

HACC & Homelessness in Yarra

Coordinating Services for Better Outcomes

Outcomes of the Second Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum 18 November 2010

On behalf of Yarra City Council, HomeGround Services, RDNS Homeless Persons Program, North Yarra Community Health and Inner North West PCP with Funding from the Department of Health, NWMR.

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Forum Participants

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. Resolve Community Consulting was contracted by the Yarra City Council and HomeGround Services in May 2009 to conduct a survey to gather evidence of the medium term outcomes from the forum and to gather ideas for future work in improving service relationships between HACC and homeless services in the Yarra area. 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. There was very strong support for repeating the Forum in some form and a range of other ideas for possible collaborative activities received support from survey respondents, including a regular newsletter.

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 holding 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.

The 2009 HACC and Homelessness Forum took place on 18 November 2009 at the Richmond Town Hall. Resolve's analysis of participant feedback and outcomes of the Forum were presented in a report to Yarra City Council and HomeGround Services. The report found that the Forum had run smoothly and had been

enthusiastically supported by participants who had 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 areas for future collaborative work to improve outcomes for homeless people in Yarra (Resolve Community Consulting, 2009:23).

There was strong support for an annual forum and for providing networking opportunities to workers across the various sectors working with people experiencing homelessness in Yarra. A number of suggestions were made around the forum format, including having a shorter day and increasing the interactive nature of the program.

Resolve's report made eight recommendations for running future events. They were:

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.

Yarra City Council and HomeGround Services approached the Department of Health, North West Metropolitan Region to provide funding to hold a third Forum. The request was approved and the Forum Planning Team reappointed Resolve Community Consulting to coordinate the event for 2010.

Resolve was also contracted to produce the five email newsletters to supplement the work of the Forum. The newsletters were published between October 2009 and June 2010 and focussed on promoting service coordination and networking between HACC and homeless services in Yarra and on supporting the work of the 2009 Forum. Copies of the newsletter are available on the HomeGround Services website.

Newsletter readers were surveyed in May 2010 and an evaluation report of the newsletter was provided to NCMPCP in June 2010. The report found that the newsletter had achieved its objectives including supporting the work of the 2009 Forum and that the vast majority of readers supported the concept of a future forum. Readers overwhelmingly reported that the 2009 Forum had provided them with excellent opportunities for much-valued networking and partnership creating and that it had significantly enhanced their social networks (Resolve Community Consulting, 2010).

1.2 2010 Forum Planning

A Forum Planning Group was established in 2009 to oversee the Forum planning and support Resolve Community Consulting. This group reconvened to coordinate the 2010 Forum. The Planning Group consisted of:

- Ro Roberts, Aged and Disability Services, Yarra City Council;
- Anne Barton, Community Planning and Advocacy, Yarra City Council
- Lorrinda Hamilton, HomeGround Services;
- Nicole Warr, HomeGround Services;
- Julie Fry, Royal District Nursing Homeless Persons Program;
- Katrina Doljanin, North Central Primary Care Partnership; and
- Georgia Savage, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership.

Six planning group meetings were held at HomeGround Services offices between July and December 2010. Members of the Planning Group also provided invaluable support on the day of the Forum.

1.3 2010 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.

Consistent with the 2009 Forum, the aim for the 2010 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 that the objectives and desired outcomes of the 2010 Forum should be the same as for the 2009 Forum. The objectives and outcomes were:

2010 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.

2010 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.



Speed Dating with Expo stalls in Background

2. 2010 YARRA HACC AND HOMELESSNESS FORUM

The third Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum was held at Fitzroy Town Hall on Thursday 18 November 2010. Yarra City Council kindly donated the use of the venue.

2.1 Forum Promotion

Since its involvement in the Forum and Newsletter projects, Resolve had developed an extensive email contact list for use for Forum promotion and newsletter distribution. In 2010 Resolve moved away from the previous year's paper-based registration process and employed an electronic registration process using the web-based data collection service Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). An electronic registration form was prepared online. A web link to the form was sent to the contact database via email. Registrants simply 'clicked' on the link and were taken to a Survey Monkey webpage where they could complete an electronic registration form. To further promote the Forum, the email invited contacts to pass the Forum invitation onto their networks.

Ruth Gordon contributed an article about the Forum to the October edition of the Council to Homeless Person's Parity magazine. The magazine's theme for that edition, 'Come Together: Integrating the Response to Homelessness' had obvious synergy with the Forum's service coordination focus and provided an excellent opportunity for promoting the Forum.

Preliminary Forum information was provided in the fifth 'HACC and Homelessness in Yarra' newsletter that was published in June 2010.

