Outcomes of the NGO Forum

Housing and Mental Health Agreement

7 November 2012

Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh
Background

In August 2011 the Directors General of the Department of Family and Community Services and the Ministry for Health signed the Housing and Mental Health Agreement. The agreement provides the overarching framework for planning, coordinating and delivering mental health accommodation support and social housing services for clients with mental health problems and disorders who are living in social housing or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

An integral part of the Agreement is the acknowledgement that non-government organisations (NGOs), community housing providers, specialist homelessness services and other support services – are an invaluable part of the service system to clients who are living with mental health problems, homeless or at risk of homelessness.

One of the important aspects of implementing the Agreement is to have NGO input in relation to the implementation of the Agreement and the issues faced at the local level.

The forum was facilitated by the Agreement Interagency Implementation Committee (made up of representatives from Health, Housing NSW, Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Homecare, the Aboriginal Housing Office) in November 2012. The NGO Forum was convened to seek NGO input into the initial implementation of the Agreement. The forum also aimed to provide an opportunity for feedback on ways to strengthen service planning, coordination and delivery at the local level.

A total of 49 people attended the forum on 7 November 2012. Each of the fourteen District Implementation and Coordinating Committees was represented and included a broad cross section of organisations. See Attachment A for a list of attendees.

Context

The Forum was held early in the implementation phase of the agreement. Most DIACCs had submitted draft work plans at the time the forum was held. Initial DIACC meetings had been held in most areas. Some regions were further down the implementation path than others owing to a range of factors including the existing structures in place and the extent to which they were already well established and highly functioning. This allowed for progress to happen more quickly than in other areas.

The forum was seen as an opportunity to address issues arising in the work plans prior to sign off by the Senior Executive Group.

A review of the work plans identified consumer and carer engagement as an area for improvement. A session was convened on this issue and the expertise of two NGOs was harnessed for the session: the NSW Consumer Advisory Group and NEAMI. Ka Ki Ng from the NSW Consumer Advisory Group highlighted the main principles and practices in this area while Sylvia Grant gave an overview of how NEAMI reformed their consumer engagement strategy.

The perspective of two different DIACCs was presented to highlight how some of the concepts being discussed were put into practice. The Area Director for the Hunter region in Housing NSW, Anna Zycki, presented an overview of the implementation of the Agreement. Given the multitude of other initiatives that impact on the work of DIACCs a presentation was delivered by Brett Louat, Area Director from Housing NSW on the topic. The following initiatives were discussed:
Outcomes of the Forum

The main issues as identified by attendees at the Forum were:

- **A lack of resources**
  The lack of resources available to address issues once they are identified by DIACCs was raised as a significant concern, directly affecting the potential usefulness of the Agreement.

  While the systemic focus of the DIACCs is welcomed there are questions about the purpose of identifying issues like the chronic lack of housing when there are no additional resources available to address the issue.

  The long term involvement of partner organisations was threatened by a perceived lack of purpose in identifying issues without having resources available to address them.

- **Privacy**
  Attendees referred to concerns about client privacy and a lack of consent which was preventing the discussion of client details at local meetings or LIACCs. Clarification was called for in relation to the ability of organisations to disclose client details at meetings.

- **A lack of commitment by some partner organizations**
  Some participants reported minimal levels of commitment to the Agreement and minimal levels of involvement to date from some providers. This was partly attributed to a lack of awareness of the existence of the Agreement in some areas.

Issues and challenges

Issues and challenges in implementing the Agreement and DIACCs identified by attendees during the small group workshops:

- **Systemic Barriers**
  - Chronic lack of housing stock leads to many problems that would not be there if each person had housing;
  - There is a need for more and improved clinical support for people with a mental illness experiencing homelessness;
  - Achieving a balance between competing priorities between health (exit from hospital beds) and Housing (supply constraints);
  - The application of policy needs to be flexible to respond to the needs of people with a mental illness.

- **Sustainability of DIACC meetings**
  The challenge of how to create sustainable and purposeful meeting structures for partner organisations in an environment where resources are limited and other similar meeting
structures are already in place was acknowledged. In some regional and rural areas traveling to meetings is onerous, high staff turnover and under staffing and duplication with other meetings were all identified as barriers to the successful running of DIACC meetings.

- **Communication and collaboration**
  - Lack of shared understanding of terms like recovery;
  - Lack of clarity on how to escalate issues beyond the DIACC and the impact on policy and systemic issues;
  - A need to improve local decision-making to prevent issues escalating unnecessarily;
  - It can be a challenge to get services to work together in a DIACC to solve problems when territorialism and inflexibility remain despite good intentions; and
  - There is a need to use plain English and not to presume a shared understanding of terminology and to avoid using acronyms.

- **Conflict between consumer and carer needs**
  A distinction was made between the engaging consumer and carers. There needs to be acknowledgement that their needs are not always aligned and this tension needs to be resolved.

