hospitals;
- Ethnic organisations such as Australian Greek Welfare and Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare and refugee services;
- Domestic violence housing organisation/representative (note there were two participants from Women's Housing Limited, including representation on the Family Case Study Panel);
- Post prison services;
- Liquor suppliers;
- DHS policy makers and local council advocates; and
- Services in neighbouring areas.

Note that most of the above services were informed and invited to the Forum but did not attend.



Family Case Study Discussion Panel

Workshops and Areas of Interest

Issues	Workshop Attended	Area of Interest
Interagency Protocols	-	5
Training Issues & Ideas	2	6
Indigenous Service Coordination	2	5
Responding to Homeless Families	-	3
Homelessness and Disability	4	5
Service Coordination in Mental Health	4	7
Housing & Homelessness	1	7
Service Coordination for Refugees & Migrants		2
Homelessness & Ageing	2	4
Health & Homelessness	1	6

16 respondents attended workshops. Workshop numbers were low due to a drop in participation later in the day. The most popular areas of interest for further collaborative work were (number of respondents in brackets):

- Mental Health (7)
- Housing and Homelessness (7)
- Training (6)
- Health and Homelessness (6)
- Interagency protocols (5)
- Indigenous Service Coordination (5)
- Homelessness and Disability (5).

Forum Learnings and Applications

Respondents were asked what they learnt at the Forum. Answers included:

- Resources and agencies in the area (5)
- Communication (2)
- Networking (2)
- Diversity of services available across HACC and Homelessness (2)
- Understanding of housing issues
- Complexity of Aboriginal mothers' issues and sensitivity of approach required;
- Primary Care Partnerships
- Greater need for coordination
- Reinforced how different services work and can be involved to bring about better client outcomes
- Keeping up to date with procedures and issues in the sector
- Positive psychology information was valuable
- Handy reminder to use the SCTT tool

- An organisation should not work alone - importance of case coordination, networking and nurturing happiness
- Found out more about Aboriginal support agencies in the area
- How complex issues are for clients and workers.
- How difficult it is to offer adequate support without adequate accommodation, especially for families,
- How difficult it is to coordinate services
- How committed workers are
- Long way to go.

Respondents were asked how they will apply these learnings in their work. Answers included:

- By referring and gaining information from workers in specialised areas and making appropriate referrals to appropriate agencies (5)
- Extending networks (3)
- Role in advocacy
- Better/efficient/coordinated service response
- Understanding of range of services required
- Assist in developing more partnerships across service sectors
- Continue to help increase my knowledge of resources/services in Yarra
- Share information with team
- Remembering who does what
- Being happy and focus on internal happiness
- Connect with services like PHAMS and SHASP

Other ideas for Information Sharing and Collaboration

Participants were asked for their ideas for sharing information between HACC and homelessness services in Yarra. Ideas included:

- annual Forum (4)
- Central dedicated website where information/opportunities is updated regularly, program information, workers, referral pathways, etc perhaps linked to Yarra Council website (3)
- Training (2) opportunities for workers across sectors and services; shared training such as St Vincents strength-based training held last year
- Use Forum to make recommendations
- More networking opportunities with more services
- Advocacy – more housing stock, upgrade and regulate boarding houses
- service open days, worker placement/exchanges
- Newsletter will be useful
- Commercial advertisement
- Regional newsletter
- That agencies work together more with increased transparency

- A focus on housing stock and how to access
- Improve basic casework skills especially engagement.

Participants were asked for their ideas for increasing service collaboration between HACC and homelessness services in Yarra. Ideas included:

- Better communication (4) via email, phone and use of websites, resourcing of more communication positions in more service-delivery agencies and regular case discussions
- Forum could become a coordinated voice for the sector
- Bi-monthly or an update service directory that is continually updated
- More opportunities for cross-sector learning/communication
- Shared training/development across agencies
- Individual presentations from new or less known services
- Central agency forum meeting on a monthly basis
- Cluster model

Other Comments

Other comments about the Forum included:

Well organised (3)

Great venue (2)

Needs to be shorter – don't need 1 hour for lunch and breaks (2).

Perhaps make the Forum two half days (2)

Great work by all invested in putting program together – well done.

Well organised, good time keeping, excellent input by participants.

Well run and interesting.

Needs to start closer to 9am when everyone is sharp. Found the late afternoon hard going. Maybe do case studies in afternoon. Thank you – it was a great day.