2.2 Forum Attendance/Participation

The 2010 Forum invitation was extended to people working in HACC and homeless services in Yarra. 93 people registered for the Forum and 96 actually participated on the day (including the Planning Team and two Resolve staff). Staff and workers from 38 different agencies were represented (see Attachment A for list of participating agencies) including a number of agencies from outside the Yarra area participated.

2.3 Forum Program

The Forum program was developed by Resolve in conjunction with the Forum Planning Group. Findings from Resolve's report on the 2009 Forum were used to inform the Planning Group in developing the 2010 Forum program particularly with regard to content, duration and focus. Feedback received from the 2009 Forum showed that participants would prefer future Forums to have:

- A shorter day with an earlier start and shorter breaks;
- Workshops to be held early in the day;
- A range of networking opportunities;
- Fewer formal presentations and more interactive sessions;
- Retention of the Agency Information Booklet and the Expo, with more agencies having Expo stalls; and
- A focus on Indigenous homeless issues, given the high representation of Indigenous service users and services in the Yarra area.

The Planning Group decided that the 2010 Forum would focus on three themes, namely **Housing, Indigenous Service Coordination and Mental Health**. The final program is at Attachment B.

The Forum day was shortened from its 2009 duration of 8.30am – 4.30pm with two breaks totalling 90 minutes to 8.30am – 2pm with two breaks totalling 60 minutes. Seven workshops were offered and were held at 12.30pm for 40 minutes (in 2009 they were held at 3.30pm and ran for 55 minutes).

Three speakers delivered twenty-minute presentations on Housing, Indigenous Service Coordination and Mental Health. A single panel on Yarra Service Innovation showcased five service innovations.

Speed dating was retained and workshops were held 'in the round' to maximise networking potential. Morning tea and lunch were delivered buffet style, again offering networking possibilities and social interaction between workers.

The Expo was retained, with eleven agencies holding Expo stalls. The Agency Information Booklet was not repeated due to the resourcing required to collate the information. The 2009 Agency Information Booklet is available on the HomeGround website.

This year, as a small gesture of appreciation for workers efforts in the field, ten-minute hand and neck and shoulder massages were offered by two reflexologists. The hand massages were delivered during the breaks while, in an effort to maximise participants opportunities to take advantage of the service, the masseurs moved around the room offering head and neck massages during the workshop. 42 participants in total availed themselves of the massage.

All speakers, panel members and workshop facilitators were kindly given gifts supplied by Yarra City Council.



Mayoral Welcome, A/g Mayor, Cr Geoff Barbour, Yarra City Council

Forum Speakers

A Welcome to Country was delivered by Wurrundjeri elder, Auntie Di Kerr and the Forum was opened by the acting Yarra City Mayor, Cr Geoff Barbour. Three speakers were chosen to support the three themes of Housing, Indigenous Service Coordination and Mental Health. The speakers were:

- Michelle Burrell, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons, reviewing the Victorian Homelessness Strategy 'Homelessness 2020';
- Graeme Fletcher, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (VACCHO), speaking about Indigenous Service Coordination; and
- Brad Wynne, Manager Community Mental Health, Clarendon Community Mental Health Centre, presenting an overview of the centre's Mental Health Shared Care Model.



Ro Roberts, Yarra City Council, thanks Michelle Burrell, Council to Homeless Persons



Graeme Fletcher, VACCHO



Brad Wynne, Clarendon, Clarendon Community Mental Health Centre

All Forum presentations are available on the HomeGround website.

Speed Dating

The speed dating activity was a popular activity at previous Forums and thus was retained. 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. 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 same agency. The speed dating was conducted standing in eight groups of 10-12 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. In some cases, people did change partners and in others, the conversations continued uninterrupted. The conversations were avid and enthusiastic which participants seemed to enjoy. Many participants took the opportunity to pick up conversations during lunch which was an informal buffet.



Speed Dating

Panel Discussion

A discussion panel was held on the topic on Yarra Service Innovation (in 2009 there had been two panel activities which had resulted in a longer day). The panel was facilitated by Ruth Gordon from Resolve. Panel members were selected to represent service innovations currently available in Yarra. The panel members and their services were:

- Street to Home - Theresa Swanborough, RDNS Homeless Persons Program
- Housing First – Heather Holst, HomeGround Services
- Indigenous Service Coordination – Colin Hunter, Yarra City Council
- Peer Education & Support Program – Cassandra Bawden, Council to Homeless Persons
- Youth Precinct – Sherri Bruinhout, Melbourne Citymission

The panel questions are at Attachment C. The aim of the panel discussions was to provide an overview of some of the service innovations currently operating in the Yarra area. Panel members were instructed to give a five-minute presentation on their service model with specific focus on how their service approach is innovative or different and what can be learned from their service model about service coordination. The panel presentations were varied and informative however the presenters ran over time and as such there was no time for questions from the audience. This was disappointing as it lessened the interactive nature of the panel.



