

# Parramatta Region Homelessness Interagency Terms of Reference Reviewed July 2014

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## **PART I – Purpose and Framework**

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### **Vision Statement**

*The Interagency works to end homelessness in the Parramatta region.*

To this end, it will improve the quality of life of people experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness by: facilitating partnerships between stakeholders including the homeless; lobbying and providing representation; and, resourcing members and the community.

The Interagency recognises that improving quality of life involves:

- improving the status of people experiencing homelessness,
- responding to their immediate and long-term needs, including their health and wellbeing,
- working in partnership with people to progress their rights.

### **Background**

The Parramatta Region Homelessness Interagency developed out of the Parramatta Homelessness Issues Forums held in November 2008 and April 2009, and attended by over 80 people at each Forum.

The Forums were organised by a Steering Committee made up of key stakeholders working with/for homeless people in the Parramatta LGA. They were designed to provide and share information between services on relevant and pertinent issues, to build/strengthen networks between services and agencies, and to increase effective and innovative ways of providing services and resources to homeless people in the Parramatta LGA. The second Forum focused on the Commonwealth Government's White Paper on homelessness.

One of the agreed outcomes of the Forums was to continue to provide a forum where individual service providers, representatives of services/ agencies and any other interested people could continue to work together to address homelessness. Approximately 25 people attended the first three meetings and identified their shared aims and objectives, the structure and operational details of what became the Interagency, which resulted in an agreed initial Terms of Reference that became the basis for the current Terms of Reference for the Interagency.

### **National and State Frameworks**

The sector has undergone significant changes since the Homelessness White Paper 'The Road Home' 2008, and the National Partnership on Homelessness 2008 and the NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014. The Going Home Staying Home Review and corresponding changes 2013-2014 to the funding structure, service delivery and services has had significant impact on the sector as a whole, and on individual services. These impacts are yet to be fully understood in terms of capacity to meet the needs of people experiencing or at-risk-of homelessness.

### **The People the Interagency Works to Support and its Scope**

The Interagency will focus on the needs of people experiencing homelessness and who are connected to the Parramatta and surrounding local government areas and those who work to support them. Stakeholders include the homeless, large and small not for profit direct and

indirect services providers, specialist and mainstream service providers, Government agencies, and peak bodies. The Interagency recognises the following groups of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as being particularly vulnerable: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; women and their children surviving domestic and family violence; young people and newly arrived and refugee people.

## **Functions**

To align with its vision, and informed by the opinions and rights of people experiencing homelessness, the primary functions of the Interagency are:

1. To break down silos between services and agencies to enhance partnership and service delivery
2. To resource members with information to enhance the effectiveness of service delivery by, for example, exploring different models.
3. To lobby and make representation at Local, State and National levels for resources and support to address homelessness in the Parramatta region.
4. To engage with relevant State government departments, authorities and agencies that are responsible for policies and services that address the different needs of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness including their need to be safe; their mental and physical health and wellbeing; social/ community connections; education/ training and employment and post release services and resources.
5. To engage with government and non-government Housing providers, including Housing NSW and community housing providers, to achieve the practical outcomes of the Regional Homelessness Action
6. Plan, for example supporting sector and system reform to address and reduce homelessness.
7. To raise awareness and the profile of homelessness in the broader community.
8. To resource the wider community that comes into contact with homelessness to improve their capacity to respond to homelessness appropriately and effectively.

## **Principles**

The following principles underpin the work of the Interagency:

- Everyone has a right to safe and secure housing, and if homeless, a right to access support and resources that improve their health and well-being, and a right to assistance in attaining housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have a strong voice in Interagency decisions and activities.
- Partnership and collaboration are essential for addressing homelessness.
- A strategic approach should guide all actions, so that they meet the identified needs of both clients and the Interagency.
- Everyone has a role to play in addressing homelessness.
- Members will engage with each other in a respectful and constructive manner.
- Consensus will be the primary means of decision making for the Interagency. It is recognised that individual members may need to abstain from some decisions.
- Members will be encouraged to communicate and collaborate in their work.

