

Sector bulletin

8 December 2016

CEO Update on Reform and Consultation Forums

Dear colleagues

In 2016, CHP has actively participated in a number of state government led consultation forums and reform processes. I am taking this opportunity to update you about this dimension of our work, which complements our public media and campaigning activity.

If there are areas of work that are of greater interest than others, you may wish to scroll down to the relevant heading.

- *Homelessness and housing sector reform process*
- *Family violence response*
- *Mental health*

Homelessness and housing sector reform process

In 2015, the Victorian Government announced it would undertake some reform in both the homelessness and housing sectors. This involves the creation of the [Victorian Housing Register](#) and the Launch sites which bring together housing and homelessness services to more effectively respond to service users.

The *Victorian Housing Register* will bring together waiting lists and allocation policies of both public and community housing. CHP is supporting this reform because we expect it to strengthen pathways to community housing for people experiencing homelessness; and deliver a more transparent process of allocation to public and community housing; improving choice for social housing consumers.

So far, the Victorian Housing Register has been implemented for public housing, and the work on incorporating community housing in the register is underway, with completion anticipated mid-2017. CHP advocacy within the Victorian Housing Register processes is focussing on the transparency of allocation and reporting processes, with a view over time to maximising opportunities for homeless consumers.

I sit on the Victorian Housing Register *Senior Leadership Group*, which has been meeting since October 2015, together with Jane Barnes (Manager Adult Services, The Salvation Army). There is also a hard working Victorian Housing Register Operational Group with a number of sector representatives, including Ian Gough (Manager Consumer Programs CHP). People with lived experience of homelessness, including representatives from CHP's PESP program, also had input into the application design.

In *Homelessness and housing reform*, the work on the [three Launch sites](#) (Hume/ Moreland; Brimbank/ Melton and Inner Gippsland) commenced in June 2016. The Launch sites bring together public housing, community housing and homelessness support services, with a view to developing a more integrated experience for service users and less duplication for service providers.

The *Launch sites senior leadership group* is intended to facilitate some consistency across the three launch site developments. I am a member of the leadership group alongside John Blewonski (CEO Vincentcare), Rita Lawrence (General Manager SASHS Network), Cathy Humphrey (CEO Sacred Heart Mission) and Lisa Morgan (Gippsland Homelessness Network Co-ordinator, Quantum SS). Those with a lived experience of homelessness are also playing an active role in the co-design process.

The Launch sites also provide the opportunity to further demonstrate the relationships possible with the private rental market, and will need to be aware of any opportunities that emerge with the development of the family violence Safety Hubs.

In July I accepted Minister Foley's invitation to be a member of the [Rough Sleeping Taskforce](#) chaired by Dr Ruth Vine. The Taskforce began meeting in August 2016 in response to unprecedented numbers of vulnerable people sleeping rough on the streets of central Melbourne. The Taskforce draws on a depth of sector experience and its work has already benefitted from the support of additional government funding for the winter response, increased assertive outreach capacity and two-year flexible support packages.

Within this process CHP has advocated for a significant increase in affordable housing, and for the creation of a permanent supportive housing model across Victoria.

Family violence response

The Victorian Government committed to implementing all [of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Family Violence](#) (RCFV) as handed down 30 March 2016. A number of processes were established to guide this process including:

[The Family Violence Steering Committee](#) has been charged with overseeing the implementation of the RCFV recommendations. The Committee is co-chaired by Fiona McCormack (CEO DV Vic) and Rebecca Falkingham (Deputy Secretary, Social Policy, Family Violence & Service Delivery Reform, Department of Premier & Cabinet (DPC)). As the CEO of your peak and Chair of the Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce (FVHAIT) I have been appointed to this committee. The Committee has been meeting monthly since June 2016 and works closely with DPC monitoring and contributing to the implementation of recommendations and has been particularly focused on the development of the recently launched [ten year plan](#).

Chaired by the Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings MLC, the [Social Services Taskforce](#) is the overarching forum for advice to government on cross-cutting elements of family violence and other social policy reforms.

The Taskforce is overseeing the development of key features of reform, facilitating alignment and integration of reforms, promoting collaboration and co-design processes to reduce duplication and bring a family violence lens to all service system reform and delivery.

The Taskforce brings together the Ministers, Departmental Executives and sector representatives, undertaking reform in the human services portfolios to maximise the consistency and integration of reforms taking place across government. I also participate in this Taskforce, which has been meeting since September 2016.

The [Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce](#) (FVHAIT) has been appointed by Minister Foley and is charged with overseeing the implementation of the RCFV recommendations relating to housing and housing support.

The membership comprises leaders from the family violence, homelessness, community and commercial housing sectors and is supported by both DHHS and the DPC. As the CEO of your peak body, I have been appointed as Chair of this Taskforce, which has been meeting monthly since May 2016.

The Taskforce has formed three Working Groups as follows:

- The *Support Services Working Group* is co-chaired by Alison McDonald (Policy and Program Manager, Domestic Violence Victoria) and David De Silva (Director, Safeguarding and Community Services Branch, DHHS) and is focussing on the rollout of the flexible support packages, private rental brokerage, both head leased and purchased social housing properties and redevelopment of refuges and implications for future reforms and funding.
- The *Housing Supply Working Group* is co-chaired by Lesley Dredge (CEO, Community Housing Federation of Victoria) and Dan Jefferson (Director, Community Services Priority Projects Branch, DHHS) and is focussing on quantifying the amount of social housing required for the state to respond both to family violence and more broadly.
- The *Evaluation Working Group* is co-chaired by Heather Holst (Deputy CEO, Launch Housing) and Jim Round (Director, Systems Intelligence and Analytics Branch, DHHS) and is supporting the commissioning of the evaluation of the Housing Blitz funding to better understand which initiatives should be taken to scale.

The *Cross Sectoral Alliance to Respond to the Family Violence Royal Commission* (the Alliance) of non-government organisations, was established in April 2016. The Alliance comprises organisations from the family violence, sexual assault, family, youth and children's, women's health, homelessness, and community legal sectors as well as Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

The Alliance seeks to advocate with one voice for the implementation of that vision, both the outcomes and the processes it prescribes to achieve it. It seeks to work effectively with all major political parties to achieve the changes recommended by the FVRC. It will do this by providing cross-sector expert advice and engagement as well as solutions for implementation. Kate Colvin, CHP's Manager of Policy and Communications, represents us on the Alliance.

Mental health

I have been invited by the Secretary of DHHS to bring a homelessness perspective to the [10 year mental health plan Innovation Reference Group](#). This Group provides advice to the Expert Taskforce on enabling and supporting Innovation within Victoria's mental health service system in alignment with Victoria's 10-

year mental health plan.

I have also been representing the sector at [Victoria Police's Mental Health Portfolio Reference Group](#) in the last few years. While the Group's focus is on mental health, this is the portfolio where the interface between our police force and homelessness are addressed.

Summary

Participation in this number of consultation processes has involved a quite considerable commitment of time and effort. However, there is such a significant level of reform underway, with the potential to considerably improve our state's ability to prevent and respond to homelessness, and so it has been time well spent to ensure that the experience of the sector and those with lived experience of homelessness, underpins all new service developments.

I realise this update is long and dry! However, it is important that our work representing the sector is transparent. I thank you for taking the time to read about our work behind the scenes.

I wish everyone a safe festive period, and look forward to working with you next year.



Jenny Smith
CEO, Council to Homeless Persons