Yarra Service Innovation Panel

Workshops

Seven workshops were planned for the last session. The sessions were kindly facilitated by volunteers from local services. In contrast to 2009, this year's workshops were well attended, with 65 attendees participating. The topics were:

1. Mental Health Service Coordination
2. Housing First
3. Disability, Homelessness and Rights
4. Indigenous Service Coordination
5. Youth Homelessness
6. Consumer Participation
7. Health & Homelessness

In 2009, the Indigenous Service Coordination workshop was cancelled due to a lack of participants. In contrast, the 2010 Indigenous Service Coordination workshop had 16 participants, the most of all workshops.

Regrettably, a lack of willing participants meant that the Consumer Participation workshop did not go ahead.

Discussion was extensive and enthusiastic and many ideas were produced. The workshop questions are at Attachment D. 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.



Indigenous Service Coordination Workshop

2.4 Other Forum Activities

Participant Folder

Upon registering, participants were provided with a participant folder. The folder contained:

- Program;
- Evaluation Sheet;
- Issue 5 of the 'HACC & Homelessness in Yarra' newsletter;
- Forum Resource List, providing links to Yarra HACC & Homelessness project resources and Forum partners' websites; and
- Pen and notepad.

Other materials distributed at the Forum included the October edition of the Council to Homeless Persons' 'Parity' magazine and the Department of Human Services' Victorian Homelessness Strategy 2020 'A Better Place: Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy'.

In 2009 an Agency Information Booklet was distributed at the Forum. The aim of the booklet was to complement the Forum by collecting and presenting agency contact and service information in an easy-to-use manner. The Planning Group chose not to include a booklet at this year's Forum. While Resolve's report on the 2009 Forum had found that the booklet was a valuable source of service information, the time spent preparing the booklet the previous year was significant and it was felt that most of the information was already widely available through existing networks and resources. Furthermore, the 2010 Newsletter Evaluation Report had found that the booklet was not widely used by respondents.

Expo

To supplement the Forum and offer additional information to participants, an agency Expo was held. Eleven agencies hosted information stalls which were held 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. Agencies that hosted expo stalls were:

- ACSO;
- CarerLinks North/Merri Community Health Service;
- Council to Homeless Persons;
- HomeGround ;
- North Yarra Community Health;
- Melbourne General Practice Network;
- RDNS Homeless Persons Program;
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre;
- The Cottage;
- St Vincent's Mental Health Service; and
- Yarra City Council.



North Yarra Community Health Expo Stall

Hand Massage

Two reflexologists were employed to provide ten-minute hand massages to participants. The reflexologists, Margaret Meyer from Aromatic Skincare Therapies and Robyn Lyons from Mind Body Sole, attended the Forum for the duration of the event. Massages were a mixture of hand massages and neck and shoulder massages and were delivered both during breaks and, in an effort to maximise access to the service, during the workshops. 42 participants in total availed themselves of the massage.



Hand Massage



Conference Participants

3. FORUM OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the Forum were assessed through an evaluation form collected at the end of the Forum (see Attachment E for a 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 29 evaluation forms were returned from a total of 96 participants.

Attempts to increase the proportion of evaluation forms filled in by forum participants should be made in future years. The form could be shortened, even to one page; the planning group members could prompt participants to fill in the form and time could be set aside in the program to complete the evaluation form.

The outcomes of the Workshop discussions are 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.

3.1 Evaluation Results

From the 29 evaluation forms completed, the following findings were made.

Forum Attendance

- 6 of the 29 evaluation form respondents (21%) had participated in the 2009 Forum.
- 22 respondents (76%) said they would attend a similar in the future while only two respondents (7%) said they would not.

Outcomes

- 100% of respondents said they had improved their understanding of homelessness and HACC services in Yarra, with 19 (66%) respondents saying the Forum had increased their understanding a great deal while 10 (34%) said their understanding had improved a little.
- 100% of respondents said they had met and got to know workers from other services at the Forum.
- 83% of respondents said that information from the Forum would assist them to make more effective referrals, with 13 respondents (45%) saying the information would assist them a great deal to other agencies in Yarra. 11 respondents (38%) said that information from the Forum would assist them a little and only two respondents (7%) said the Forum would not help them at all to make more effective referrals.

Newsletter Readership

- 11 respondents (38%) reported reading the Yarra HACC and Homelessness newsletters in 2009 and 2010 while 13 respondents (45%) indicated that they had not read them (potentially because they may not have been on the email list to receive them).
- 22 respondents (76%) said they would like to receive future Yarra HACC and Homelessness newsletters and 2 (7%) said they would not like to receive the newsletter.