Improvement on last year's – how do we get people to stay the whole day? If there was more housing available this forum would be less necessary. You could then have a Forum about care planning etc, but a Forum is needed about how to actually reduce homelessness.

Forum seemed to go for too long – better time management is needed.

I enjoyed it!

Happiness session was great.

Thanks

It was really great.

Would be great to see other Councils supporting these kinds of Forums.

Very interesting and well presented Forum, perhaps something similar for youth sector.

Back to basics/good practice and respect for client is still lacking.

Case studies and discussions stimulating and useful.

I found it to be motivating. It can get difficult in the sector and knowing that you are actively trying to collaborate is very helpful.

3.2 Workshop Results

Despite low attendance at the Workshop sessions, discussions were intense and productive. The results of the discussions are presented below.

Workshop 1. Interagency Protocols - Facilitator – Kerina Princi, NCMPCP

Interagency protocols can be developed around HACC and homelessness in Yarra around shared clients and co-ordinated outreach. Management support and establishing trust with other workers is necessary to develop effective interagency protocols. Agencies to be involved include Home Ground, North Yarra Community Health (NYCH), Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program (HPP).

The barriers to developing interagency protocols were identified as management support; aboriginal cultural awareness; trust and rapport; history – bad experiences; and relationships.

The next steps in developing interagency protocols are:

- Each representative to meet with representative line managers to gain upper management support;
- To discuss with respective agencies inter-agency protocols; and
- Managers across each agency to meet and reach agreement to develop protocols and reach agreement to work collaboratively.

Key Recommendation

Each key agency to meet to progress discussion on inter-agency protocols.

Workshop 3. Training Issues and Ideas - Facilitator – Sandy Milne, Council to Homeless Persons (4 participants).

The key training gaps in working with homeless people in Yarra are:

- Skills based training;
- Career development – project management, working with partnerships, presentation skills;
- Workshop-based activities around common themes – housing, referral, health, HACC, access to services etc; and
- Service co-ordination with other services, understanding how they work and what is available.

Multiple skills are required including - understanding systems, terminology, and philosophies; induction/orientation to service system; and advanced practitioner training as above. Currently training varies. Organisations can't always afford the

training so would be great to circulate/promote the opportunities that are available for example, those offered through VCOSS, Turning Point and Infoexchange e-lists on Pro Bono opportunities. The sector needs to consider accredited training that can be built on.

Ideas for developing a joint orientation program for new workers in homelessness in Yarra included:

- A City of Yarra-based induction rather than ad hoc system as now;
- 1 day per week rather than condensed course;
- HACC involvement;
- Whole of government approach;
- Staged approach to induction – opportunity for people to visit agencies at bi-annual open days etc. also shadowing/ mentoring opportunities that are promoted through the City of Yarra HACC/Housing and Homelessness Network - cross sector stuff;
- Comprehensive all agency resource online;
- Acronym explanation/ lexicon; and
- Professional/ career development training.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop a web based all-agency resource for City of Yarra Homeless Persons Services, inc. training opportunities.
2. Secondment/swapping/agency based opportunities with central facilitation – with opportunities also promoted through the Yarra Council HACC/ Homelessness groups.
3. Develop a web-based training calendar, maybe through Infoexchange.

Workshop 4. Housing and Homelessness Service Coordination - Facilitator – Anne Barton, Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network, City of Yarra (3 participants).

Service coordination in housing and homelessness in Yarra can be strengthened through:

- Communication;
- Face to face meetings and getting to know each other;
- Prioritising responses;
- Finding ways of understanding the range of available resources;
- Having universal assessment tool that is realistically directional;
- Goals that are understood by all and driven by client;
- Tools to work with differing values of different agencies; and
- Training that leads to consistency of values, methods and principles.

It is necessary to do the following to strengthen housing and homelessness service coordination:

- Focus on communication methods;
- Illumination and communication about services/programs;
- Funded positions that are designed to facilitate communication;
- More capacity on the ground to allocate resources rather than top down funding models, e.g. advocacy campaigns; and
- Sector wide training on assessment and case management that sets a standard for the Homelessness Service System (HSS).

HSS agencies need to be involved. The current lack of involvement may reflect lack of capacity and therefore there should be increased in resources to participate. The next steps include pushing for training on shared principles and values which should also include mainstream services; and setting up a system to inform mainstream services on housing and homeless issues and resources within a locality.

The Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network can facilitate this ideas through communicating with local resources to swap services, gather information on changes ask services what they need.

Key Recommendations

1. Be realistic and pragmatic about limits to housing and resources and its impact on day to day functioning of services.
2. Deliver training and forums to develop shared values and principles across organisations.

Workshop 6. Service Coordination for Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers -
Facilitator – Johanna Burns, HomeGround (2 participants).

Service coordination for homeless refugees and migrants in Yarra can be strengthened through:

- referrals between agencies;
- better transitions for people who are now permanent residents;
- Improving consistency from MRCs and settlement workers; and
- Provision of intensive case management services.

It is necessary to do the following to strengthen service coordination for homeless refugees and migrants:

- Hold a day like the HACC forum with refugee, asylum seeker and migrant services;
- Develop a minimum standard for housing services responses to ensure consistency for this client group; and
- Settlement services to provide education and commence doing some trans-cultural information and education for workers of other services.

Agencies to be involved include DHS, Department of Immigration, RDNS and local Community Health Centres, Health and Mental Health Providers, Foundation House, HomeGround, and Red Cross/ASRC/Hotham Mission. The next steps include addressing the need to provide ongoing coordinated services; DIAC to take some responsibility for developing minimum service standards for people from CALD backgrounds; and settlement services to provide clarity about the services they provide.

Key Recommendations

1. Housing service sector to commit to lobbying DIAC and Centrelink both one-on-one for individuals/ families and as a broader pathway to homelessness; and
2. RDNS and HomeGround to attend the Yarra Refugee and Asylum Seekers Network.

Workshop 8. Homelessness and Ageing - Facilitator – Adrian Murphy, Yarra City Council (3 participants).

Issues around housing and older people include:

- Property rental (owners selling) - five cases this year (availability/ affordability);
- Some older people enter low level care;
- Wintringham has a two year waiting list; and
- Elder abuse.

Service coordination for older homeless people in Yarra can be strengthened by improving access points for services and through bringing services together to strengthen individual capacity. Note that there is good commitment in the sector. A strong positive view about the level of interagency co-operation is required, together with ensuring that older people are brought into the full range of service opportunities available to strengthen service coordination for older homeless people.

Key Recommendations

1. Advocacy plus political action.
2. Develop different models/ funding arrangements for housing that address problems of housing affordability and availability especially in private/rental market and public housing.
3. Work out how to open up HACC services to people in rooming houses.

Workshop 9: Homelessness and Disability - Facilitator: Ro Roberts Yarra City Council (6 participants)

Disability and discrimination in public housing:

The OOH are responsible for things such as installing grab rails and stand alone showers for People With a Disability (PWD). OOH procedures categorise this as “special accommodation requirements” and in this way, PWD are seen as having “special needs” ie out of the norm and not like everyone else. It is very hard for PWD to get the modifications done because it is not approached as a human rights issue – your right to live in accessible accommodation - but as a “special case” issue that can be done at the discretion of the OOH. The whole system works against people getting these adaptations made. The onus is on the PWD to “prove that they have this “special need”. If turned down there is an appeals procedure that people must go through. If PWD are re-housed they have to go through the procedure of applying for “special requirements” all over again. OOH workers sometimes demonstrate their values that “you are lucky to be housed” in public housing. Attitudes can be discriminatory. This raises the question as to whether OOH workers have had disability awareness training.

The workshop discussed the issue of getting change in discriminatory practice. PWD have rights and can take action under the Equal Opportunity legislation if reasonable actions are not taken to remove discriminatory practices. However public tenants with a disability are often not in collectives where they could get some empowerment through group action. Yarra Council has a Disability Advisory Committee which has membership of community members who are strong advocates and provide powerful advice to Council on a wide range of access and inclusion issues. The meetings are open and people can attend as observers. There is an emphasis on community membership, but workers can come and present issues at the Committee. Some workshop attendees were interested in following up on this opportunity.

PWD in rooming houses particularly people with ABI are sometimes discriminated against. Residents can be pitted against one another.

Disability and public transport :

- Public transport can be very inaccessible to PWD.
- The wheelchair accessible bus needs to be “dialled up” and then you have to wait for it to arrive.

