

NEWCASTLE and HUNTER HOMELESSNESS INTERAGENCY NETWORK MINUTES

12th November 2015

Meeting commenced 10.08am

Meeting Chair: Astrid Gearin, CYDP

Minute Taker: Fiona Edwards, NOVA

- Acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet
- Minutes and actions of the previous meeting reviewed
- Guest Speakers: Geoff, Hunter Tenancy and Advocacy Service:

Geoff presented the two main changes being introduced by FaCS Housing via the **Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment** (Public Housing – Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015-HTAAS/PIAC

1. If a tenant of FaCS Housing has someone living in their property without being declared, FaCS Housing can impose a debt on the tenant for the rental cost of the undeclared person. This debt will be regarded by FaCS Housing as the same as rent arrears. Unrepayable debt will result in eviction. Tenants evicted will not be eligible for TA. This will appear to reduce the FaCS Housing waiting list as they will replace the evicted tenant with someone off this list. It will however cause homelessness for the evicted tenant.
2. Scheme for Recording Strikes Against Tenants for Breaches. Strike notices can be issued to tenants for certain behaviours. More 'serious' behaviours such as Grievous Bodily Harm and certain drugs charges can result in eviction from one strike. Other behaviours may result in 3 strikes which will result in eviction.

NHHIN concerns around this amendment included:

- An 'undeserving tenants' attitude which underpins the philosophy of this policy.
- How this will impact on SHS providers.
- These policies will create a homelessness crisis especially among the most vulnerable tenants i.e. those with complex issues such as mental health issues.
- As a housing provider, how can FaCS Housing be evicting to homelessness?

Suggestions for action for NHHIN:

- Barbara Stacey, HNEMHS, to email the Housing and Mental Health Agreement to NHHIN members for review. - **COMPLETED**
- Roz, Homeless Persons Legal Service, to give feedback on concerns from NHHIN to FaCS Housing then report back to NHHIN. She also encouraged NHHIN members to refer clients effected by these policies to the Homeless Persons Legal Service or to Legal Aid. - **TO BE ACTIONED**
- A forum to be held with NHHIN and FaCS Housing and other stake holders so that FaCS Housing can flesh out the policies for us and help us understand them. Also so that stake holders can ask FaCS Housing what responsibility they will take for the increase in homelessness these policies will cause. – **ON FEB AGENDA TO DISCUSS**
- Lobby NSW Premier Mike Baird and other politicians around affordable housing.

- Mark Webber, PIR, to share his Early Intervention Policy with NHHIN members. .- **TO BE ACTIONED**
- Challenge FaCS Housing around providing documentation to show communication between FaCS Housing and SHS providers on this amendment.-
No ACTION at this time.
***NHHIN has no current process to report and engage with Hunter DHIG or FACS representatives to query this correspondence, SHS are welcome to raise at SHS implementation group- THIS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS**

- **Sandra Felton, Homeless Committee Working Group from Newcastle City Council:**

Sandra explained the Committee had been formed in response to complaints from the community regarding a large group of homeless people congregating around the foreshore, Tram Sheds, Community Garden etc. These are Council/Public lands. Various charities offering food on a Friday and Saturday night created a 'honey pot' effect for these 'homeless'. The community was feeling threatened by the number of these people and at times by their behaviour. When council investigated these groups of people turned out to be mostly travellers and other people who were not homeless.

The Homeless Committee Working Group aims to facilitate communication with compliance rangers, police, SHS providers, Hamilton Station Master, Transit Police, Hunter Business Chamber and other stakeholders.

Currently developing an information card for the public and for services.

Currently training Compliance staff prior to Christmas. Compliance staff intend to target campers and homeless on foreshore over Christmas.

- **The Big Question: High, Medium and Low Effort: Are your services struggling to meet the needs of High Effort clients that may need daily support under your funding structure?**

Astrid Gearin requested NHHIN members take this question back to SHS providers and provide feedback at next meeting. **ACTION: feedback provided and info fwded to PEAK BODIES**

- **District Homelessness Implementation Group (DHIG) update by Ann Fletcher, RTNC:**

One issue discussed by DHIG was the difficulty getting qualified staff in the SHS sector. Another issue was the No Wrong Door Policy. Nexus provided a referral form and exit strategies for youth and the role of SHS providers in that.

- **OTHER BUINESS: Astrid Gearin tabled the NHHIN Terms of Reference. To be passed by members at the next meeting. ACTIONED AT FEB MEETING**

Meeting closed: 11.33am.

Next meeting: 11/2/2016. RTesced to 18th Feb 2016