Sherri Bruinhout, Melbourne Citymission



Colin Hunter, Yarra City Council



Heather Holst, HomeGround



Cassandra Bawden, CHP



Theresa Swanborough, RDNS HPP

Forum Activity Ratings

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

Forum Activity	Very Valuable	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Homelessness 2020 Presentation, CHP	20	7	2
Indigenous Service Coordination Presentation, VACCHO	15	13	1
Mental Health Shared Care Model Presentation, Clarendon CMHC	17	11	1
Speed Dating	13	11	5
Yarra Service Innovation Panel	15	10	3
Workshops	14	12	-
Networking	19	8	1
Expo	11	14	3
Hand Massage	9	8	2

The most highly rated activities were the Homelessness 2020 Presentation, the Networking, and the Mental Health Shared Care Model Presentation, with 17-20 respondents citing these activities as ‘very valuable’ and a further 7-11 respondents rating them as ‘satisfactory’.

The Indigenous Service Coordination Presentation, the Yarra Service Innovation Panel, and the Workshops were highly rated overall, with 25-28 respondents finding these activities either very valuable or satisfactory. With the exception of Hand Massage, every activity received a rating of either very valuable or satisfactory by at least 24 respondents.

17 of the 19 respondents that rated the Hand Massage found it very valuable or satisfactory. 10 respondents indicated that they had not received a hand massage and were therefore unable to rate this activity.

Unsatisfactory scores were few, with five respondents scoring the Speed Dating as unsatisfactory and three respondents finding the Expo unsatisfactory.

Positive Aspects of the Forum

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

- Networking (10)
- Learning about different services/programs available (4)
- Homelessness 2020 presentation (4)
- Indigenous Service Coordination presentation (3)
- Meeting people from different services (3)
- Speed dating (2)
- Workshop - Indigenous Service Coordination (2)
- Workshop – Health and Homelessness (1)
- Workshop – Housing First (1)
- Mental Health Shared Care Model presentation (1)
- Yarra Service Innovation Panel (1)
- Learning about housing and homelessness issues (1)
- Learning about homeless strategies and organisations (1)
- Information sharing (1)
- Examples of service innovations (1)
- Learning about organisations and their perspectives (1)

Some quotes from the feedback include:

I learned a lot about homeless strategies and organisations

Graeme from VACCHO was interesting. Felt he spoke honestly and explained the challenges for the organisation

Hearing about the new and fantastic programs and ideas from services

Great to hear a critical perspective from Michelle Burrell. I get really sick of speakers from DHS who come and talk about policies that have not been thought through! Great to see someone thinking laterally about the issues!!

Least Useful Aspects of the Forum

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

- Speed Dating (3)
- Time restraints (2)
- Too many speakers (2)
- Yarra Service Innovation Panel (2)

- Dry/dull (2)
- Acoustics in the room (2)
- Indigenous Service Coordination Presentation (1)
- Hand massage (1)
- Use of PowerPoint presentations (1)
- Not enough networking (1)
- No one present in the Consumer Participation Workshop (1)
- Workshop – Health and Homelessness (1)
- Politicians talking about reforms (1)
- Lack of focus (1)

Some quotes from the feedback include:

Found it very dry, not very interesting. Too much rhetoric, no passion or inspiration

Too many managers. I would like to hear from workers and clients

Not enough time to network – a bit rushed

It was difficult to hear some of the speakers. Perhaps the room was too big

Too many speakers. A bit long and dull

Speed dating needed to be more organised e.g. as simple as setting up the chairs

Constructive feedback included:

- Having a central theme or focus to concentrate on.
- Need a smaller, more intimate room with better acoustics.
- Having fewer speakers and more time to network.
- Having a more structured space for speed dating.

Other Services that should be Involved in a Forum

13 respondents (45%) said that other services should be involved in such a Forum while six respondents (21%) said that other services should not be involved. Two respondents (7%) were unsure and eight respondents (27%) declined to comment. Services that should be included were named as (*Denotes a service that did attend the Forum). :

- Schools (2);
- State and Federal Government funding bodies* (2);
- Other CALD communities* (1)
- Users of homeless services, to contribute their own experiences* (1);
- ACSO* (1);
- Carers (1);
- Aboriginal services* (1);
- PDRS services* (1);
- Prison and correctional services (1);
- Office of Housing* (1);
- Clarendon Clinic* (1);
- MAYSAR (1);
- Aged Care Assessment Services* (1);

- General Practitioners (1);
- Members of Parliament (1);
- Media (1); and
- Council services*(1);

Many of the services mentioned were informed and invited to the Forum. Some actually attended but some did not. Perhaps a list of attendees/attending services should be available in the Forum folder to assist with networking.

