

# Western Australian Council on Homelessness

## MINUTES OF MEETING

Friday 11 March 2011

Large Executive Conference Room, Level 2

Department for Child Protection

189 Royal Street, East Perth

Meeting commenced at 9:00am

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Acting Chair, Mr Steve Glew, welcomed the members to the meeting:

#### Present

Mr Greg Cash	Department of Housing
Dr Paul Flatau	University of Western Australia
Mr Steve Glew	Department for Child Protection
Ms Kathleen Gregory	Foundation Housing
Ms Heather Harker	Department for Corrective Services
Mr James Hunter (proxy)	Drug and Alcohol Office
Mr Ross Kyrwood	Mission Australia
Ms Judi Morris	Mental Health Commission
Ms Leanne Strommen (proxy)	Centrecare
Ms Nanette Williams	Pilbara Community Legal Service

#### In attendance

Ms Sandra Flanagan	Department for Child Protection
Ms Maureen Flynn	Department for Child Protection
Ms Hilary McWilliam	Department for Child Protection

#### Apologies

Hon Kay Hallahan AO	Independent Chair
Mr Tony Pietropiccolo	Centrecare
Ms Julie Waylen	Department for Child Protection

The Chair welcomed Ms Heather Harker to the meeting. Ms Harker will be representing Corrective Services while Mr McCulloch is on secondment with Worksafe.

### 2. Minutes of meeting held 11 February 2011

The minutes of the WA Council on Homelessness meeting held on 11 February 2011 were confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

### 3. Business Arising

#### 3.1 NPAH Forum – development of the agenda

Ms Flynn advised that a draft agenda has now been developed and thanked Ms Strommen and Ms Williams for their assistance developing the agenda.

There will be a range of information sessions and workshops over the two days including program sessions providing information on the following:

- Street to Home;
- Public Tenancy/Private Tenancy;
- Housing Support Workers;
- Safe at Home;
- Children; and
- Remote Rough Sleepers

Members suggested that it may be of benefit to promote/discuss the State Plan during the breaks at the forum. Ms Flynn advised that copies of the State Plan would be available at the forum.

**Action:** A copy of the draft agenda to be emailed to members following the meeting.

**4. Guest Speakers: *Nathan Robbins, Senior Manager, Special Strategies, and Howie Manning, Homeless Enumeration Manager, WA Census Management Unit, ABS***

The Acting Chair introduced Mr Robbins and Mr Manning to the meeting.

Mr Robbins provided the following information bases in the 2006 census collection:

- In 2006 WA had a high rate of homelessness – 68 per 10,000 (53 per 10,000 nationally).
- 13,391 people were counted as homeless. 6,720 in the metropolitan area and 6671 in regional/remote areas.
- WA had a higher proportion of homeless staying with ‘friend and relatives’ (59% in WA compared to 45% nationally).
- 11,837 non-indigenous. 1,496 Indigenous.

Mr Robbins then clarified the following to be utilised for the 2011 Census:

- Using same cultural definition of homelessness as 2006 Census.
- Utilising collectors at service provider locations and also a roving team of collectors (all using special short forms).
- Extending the enumeration period to a week instead of just Census night (same as 2006).
- Strong regional focus.
- Will utilise list option of all facilities providing accommodation for the homeless.
- Supplementing the list with a “green sticker” option for sensitive accommodation (eg: refuges).
- In conjunction with FaHCSIA, AIHW and representatives from the Housing and Homelessness Information Management Group (reporting to the Housing Ministers' Advisory Committee), ABS is conducting a methodological review of *Counting the Homeless* (CTH).
- Although CTH has been produced by Professors Chamberlain & MacKenzie after each of the 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, the methodology has never been reviewed.

- A review is now underway and is seeking to understand the relationships between the various assumptions adopted by C&M in their CTH reports and the underlying Census data.
- Discussion paper due out March – April 2011.
- Feedback on discussion paper expected by mid 2011.

Members expressed concern that using the short form will result in limited data, given that the census is a critical opportunity to better understand homelessness in WA. The long form would provide greater depth of information. The census information is used widely for vital research.

In regards to Counting the Homeless, members also expressed concern about changing the methodologies and assumptions before collecting and analysing additional, relevant data to enable informed decisions.

It was suggested that the question regarding where they are staying on the given night be followed by a question asking if it is “*because you have no where else to live*” to establish whether people do have a home but are not staying there, or they do not have a home.

It was agreed that a meeting be organised, including the Department of Housing, the Drug and Alcohol Office, the Mental Health Commission, the Department for Child Protection and the ABS to ensure that the census will reach as many homeless people as possible.