Key Recommendations

1. Collective action and advocacy to change discriminatory practices in public housing.
2. Explore capacity of the EEO legislation to give individuals legal redress in the face of discrimination.
3. Workers to attend the Council Disability Advisory Committee meeting to talk about their experiences of disability discrimination.
4. Develop a more collaborative relationship with OOH rather than an adversarial one.

Workshop 10. Health and Homelessness (2. Mental Health) - Facilitator – Julie Fry, RDNS Homeless Persons Program (7 participants).

Issues around health and mental health raised included that there are not enough open doors in mental health for immediate response from clinical or support services. PHAMS is a new service that is able to assist those without mental health diagnosis. The Yarra Mental Health Alliance includes all PDRS services and Clarendon clinic, Mental Illness Foundation, Nexus, Turning Point and other relevant services. The Alliance has a referral pathways document that may help agencies with referrals into services. HPP and the Cottage requested to join the Alliance at the Forum.

The following ideas strengthen service coordination for health, mental health and homeless services:

- Policy at St. Vincent’s mental health not to do discharge unless into accommodation – HomeGround is involved in discharge planning;
- The Yarra Mental Health Alliance could include more agencies (allied services); and
- Reading and contributing to Yarra services newsletter.

Any mental health/general health specialist homelessness services could be involved. The next step is establishing stronger networks and developing personal relationships and contacts.

Key Recommendations

1. The Cottage and RDNS HPP request to join Alliance is considered at the next meeting.
2. Continue to read and contribute to Yarra services newsletter.
3. Alliance to make available referral pathways document.



Workshop Discussion

4. LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the 2009 Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum ran smoothly and was enthusiastically supported by participants who found it provided an excellent opportunity for networking; provided them with useful information about other services that would assist in their work including in making more effective referrals; and provided a number of ideas for future collaborative work to improve outcomes for homeless people in Yarra.

There was strong support for holding an annual Forum and for providing a range of networking opportunities across the various sectors working with people experiencing homelessness in Yarra. Future forums should hold workshops earlier in the day to ensure greater participation. A shorter day with an earlier start and shorter breaks is suggested to overcome some of the timing issues from the 2009 Forum. It would also be worth considering reducing the number of more formal presentations and increasing the interactive sessions.

The Agency Information Booklet should be retained and made available at future Forums as this was seen as a useful and valuable resource. The Expo should also be retained and promoted to increase the number of agencies having stalls.

The Forum highlighted the importance of including and focusing on indigenous homelessness issues in Yarra, given the high representation of Indigenous service users and services in the Yarra area.

The Planning Group should consider other ways to maintain participation in areas of interest through existing networks such as the Yarra Mental Health Alliance and the Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network, and through other collaborative projects such as a website, training, etc.

It should be noted that the recommendations listed below require adequate resourcing to be developed and implemented effectively. Workers across a range of sectors working with people experiencing homelessness generally do not have the capacity currently to undertake most of these recommendations without additional resources.

Resolve Community Consulting makes the following recommendations to the Planning Group based on the findings of this report:

Recommendation 1: *Hold the Forum annually, maintaining an interactive format complemented by the expo and Agency Information Booklet (to be updated annually).*

Recommendation 2: *Consider involving homeless people in the development and delivery of future Forums and/or associated collaborative activities.*

Recommendation 3: *Continue to make resources from the Forum and associated activities available the HomeGround and Yarra City Council websites.*

Recommendation 4: Continue to include a broad range of services for people experiencing homelessness in Yarra in future Forums and associated activities.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that indigenous issues continue to be addressed through future Forums and associated activities.

Recommendation 6: Consider utilising the Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network to advocate for and develop training opportunities including for new workers and experienced practitioners.

Recommendation 7: Consider utilising the Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network to take the responsibility for driving the development of interagency protocols for services working with people experiencing homelessness in Yarra.

Recommendation 8: Consider other ways to increase collaborative opportunities in across different sectors, including newsletters, websites, regular workshops and email discussion groups and providing a range of networking opportunities, both formal and informal, including future Forums.



Speed Dating Session



Expo Stall

5. REFERENCES

Resolve Community Consulting, 2009a, *Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum Survey Report*, Prepared for Yarra City Council & HomeGround Services.

Resolve Community Consulting, 2009b, *HACC and Homelessness in the North West Metropolitan Region Project, Final Report*, prepared for the Council to Homeless Persons.