Workshops and Areas of Interest

Issues	Workshop Attended	Area of Interest
Mental Health Service Coordination	5	12
Housing First	4	8
Disability, Homelessness and Rights	-	4
Indigenous Service Coordination	10	10
Youth Homelessness	1	7
Consumer Participation	Not held	6
Health and Homelessness	6	10

26 respondents (90%) reported attending workshops from a total of 65 participants who attended the workshops. Consistent with total workshop attendance figures, the most highly attended workshops by respondents were Indigenous Service Coordination (10 respondents from a total of 16 participants), Health and Homelessness (6 respondents from a total of 15 participants) and Mental Health Service Coordination (5 respondents from a total of 13 participants).

The four most popular areas of interest for further collaborative work were (number of respondents in brackets):

- Mental Health Service Coordination (12);
- Indigenous Service Coordination (10);
- Health and Homelessness (10); and
- Housing First (8).

Other suggestions for future collaborative work were:

- Schools and adult education and training bodies as part of greater focus on primary prevention (3); and
- Ageing and Homelessness (1).

Workshop Learnings and Applications

Respondents were asked what they learnt in the workshops. Answers included:

- Information and services available (4)
- Breadth of services available (2)
- Other initiatives and models (2)
- Importance of available alliances (2)
- Indigenous services (2)
- Services available to police in Yarra (1)

- Unique challenges facing Yarra (1)
- Complexity of the issues (1)
- Referral pathways (1)
- Benefits of outreach as an engagement strategy (1)
- Grass roots ideas and methodologies (1)
- Issues affecting service delivery (1)
- Sharing information with agencies to better support clients (1)
- The importance of trust, time and patience when working with the Indigenous community (1)
- Better communication is need to deliver coordinated care plans between services (1)
- Housing First model rather than first housing (1)
- Importance of service integration (1)
- Youth Precinct (1)
- There is a lot to do (1)
- A little I didn't already know (1)
- Not much (1)

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

- Having a broader understanding of issues and their context (2)
- Thinking outside the square and doing things more innovatively (1)
- Sharing client information with other services to improve outcomes (1)
- Being more active in local area networks and alliances (1)
- Better promoting mainstream services to the Indigenous community (1)
- Employing more Indigenous workers (1)
- Inviting services to join the Yarra Alliance (1)
- Sharing Yarra initiatives, learnings and experiences with INWPCP (1)
- Distributing information (1)
- Making referrals to appropriate services (1)
- Advocating for more housing stock (1)
- Keeping contact with workers post-Forum (1)
- Concentrating on communication (1)
- Talking with team about youth focus (1)
- Educating colleagues (1)
- Networking more (1)

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:

- An online referral and networking database e.g. Infoxchange S2S (2)
- Regular Forums (2)
- More regular agency get-togethers (1)
- An electronic Alliance newsletter (1)

- Virtual web-based pin-up board (1)

- Area information sheet (1)
- Less talk, more action (1)
- A speed-dating event around lunch or morning tea (1)
- Develop service protocol similar to CBD Health and Homelessness one (1)
- Involvement in Community Mental Health Planning and Service initiative (1)

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

- More coordination of services (2)
- Regular forums (2), held in a more intimate setting
- More funding for housing (1)
- Invite workers that are new to Yarra to future forums (1)
- More communication (1)
- One-file policy – all services involved with a client share a single digital file and meet together at least once a year (1)
- Work on developing a virtual web-based pin-up board (1)
- Regular network meetings involving more stakeholders (1)

Other Comments

Other comments about the Forum included:

Thanks for running it. Your efforts were appreciated!

Thanks for putting it on.

Great lunch

Great!

Very good!

Good!

Need more time for the 'workshops' - they shouldn't be called workshops as it's misleading

Potential to collaborate with workers beyond Yarra to share learnings e.g. Moreland Hume Homelessness Network

Start on time and have some conversation-generation questions already prepared for the Service Innovation Panel

Was a little bit hard to hear. The room seemed too big

Sound was poor and distracted from content of presentations

It has great potential – is it about presentations or a 'just getting to know you'?

I don't want to attend again. Not of much use to me as I am very familiar with services in Yarra

Topics that Should be Covered in Future Forums

Respondents were asked if there were topics they would like to see in future forums. Topics that were mentioned included:

- Services for elderly homeless men and women (1)
- Having a specific theme/focus (1)
- Family and carer support networks (1)
- Whole of health approach (1)
- Recreation (1)
- Updates on the progress and success of initiatives and programs (1)
- The value of case management for people experiencing homelessness (1)
- Indigenous specific themes around homelessness (1)
- Ability of acute hospitals with non-mental health focus (1)

3.2 Workshop Participation and Findings

Attendance at the Workshop sessions was significantly higher at this year's Forum, with 65 attendees participating in 2010 as opposed to just 16 in 2009. The Indigenous Service Coordination workshop was the most widely attended of all workshops, with 16 participants. Discussion was vigorous and productive. The results of the discussions are presented below.