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## **Part II - Structure and Operation**

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**1. Review of the Terms of Reference** These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Interagency annually in conjunction with annual planning and evaluation, or at any time determined by the Interagency.

## **2. Incorporation**

The Interagency is not incorporated.

## **3. Membership**

Any individual, representatives of an organisation, service or agency, who agree to work within the vision, functions and principles of the Interagency, may become a member.

To apply for membership, a Membership Application must be completed and submitted to the Secretariat which will then present the Application to members for ratification at the next Interagency meeting. The Membership Application form is available from the Secretariat or can be downloaded from the Interagency's webpages.

## **4. Critical partners**

The Interagency recognises a number of government departments and agencies and non-government services whose authority/ role can have a significant impact on homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. The Interagency undertakes to actively engage with these departments, agencies and services through their membership of or attendance and participation in Interagency meetings.

Critical partners include Correctional Services; Western Sydney Local Health District; Housing NSW; Community social housing providers; Family and Community Services; Police; Centrelink and Local Councils.

## **4. Meeting Frequency**

The Interagency will meet monthly on the third Thursday of every second month, between 10:00 am and 12:00pm.

## **5. Meeting venue**

Meetings will take at Connection Studios, Connection Arcade, while available. With Interagency agreement, alternative venues will be used for two meetings a year.

## **6. Chairperson**

The elected Chairperson will sit for 12 months, and members will be asked to nominate and vote for a new Chairperson from the Membership in June each year. A person cannot stand as Chair for more than 12 months (i.e. two years in a row), and once having sat as Chair, a person is ineligible for nomination for a further 3 years. In the event of a long absence during the 12-month term, the Interagency will vote for an interim-Chairperson from the Membership to sit in place of the absentee Chair until their return. In the event of the elected Chairperson not being available for one Interagency meeting, the Secretariat may ask a member of the Interagency to perform the duties of the Chairperson for that meeting.

The work of the Chairperson will be directed by the Interagency. The Chairperson is not able to vote on any issue.

## **7. Secretariat**

Parramatta City Council will provide secretariat support for the Interagency. This may be reviewed at any time upon agreement by the Interagency. The Secretariat will be responsible for: recording and distributing the minutes and agenda, maintaining an email contact list of members, ensuring meeting venue is arranged, and providing notice of meetings. The work of the Secretariat will be directed by the Interagency.

## **8. Website**

The Interagency's website is maintained by the Secretariat and Interagency members able to support this work are invited to contact the Secretariat and offer their assistance.

The Interagency's web pages contain information, resources and notices of relevance to members; people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness; students, and general members of the public minutes of meetings; the Interagency's Terms of Reference; upcoming events held by and Information on policies, services and programs. All members of the Interagency are encouraged to provide information for the webpages through the Secretariat.

## **9. Contact people**

The Chairperson and Secretariat will be the contact people for the Interagency.

## **10. . Media Officers**

Members participating in the Communication, Lobbying and Advocacy Working Group will perform the function of Media Officers, and will be responsible for drafting press releases, contacting and promoting the Interagency's work through the media, and responding to media queries, etc. Their work will be directed by the Interagency.

## **11. Decision making**

The Interagency will primarily use a consensus model of decision making, based on one person-one vote.

A quorum will be 10 representatives of different organisations/ agencies.

Where a consensus cannot be achieved for a particular decision, the Interagency has the option of using a majority decision making model, with a majority determined by 2/3 +1 of votes.

As a number of organisations/agencies have several representatives attending each Interagency meeting, votes under a majority decision making model will be counted on the basis that each organisation/agency has one vote to cast for each decision of the Interagency, rather than multiple representatives of organisations/agencies having one vote each.

Where possible, members will be informed via each Agenda for Interagency meetings that an Agenda item includes a decision to be made by the Interagency. An individual member may cast their vote by absentee ballot, if not able to be present at the meeting, by providing their decision (or feedback) to the Secretariat or another member of the Interagency.