- **Membership**
  Ensuring membership of DIACCs includes the right people from the right agencies/services for effective meetings and problem solving.

**Opportunities**
A number of opportunities were identified by participants. They included:

- **Innovation**
  DIACCs can develop, facilitate and monitor innovation and flexibility in service delivery in the context of limited resources. DIACCs could support innovative approaches to housing like shared accommodation models.

- **Empowering consumers and carers**
  DIACCs can improve engagement with consumers through various methods including online forums. When DIACCs engage consumers and carers, it improves service delivery and can empower people with lived experience. This sort of activity can be included in DIACC work-plans.

- **Improved services & outcomes**
  Opportunities exist to: develop guidelines, share information and develop protocols (without breaching privacy), provide evidence of systemic issues, use the DIACC as an appeal process to speed things up and get results for clients and to identify commonalities of other forums / committees / programs.

  In addition the DIACC can monitor service gaps regionally and across the state and help to prevent duplication (with initiatives like Partners in Recovery).

The suggestion was also made to strengthen referral pathways. DIACCs may provide the right structure to engage the wider community not just consumers to assist more cohesive communities to develop. Through capacity building and skill / knowledge development services and outcomes will both be improved. Potential topics include: the recovery framework, hoarding and squalor, escalating a transfer for accommodation.
• **Improved communication**
Technology could be used to manage tyranny of distance and engagement with a range of stakeholders - teleconference, webinar, video conference and on line forums. DIACCs can help develop a shared vision through the development of shared terminology.

The effective flow of information between sub groups and the main DIACC is essential to the successful implementation of the agreement at a local level.

**Where to from here?**
This document will be circulated among stakeholders in the Housing and Mental Health Agreement to raise awareness of the issues and to create an opportunity, especially for DIACCs to respond regionally, where appropriate, to the issues.

The process for finalising the work plans will be guided by the input received at the forum. Additionally, each DIACC will receive tailored feedback on their work plan which incorporates many of the issues raised by participants at the forum. Once the work plans are finalised they will be signed off by the Senior Executive Group and will then guide the work of DIACCs in the coming year and form the framework for reporting by the DIACCs.

In response to the issues raised at the forum guidance will be issued about client privacy. This will ensure a coordinated state wide approach to the issue guaranteeing consistency and enabling regions to share client information to improve service planning, coordination and delivery and to enable systemic issues to be identified.

The Department of Family and Community Services and the Ministry of Health will continue to play a role in promoting awareness of the agreement and undertaking a range of other activities aimed at ensuring commitment to and effectiveness of the Agreement.
### Attachment A - List of attendees

A list of those wanting to share their contact details with other attendees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIACC or LHD</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney</td>
<td>Colleen</td>
<td>Kosowicz</td>
<td>Carer Representative</td>
<td>Uniting Care Mental Health</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Colleen.Kosowicz@ucmh.org.au">Colleen.Kosowicz@ucmh.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney</td>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>Lazarus</td>
<td>Team Leader HASI</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:LazarusG@missionaustralia.com.au">LazarusG@missionaustralia.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney</td>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Watene</td>
<td>Manager of Community Services</td>
<td>New Horizons</td>
<td><a href="mailto:KWatene@newhorizons.net.au">KWatene@newhorizons.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Lines</td>
<td>Service Manager</td>
<td>NEAMI</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chris.lines@neami.org.au">chris.lines@neami.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West Sydney</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Clenaghan</td>
<td>Cluster Manager - Mental Health</td>
<td>South West Sydney Local Health District</td>
<td><a href="mailto:paul.clenaghan@sswahs.nsw.gov.au">paul.clenaghan@sswahs.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Inner Sydney</td>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>NSW State Manager</td>
<td>NEAMI</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Sylvia.grant@neami.org.au">Sylvia.grant@neami.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Inner Sydney</td>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td>Basset</td>
<td>Mental Health Service Manager</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bassettl@missionaustralia.com.au">bassettl@missionaustralia.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sydney</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Caballero</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uniting Care</td>
<td><a href="mailto:john.caballero@ucmh.org.au">john.caballero@ucmh.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Barnes</td>
<td>Executive Manager, Operations East</td>
<td>Compass Housing Services</td>
<td><a href="mailto:RebeccaB@compasshousing.org">RebeccaB@compasshousing.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>Tiyana</td>
<td>Gostelow</td>
<td></td>
<td>Central Coast Local Health Wyong</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tgostelow@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au">tgostelow@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Caballero</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uniting Care Mental Health</td>
<td><a href="mailto:john.caballero@ucmh.org.au">john.caballero@ucmh.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East NSW</td>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>GSAHS Mental Health Consumer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:al007turner@hotmail.com">al007turner@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East NSW</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>Richmond PRA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Elizabeth.morris@richmondpra.org.au">Elizabeth.morris@richmondpra.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illawarra</td>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>Wheeler</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>Illawarra &amp; South Coast Tenants</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Warren_Wheeler@clc.net.au">Warren_Wheeler@clc.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Sydney</td>
<td>Wally</td>
<td>Pelosa</td>
<td>Senior Youth Worker</td>
<td>Oasis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Digby</td>
<td>Hughes</td>
<td>Policy &amp; Research Officer</td>
<td>Homelessness NSW</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Digby@homelessnessnsw.org.au">Digby@homelessnessnsw.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>Harms</td>
<td></td>
<td>ARAFMI</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jonathan.Harms@arafmi.org">Jonathan.Harms@arafmi.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
South East Sydney  
Suzanne Faraj  
Team Leader  
Maroubra Community Mental Health CONNECT, Sutherland Mental Health  
Suzanne.Faraj@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