Workshop 1. Service Coordination in Mental Health

Facilitator - Joan Clarke, Yarra Mental Health Alliance (13 participants)

Service coordination in mental health for homeless people in Yarra can be strengthened via the use of a single client case file, better interagency worker communications and regular shared case management catch-ups. Client reports and assessments should be shared between agencies and there should be more information passed on from the Department of Justice.

Digitalisation and electronic case management can assist with service coordination. Info Exchange www.infochange.net.au has a referral system called S2S that could be worth investigating. More information-sharing forums and a strengthening of the Yarra Mental Health Alliance would be valuable.

The barriers to service coordination in mental health were identified as a lack of a shared 'language' (too many acronyms), intellectual property issues and the need for confidentiality and consent.

Service coordination in mental health should involve all agencies that work with clients, including schools and a single coordinator should be appointed to keep track of what services are involved with the client. Education around mental health issues and what services are available is vital.

The next steps in strengthening service coordination in mental health are to:

- Strengthen alliances and create meaningful and effective partnerships;
- Involve schools in the mental health service coordination dialogue;
- Appoint service coordinators; and
- Promote advocacy, where services unite around ideas.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop an inter-agency information release/exchange protocol.
2. Develop a resource register.
3. Promote services and projects more widely.

Workshop 2. Housing First - Facilitator – Heather Holst, HomeGround Services
(10 participants)



Health and Homelessness Workshop

The key Housing First initiatives in Yarra and Melbourne are:

- Common Ground – offering housing and onsite support, with controlled entry;
- Yarra Space – using existing Yarra Community Housing rooming house stock and overlaying onsite support services, with some agencies considering onsite location e.g. RDNS, HomeGround, St Vincent’s Mental Health, ACSO and physical health; and
- Permanent housing being offered as a first option.

The key issues around Housing First in Yarra were identified as:

- A poor supply of quality permanent housing;
- The location of the current housing stock;
- Lack of support for the ‘Housing First’ concept – some believe that people need to be ‘fixed’ before receiving housing;
- Recognising the cost/benefit of providing permanent housing i.e. better long-term outcomes;

- Advocating consumer choice i.e. making a range of housing options available to suit individuals' needs;
- Service coordination among support organisations; and
- Using MOU's between organisations to help mitigate the impact on service coordination of high staff turnover rates.

These issues could be best managed by creating networks and building on existing agency partnerships. The agencies that should be involved in this were identified as:

- Housing (outreach);
- Mental Health (clinical);
- Indigenous services;
- PDRSS (outreach);
- Emergency services;
- Physical and Community Health;
- Forensic specialists (ACSO); and
- Peer educators.

Other suggestions for supportive housing in Yarra included 'dry' and 'wet' housing (re drug and alcohol use) and that services should work together to advocate to Government for supportive housing policy.

Key Recommendations

1. Agencies develop a single voice to advocate to Government and the 'Nation Building' policy for the provision of housing stock in a timely manner and the availability of funding for support roles.
2. Expand consumer/peer support roles into community housing situations, providing formal advocacy and management and ensuring standards are maintained.

Workshop 3. Disability, Homelessness and Rights - Facilitator – Ro Roberts, Yarra City Council (6 participants)

The Charter of Human Rights affects service coordination for people with a disability who experience or who are at risk of homelessness by requiring organisations to demonstrate that they have considered appropriate access to their services by people with disabilities and the services supporting them. It was noted that there were few links between disability services and housing, particularly in the acute hospital sector, that there was often a significant wait for access to services by people with a disability and that organisations had introduced more stringent requirements, insisting that people prove their disability.

SHASP indicated that they had used the Charter to push for human rights for a tenant with a disability. Apparently, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission have developed an easy-to-use complaints service and will support individuals who may not feel confident about the process of making a complaint.

Service coordination in Yarra for homeless people with a disability could be strengthened by better communication among organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, HomeGround and North East Housing and by continuity of care for clients. It was noted that the use of a single point of entry for homeless services was very slow and that the high staff turnover in services affected continuity of care.

Discussion turned to the barriers to people with disabilities securing modifications to their public housing. It was pointed out that the needs of people with disabilities fell between the cracks because there was no link between the Department of Health (Disability) and the Office of Housing; systems are paper-based and bureaucratic; and people are required to 'prove' their disability, often necessitating multiple doctors letters. The Office of Housing had become punitive in its approach, requiring tenants with disabilities to provide ever-growing amounts of proof that they required adaptations or modifications to make their accommodation accessible. Several participants noted that they had written letters of support for clients, one of whom was told that it would be preferable for their client to relocate than for the Office of Housing to undertake the fit-out.

