

## **Newcastle and Hunter Homelessness Interagency Network**

### **Documented Minutes –**

Digby introducing Homelessness NSW. Discussion of the reform process which has affected them. More affordable, social housing such as boarding homes is their main focus, including meetings with MP's and liaising with politicians.

### Going Home, Staying Home –

#### *Pro's –*

- Services are learning to work together rather than against. Believed to be due to a relearning process.
- Changes affected workers, however forced for them to create strong relationships.
- More skilled workers due to further training.
- Turn away rate acknowledged to be decreasing.

#### *Con's –*

- Holding onto clients for longer periods of time due to lack of resources.

Ensuring assistance is delivered ASAP is the most important factor for improvement.

### Link 2 Home – (Stakeholder's opinions)

- Not assisting with the housing as much as needed. However the contacts and resources between each organisation is what continues to deliver clients' needs.
- No communication between Link 2 Home and Housing.
- Link 2 Home isn't asking enough questions in regards to each individual incident.
- Refusal of service due to women allowing men in, "she made herself homeless" – setting risks for future refuges.
- Housing will apparently be trained by CIMS 1.
- Housing asking for Carries Place to fix brokerage out of funding.
- Housing trying "school" how to manage brokerage.
- PRBS needing more access and support.
- Not returning calls due to being inundated with cases and extremely understaffed.
- Gaps in funding. Packages are written internally. 18-25yo are the main age group suffering due to such a large difference in mentality between these 7 years.
- Single male with no rights to an income cannot be waived.
- Brokerages only work short-term, not long-term.
- Better connections between Carries and Real Estate Agencies are needed.

*Astrid plans on contacting Link 2 Home and addressing these issues with them.*

### Real Estate Agencies –

- Incorrectly referring women without complex issues for individual clients
- One week or longer – Real Estate's aren't willing to wait that long.
- Rapid Housing – Restart taking too long. Unnecessary amount negotiation. Smaller branches are more hesitant to show any leniency.
- Housing needing to communicate with agencies more frequently

- Waiting up to 3 weeks for a tenancy guarantee clients lose interest due to being turned down based on previous history of initial assessments.
- Community engagement team liaising really well with Centrelink.

#### Issues for long-term accommodation and support –

- Ensuring tenancies are sustained, Housing and Real Estate don't engage well enough between one another.
- High success rate however drug/alcohol issues affect the client's long-term placement.
- Real estate's ensuring they leave ASAP to keep deposits.
- Detoxes are needed before relocation to boarding homes to ensure they aren't caught out.
- Bond loan is covering the bond and weeks rent which is enough to get the clients started, however it isn't enough to maintain their stability.
- Supply and demand issue.
- Engagement with Newcastle Council for inspections.
- Some boarding house owners are ruthless with pushing clients out. Further communication with them is needed.
- Australian Consumer Law overlaps everything else. Consumer guarantees.
- If evicted unfairly, there was discussion about contacting free legal support (Community Legal Centre) to avoid burning bridges.
- Housing brochures needing to be further distributed.
- Boarding Act for assistance housing and homecare. Rights of a tenant need to be communicated in clear, general and understandable terms.

Specific case studies to be discussed at future minutes to assess individual cases.

Digby intends on talking to owners of boarding. Advocacy is needed regardless of funding.

#### Mental Health Concerns –

- Not enough capacity/training to provide mental health care. Clients without chronic illnesses aren't having access to the referrals they need.
- PIR liaising with clients/ taking them on without casework.
- More engagement from mental health services is required to maintain clients' illness' that aren't as severe that hospitalisation is required but still need low-key focus.
- Mental health services only contacting via phone so clients are forgotten/dropped due to disengagement/motivation.
- Mental health services discontinue services once clients are considered to no longer have a chronic illness.
- PHAMS – High success rate by visiting clients and linking in with other services.
- Supplying support for clients who can't be supported from other organisations.

#### NDIS –

- Lack of knowledge for support, "specific cohort".
- Lack of advocacy preventing clients the full potential and benefits of the scheme.

#### NGO's –

Being contacted for further support.

Centrelink –

- Forms not user-friendly. Too many complicated questions even for professionals.
- New legislation which prevents people from receiving payments if they don't attend appointments.

Plans to create more awareness and changing the culture of how Centrelink treats clients by focusing on individuals clients' needs and producing more sensitivity towards mental health.

Ideas for future meetings –

- Boarding House outreach (ask to attend future meetings)
- Housing Stakeholder outreach (ask to attend future meetings)
- Mental Health Stakeholder outreach (ask to attend future meetings)
- Responses 3/6 months to improve
- Creating future boarding house subgroup
  - Matthew Talbot with Homeless Persons Free Legal Service.

Last announcements –

- Council with Vagrance Group (working with police, PIR and Matthew Talbot).
- Agencies actively reaching out to services in the city to store possessions in lockers and make hygiene amenities more readily available to clients.