South East Sydney  
Adam Bryant  
Team Leader  
Manager, Prevention and Community Partnerships  
Adam.Bryant@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Lynelle Richards  
Senior Project Officer  
NSW Health  
Lrich@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Kateena Doherty  
Senior Project Officer  
NSW Health  
kdohe@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

South East Sydney  
Beaver Hudson  
Mental Health Service Manager  
St Vincents  
BHudson@stvincents.com.au

South East Sydney  
Emily Pile  
Service Coordinators Community  
St Vincents  
epile@stvincents.com.au

South East Sydney  
Robin Ellis  
Inpatient Services  
St Vincents  
rellis@stvincents.com.au

South East Sydney  
Hellen Francis  
MH Senior Social Worker  
St Vincents  
hfrancis@stvincents.com.au

n/a  
Vivian Hanich  
Director  
Housing NSW  
vivian.hanich@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Sam Ngui  
Principal Policy Officer  
Housing NSW  
Samantha.Ngui@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Robert Bosi  
Senior Policy Officer  
Housing NSW  
robert.bosi@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Lance Borwick  
Community Services  
lance.borwick@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Angelli Meza  
Housing NSW  
angelli.meza@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Tuly Rosen  
Policy Officer  
Mental Health Coordinating Council  
Tuly@mhcc.org.au

n/a  
Warren Gardiner  
Senior Policy Officer  
NCOSS  
warren@ncoss.org.au

n/a  
Ka Ki Ng  
Senior Policy Officer  
NSW Consumer Advisory Group  
kaking@nswcag.org.au

n/a  
Catherine Walton  
Manager, Sector Reform  
Aboriginal Housing Office  
Catherine.walton@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Gordon Slattery  
Manager, Behaviour Support Unit  
Ageing, Disability and Home Care  
gordon.slattery@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Brett Martin  
Principal Policy Officer, Sector Development  
Community Services  
brett.martin@facs.nsw.gov.au

n/a  
Taryn Champion  
Policy Manager  
NSW Women's Refuge Movement  
po@wrrc.org.au

n/a  
Poppy Dowsett  
Policy Officer  
NSW Federation of Housing Associations  
PoppyD@communityhousing.org.au

Murrumbidgee  
Paul Harding  
Area Director  
Housing NSW  
paul.harding@facs.nsw.gov.au
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far West</td>
<td>Rynnette Gentle</td>
<td>Richmond PRA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rynnette.gentle@richmondpra.org.au">rynnette.gentle@richmondpra.org.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Judith Hill</td>
<td>Consumer Consultant</td>
<td>Mental Health Linkages Project</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bpfoard@hotmail.com">bpfoard@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>Belinda Kotris</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Tamworth Family Support</td>
<td><a href="mailto:genmgr@tfss.com.au">genmgr@tfss.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>Chris Maylea</td>
<td>Lismore Mental Health Services Manager</td>
<td>On Track Community Programs</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tracey@otcp.com.au">tracey@otcp.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>Cindi Rees</td>
<td>Consumer Consultant</td>
<td>New Horizons - Community Services</td>
<td><a href="mailto:CRees@newhorizons.net.au">CRees@newhorizons.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Anna Zycki</td>
<td>Area Director</td>
<td>Housing NSW</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anna.zycki@facs.nsw.gov.au">anna.zycki@facs.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Helen Marquez</td>
<td>Team Leader</td>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:marquezh@missionaustralia.com.au">marquezh@missionaustralia.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Humair Ahmad</td>
<td>A/Manager Operational Programs</td>
<td>Housing NSW</td>
<td><a href="mailto:humair.ahmad@facs.nsw.gov.au">humair.ahmad@facs.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sydney LHD</td>
<td>Allison White</td>
<td>Housing Coordinator</td>
<td>NSW Health</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aawhite@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au">aawhite@nsccahs.health.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judi Higgin</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Horizons</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jhiggin@newhorizons.net.au">jhiggin@newhorizons.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liza Sloan</td>
<td>Manager Supported Housing</td>
<td>St George Community Housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>