**Action:** A meeting to be scheduled with the ABS and the following departments: Child Protection, Housing, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health.

## 5. Update from the Department of Housing – National Rental Affordability Scheme

Mr Cash advised that:

- The National Rental Affordability Scheme is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments.
- Units will be rented at less than 80% of the Market value for 10 years and give investors some tax credits and a small cash contribution every year from the State Government.
- 3100 units have been approved in Western Australia.
- 210 units have been completed.
- 450 units will be completed by the end of this financial year.
- Requests have been made for another 12,000 incentives, however there is only funding for another 1900.
- This is a mechanism that works well and negotiations for increased allocations are progressing.
- There have been 920 applications that will deliver accommodation for 1800 households in the north of WA. Not all are approved at present.
- This building will take place over the next two years.

Mr Cash advised members that the State Affordable Housing Strategy is on the agenda for Cabinet this month. Once through Cabinet it will be formally released and available to the public.

## **6. Development of Regional Plans to reduce homelessness**

The Acting Chair provided a brief overview of the Regional Plans, for the benefit of new members. Ms Hilary MacWilliam was introduced to members. Ms MacWilliam has taken on the role of assisting with the development of the Plans, particularly engagement with the Departments local districts. Ms MacWilliam discussed the important role for the District Directors and the newly appointed Assistant District Directors. They will have shared ownership over the process and assist with driving the on-going development and implementation of the plans in their local areas.

## **7. Future Agenda Items**

- Tenancy Rights.
- Government departments - homelessness programs.
- Housing issues re Mining Companies.
- Accommodation design for homeless people/families.
- Impact of the change from Job Network to Job Services Australia.
- Guest speaker from EAC Homelessness Task Group.
- Links between specialist homelessness services and health services.

## **8. General business**

- 8.1 Safe at Home, Memorandum of Understanding with Western Australia Police  
*Guest speakers: Stacey Collins (DCP), Jackie Newbigin (Womens Council), Anne Moore (Lucy Saw)*

Ms Collins provided an overview of the Safe at Home program.

Safe at Home and Domestic Violence Outreach services have been funded through the joint Commonwealth/State National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and offer a new response to ensure women can remain safe at home, if it is appropriate, thereby avoiding them becoming homeless following domestic violence.

The model provides another option for women and is based on an individual assessment of risk and safety to allow women to make informed choices. Risk assessment, upgrades to home security and safety planning are required to ensure confidence and safety.

The Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) has been working in partnership with the Department's Non Government Policy and Funding Unit to implement the program.

Ms Newbigin advised that a significant development of the program is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WA Police and the Department's non-government service providers. This is an important component that ensures service providers have the full picture of the incident before they make contact with victims or perpetrators and embeds the program into WA Police procedures. Of note is the collaborative role and information the WA Police are willing to provide to non-government service providers.

Ms Moore discussed the success of the program in the region Fremantle to Mandurah. The following points were made:

- Strong relationships were in place prior to the implementation of the program.
- Priority is given to those with a Police Order and/or where children are involved.
- Two staff members work together to do home visits, risk assessments and ensure the home is secure.
- Police check any males in the home.
- All clients have access to outreach services.
- Other regions are also working well, although most have had to establish the relationships and outreach services as part of the process.
- A mentoring process is in place to assist with the establishment of the program in new locations.
- Breathing Space provides accommodation and outreach services for perpetrators.

The Acting Chair thanked Ms Collins, Ms Newbiggin and Ms Moore for their informative presentation.

## 8.2 Other Business

### 8.2.1 Impact of the Modern Award, Federal Equal Pay process and the EAC

Mr Kyrwood briefly discussed the Modern Award process, the Federal Equal Pay process, the impact on NAHA and NPAH services, particularly 24/7 services, and the fact that the Economic Audit Committee is looking at service viability in Western Australia. All three processes could potentially have wage implications. The EAC is looking at a process to implement an across the board wage increase, plus an assessment of agencies on a case by case basis for additional increases to wages based on a variety of factors.

Federally, there is a Working Group reviewing the impact of wage increases on the system. A member queried the ability to factor in the cost of housing, specifically for staff in the Kimberley and Pilbara. Members briefly discussed different modelling for costing funding for services, and the inclusion of a regional/remote allowance.

Given the complexity and importance of this issue, members requested that it remain on the agenda for next month.

<b>Action:</b> This item to remain on the next agenda.
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## **9. Next Meeting**

The Acting Chair thanked members for their attendance. The meeting closed at 10:35am.

The next meeting will be held on April 8, 2011 at 9am.