Communication and trust between services and people with disabilities was compromised by a lack of trained workers and the tendency to employ casual workers and locums who, due to the transient nature of their work, rarely receive specialised training in disability rights and issues.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop a holistic, client-focussed service that is proactive and streamlined.
2. Develop a generic assessment tool that incorporates disability, housing and medical issues and requirements.
3. Develop a client self-assessment tool for service access that is goal focussed.

Workshop 4. Indigenous Service Coordination - Facilitator – Colin Hunter, Yarra City Council (16 participants)

Service coordination for Indigenous homeless people in Yarra can be strengthened by:

- Rapid and immediate response to need – if ATSI people do not receive services, they tend not to go elsewhere and as a result will go without and then 'fall through the cracks';
- Addressing need at its various stages;
- Social inclusion;
- Involving employment services in service coordination, as Indigenous people with skills may need employment support and/or access to additional training in order to use their skills; and
- Greater employment and training of ATSI people to work with ATSI people.

For service coordination to be strengthened there needs to be:

- Trust built between the ATSI population and services;
- Community outreach;
- More Indigenous workers, giving Aboriginal people a louder voice; and

- Pathways through services that are clearer and stronger, eventually allowing ATSI people to contribute to society in their own right;

Trust was identified as a key barrier to service coordination and was important at an individual and an organisational level. It was noted that a lack of trust extended to within the Aboriginal service network, with certain Indigenous agencies not trusting each other. The presence of trust would allow the use of a strengths-based model to be employed when working with Indigenous people.

Outreach services and the Yarra Aboriginal Services Network must be involved, as must organisations that can influence political and public opinion. 'White' services need to understand that change will only occur where there are ATSI people working for and with ATSI people.

The next steps include trust building and a change in culture, providing culturally appropriate housing for ATSI people, freeing up more housing stock and using new media and technologies to generate change.

Key Recommendations

1. A 20-bed Indigenous detoxification unit, ready-to-go when clients are.
2. Adapting existing service models to be more culturally relevant to ATSI people, including a mandatory cultural awareness policy for health services.
3. Use new media to effect change in public awareness/opinion around homelessness.
4. Services work together to create a cohesive, integrated set of initiatives, thereby creating a shared vision and reducing the competition for funding.

Workshop 5. Youth Homelessness - Facilitator – Sherri Bruinhout, Melbourne Citymission (5 participants)

Service coordination for young homeless people in Yarra can be strengthened through involving more services in the Melbourne Youth Services forum (believed to take place on the second Thursday of every second month). The forum offers services excellent opportunities for networking and collaboration. To maximise the youth forum's effectiveness, a coordinator needs to be appointed (potentially a local council role) who would be responsible for sending meeting invitations and reminders, setting agenda, taking and distributing the minutes and maintaining the contacts database. Provision of lunch would be a great incentive for people to attend. The forum format should offer the opportunity for presentations, information sharing and also an opportunity to point out gaps in services and what is not working. The service network should work collaboratively for funding (as opposed to competing) and take on an advocacy role where there are issues of collective concern. Opportunities should be created to orient people into the sector and bring people together, especially new workers. Suggestions include open days for services and agency-to-agency bus tours.

Local council is well positioned to manage youth homeless service coordination while the new Youth Precinct will be a strong contributor to the sector. Agencies that should be involved in the Melbourne Youth Services network include:

- HomeGround and other housing/accommodation providers;
- Schools and alternative education providers;
- Community health centres;
- Social Studio;
- YSAS;
- Smith Family; and
- REACH (Jim Steins Youth Mentoring).

The next step is to establish or re-energise a 'Youth Network'.

Key Recommendations

1. Local council youth services coordinator to contact all agencies in the area and invite them to join the network.
2. Better advertising and promotion of the youth network/forum
3. Create avenues for services and agencies to interact and communicate with local council so that the forum is inviting and remains relevant to their needs.

Workshop 7. Health and Homelessness - Facilitator – Theresa Swanborough, RDNS HPP (15 participants)

Service coordination for health and homeless services in Yarra can be strengthened through:

- the creation and expansion of alliances, such as the Mental Health Alliance;
- adopting the Active Service Model approach to service provision, advocating a strengths-based and client-centred focus; and
- a simplification of the client service experience i.e. making clients' lives easier through having fewer appointments and fewer sets of goals.