An individual member may abstain from participating in any decision or vote and have this recorded in the minutes.

The Interagency may choose to defer a decision until a later meeting, to allow time for consideration at individual and agency/organisation levels.

The Interagency recognises that a significant strength of its operation is that it does not have nor seek to have authority over individual services or service providers.

## **12. Representation at External Forums**

Various members are involved in external forums, networks and interagencies that are relevant to the work of the Interagency. Many members attend as representatives of service providers, government agencies, and service users.

The Interagency considers it necessary to be represented at relevant forums across Western Sydney concerning the needs of homeless people. These will be determined by the Interagency, and a person will be delegated to represent the Interagency and report back to

the membership. Only where this delegation takes place can a member assume authority to speak on behalf of the Interagency.

The Interagency will outline to the delegated member any requisite position to be taken on key issues the delegate is required to communicate. Should the opinion of the Interagency be sought outside this position, the delegate should bring it back to the Interagency for consideration and a reply.

The Chairperson is considered to have a standing delegated authority to speak on behalf of the Interagency at external forums.

### **13. Representation of Service Users**

The Interagency aims to include the voices of all stakeholders, and welcomes the participation of consumers (service users) who agree to work within the vision, functions and principles of the Interagency as all Members are required to do.

The primary role for consumers at Interagency meetings is to assist the Interagency in identifying and addressing gaps in the service delivery system and increasing understanding of how users engage with the system. The Interagency will seek to provide appropriate guidance and information to individuals outside Interagency Meetings where issues raised are a specific individual concern.

Because of the different perspectives that consumers and service providers bring to the Interagency, and the need to clearly establish from which perspective a member is speaking, people will be asked to identify if they are a service provider or consumer when introductions are being made at the beginning of Interagency meetings.

It is also recognised that some agenda items regarding service delivery may need to be discussed in-confidence in a closed session limited to service providers. Where this is identified, the items will be held over until the end of the meeting and identified on the Agenda. The Chairperson will note this at the beginning of a meeting. If an item is added after an Agenda has been distributed, the Chairperson will also note this at the beginning of the meeting.

### **14. Structure of the Meetings**

Interagency meetings will include standard agenda items for:

- Introductions for all present, including identification as a service representative or consumer;
- Quarterly: Review of representation at meetings of Critical Partners and those representing identified vulnerable groups of homeless people;
- Presentations by host-services as relevant;
- Guest speaker presentation/s;
- Case study presentation/s;
- Reports back from the Working Groups;
- Reports back from members who have attended external network/interagency meetings, conferences;
- Reports back from members who have participated in relevant external forums and planning processes (Regional, State and Federal levels), and/or informing the interagency of upcoming opportunities to participate in forums and planning processes;
- Update on Policy and Protocol Changes – Government Agencies
- Information share on training opportunities and resources available;
- Strategic Issues / projects and services / funding opportunities / policy and planning information as identified by any member of the Interagency.

- Confirmation on next meeting's venue
- Where possible, Agendas for Interagency meetings will note which items will include a decision to be made by the Interagency (which may include deferral of that decision for a later meeting).

### **15. Working Groups**

Working Groups will be established on an as-needs basis to address specific issues or undertake particular tasks identified by the Interagency, and may operate concurrently. Membership of working groups is not fixed - any member may join any Working Group at any time. Working Groups will report back to the Interagency through a standard agenda item at Interagency meetings. Working groups do not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Interagency but make recommendations to the Interagency for decisions and action.

### **16. Current Contact Details (As of October 2016 and until next review)**

*Chairperson:* Angela Daynes, Parramatta Mission

*Secretariat support:* Maggie Kyle, Community Capacity Building Team, Parramatta City Council, 9806 5082 or and Tanya Owen, Community Capacity Building Team, Parramatta City Council, 9806 5599 or email [parrhomelessness@parracity.nsw.gov.au](mailto:parrhomelessness@parracity.nsw.gov.au)