It is necessary to do the following to strengthen service coordination for health and homeless services:

- Workers need to seize opportunities and take initiatives e.g. becoming a member of the Mental Health Alliance;
- New media should be used to promote inter-agency communication e.g. electronic forums and email discussion groups;
- There should be forums where workers can take client case conferences and issues; and
- Partnerships between acute care and community health should be strengthened at all levels.

Agencies that should be involved include RDNS HPP, North Yarra Community Health (NYCH), hospitals and the acute sector, mental health services and HomeGround.

Key Recommendations

1. Invite service providers to a formal discussion where a process for coordinating care across services for clients with complex needs is established. At this discussion, establish who takes responsibility for the client and what paperwork is used. Agencies who cannot attend should be involved via conference call.

4. LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the 2010 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.

In response to the feedback received from the 2009 Forum, this year's Forum gave specific focus to Indigenous homelessness issues in Yarra. As a result of the work put into the Forum agenda on this issue and through strong promotion to Indigenous Services, particularly through the Yarra Aboriginal Services network, the Forum was well attended by Indigenous workers and by other workers with an interest in this theme. The Indigenous Service Coordination workshop was the most highly attended of all workshops and the Indigenous Service Coordination Presentation was rated valuable or satisfactory by 96% of Evaluation Form respondents.

There was strong support for holding an annual Forum and for providing a range of regular networking opportunities across the various sectors working with people experiencing homelessness in Yarra.

Future forums could be held in a smaller, more intimate setting and with a clearly identified 'focus' or 'theme' for the day. A dynamic, interactive program is preferred, with opportunities to workshop ideas, ask questions and discuss practical options for improved service coordination.

Schools and education facilities should be invited to attend future Forums as should services for aging homeless people. The Newsletter should continue to be published and the Expo should also be retained and promoted.

The ability to learn about the variety and depth of services in Yarra and the opportunity to network with other workers were cited as the most highly valued elements of the Forum. In light of this, future Forums should continue to devise programs that showcase the breadth of services available in Yarra and maximise networking opportunities for workers.

The workshops raised the need to maximise the use of new media to network, share information, discuss issues of shared concern and influence public opinion. Initiatives raised include web-based networking forums, email discussion groups, a virtual pin-up board and using new media to raise awareness of homelessness issues and influence public opinion. These initiatives need to be resourced to work effectively.

Equally, participants were keen to see specific interagency protocols developed that would deliver a seamless, consumer-friendly service experience with ready access to information by workers and minimal case management duplication. Specific protocols that were raised include; a generic assessment tool that addresses disability, housing and medical status; a single client case file that can be electronically accessed by all workers who support a particular client; an inter-agency information release/exchange protocol; a single voice to advocate on behalf of Yarra homeless services on issues of shared concern; and a collaborative approach to seeking funding aimed at minimising duplication of services and maximising use of available monies.

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 the shortened format and retaining the Expo.*

Recommendation 2: *Ensure Forums have a clearly identifiable central focus or theme and a program that is dynamic, interactive and stimulating.*

Recommendation 3: *Develop programs for future Forums that offer participants maximum networking opportunities.*

Recommendation 4: *Develop programs for Future Forums that offer workshopping and discussion opportunities for participants.*

Recommendation 5: *Continue to include a broad range of services for people experiencing homelessness in Yarra in future Forums and associated activities.*

Recommendation 6: *Promote involvement in the Forum to schools and educational facilities, youth services and other agencies who are at the coal face of primary prevention of homelessness.*

Recommendation 7: *Ensure that Indigenous issues continue to be addressed through future Forums and associated activities.*

Recommendation 8: *Include a list of registrants in the Forum folder to support networking.*

Recommendation 9: *Increase the proportion of participants returning evaluation forms by shortening the form and emphasising the importance of the evaluation process.*

Recommendation 10: *In addition, to the annual Forum, consider holding regular smaller and shorter events focussing on networking and information sharing, for example, a monthly lunch event.*

Recommendation 11: *Seek ongoing funding for the newsletter. Ideally, newsletters would be produced on a bi-monthly basis.*

Recommendation 12: *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 13: *Consider utilising the Yarra Housing and Homelessness Network to take the responsibility for driving the development of electronic and web-based communities to facilitate communication, information-sharing and networking for services working with people experiencing homelessness in Yarra.*

It should be noted that the recommendations listed above 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.

5. REFERENCES

Resolve Community Consulting, 2009a, *Outcomes of the Second Yarra HACC and Homelessness Forum, 18 November 2009*, 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.

Resolve Community Consulting, 2010, *Evaluation Report – Yarra HACC and Homelessness Newsletter*, prepared for North Central Metropolitan Primary Care Partnership.

Note all resources from the Yarra HACC and homelessness projects are available on the HomeGround website at:

<http://www.homeground.org.au/resources/hacc-and-homelessness-resources/>