

MINUTES OF THE HOMELESSNESS TASKFORCE SHOALHAVEN

Meeting Date: Monday, 30 July 2018
Location: Jervis Bay Rooms, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.05pm

The following members were present:

Clr Findley - Chairperson
Clr Gash
Clr White
Clr Levett
Clr Cheyne
Clr Alldrick
Sharlene Naismith – Legal Aid NSW
Penni Wildi – Waminda
Matthew Wilson – Nowra Uniting Church / Safe Shelter
Max Zalakos – Nowra Baptist Church / Safe Shelter – left at 5.11pm
Peter Dover – SALT Ministries
Lesley Lane – Safe Shelter Shoalhaven
Julie Budgen – Shoalhaven Homelessness Hub

Also present:

Nikki Sloan – CEO, Community Industry Group – left at 4.45pm
Gordon Clark – Manager, Strategic Planning
Colin Wood – Manager, Building & Compliance
Jessica Rippon – Executive Manager, Communications – left at 5.27pm
Stephen Dunshea – Director, Finance Corporate & Community Services
Catherine Campbell – Senior Community Development Officer
Melissa Andrews – Community Development Officer
Donna Corbyn – Community Development Officer – left at 4.45pm

The Chair made an Acknowledgement of Country, and gave respects to Elders and all other Aboriginal people working in this space.

Apologies / Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from Clr Gartner, Shelley Hancock MP, Ashleigh Hudson, Wendi Hobbs, Wendy Woodward, John Steele, and Patricia David.

Carried by consent

Confirmation of the Minutes

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That

1. The Minutes of the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven held on Monday 27 November 2017 be confirmed.
2. The Minutes of the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven held on Thursday 05 April 2018 be confirmed.

CARRIED

Declarations of Interest

Nil

The meeting participants introduced themselves.

Updates:

Peter Dover (SALT) reported that Safe Shelter has now been open for 21 days, and has hosted 278 different clients. The shelter has been very successful in attracting community support.

The Church of Christ has offered 5 acres of zoned residential land in South Nowra to use for bus accommodation, should this be needed.

Matthew Wilson (Nowra Uniting Church) has been looking at affordable and transitional housing options.

Lesley Lane (Safe Shelter) has been at the shelter consistently and agreed that the community response has been strong. They have received donations of tea, coffee, food (Aldi), and other items. Grand Pacific Health and 'Nurse Nina' Cheyne have also been very helpful.

Clr Cheyne reported the shelter is offering its volunteers staff policies and procedures, and workshops, which will aid them in dealing with the effects of trauma in clients.

PRESENTATIONS

HT18.7 The Housing Spectrum

**HPERM Ref:
D18/228215**

Nikki Sloan, Chief Executive Officer of Community Industry Group (formerly the Illawarra Forum) gave a presentation on The Housing Spectrum.

The organisation has been delivering services for the last 16 years. It is a membership-based peak body for community service organisations with a dual role: – to support the work of community organisations (offering professional development, and government and management support) and as a voice for the community sector (advocacy, lobbying).

Community Industry Group surveys its membership annually to identify the biggest issue impacting their clients. Every year, housing is the top issue. They have found the term "affordable housing" is overused and has different meanings for different people; the level of understanding is very mixed.

The system is complex and they wanted a simple document, starting with definition of homelessness. They have used the ABS statistical definition that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living

arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

Some people might not consider they fall under this definition, but they do.

Nikki explained each of the steps on the Housing Spectrum diagram (see attached):

1. Homeless.
2. Emergency Temporary Accommodation.
3. Crisis Accommodation.
4. Transitional Housing. Community Industry Group has been lobbying for people not to be left in transitional housing but make it permanent.
5. Supported Accommodation.
6. Boarding Houses. Nikki stressed the problem in boarding houses of insecurity of tenure and vulnerability.
7. New Generation Boarding House.
8. Affordable Housing.
9. Social Housing. Nikki noted the NSW Government's New Directions Policy means tenants are expected to exit social housing – but the need security of lease.
10. Affordable Private Rental.
11. Purchase Property: This is a cultural ideal but out of the reach of many.

The term "Affordable Housing" really means "the right to a home". Housing is a multilevel, intergovernmental issue.

Clr Levett asked how people are able to move from social to affordable housing, given the potential obstacles of references and tenancy records – do agencies accept them? Nikki Sloan agreed this is one of the key issues. Donna Brotherson had been Community Industry Group's tenant resource officer, training tenants in building a portfolio etc. to make their applications more attractive to real estate agents. There are so few affordable private rentals that agents can be selective.

A discussion followed about the ways people with a low income can improve their chances of securing a sublease. Housing problems may come down to levels of unemployment.

Nikki Sloan advised that Community Industry Group use no formula for offering car park ratio and/or floorspace concessions to developers, but take the position that to encourage provision of more affordable housing in central locations with access to services and transport, this must be made more attractive to them.

Gordon Clark (Manager, Strategic Planning) noted that models from other areas are not necessarily applicable to the Shoalhaven: the economy and scale of development can differ. Planning solutions should be tailored to the local area. Another problem is that it is difficult to give car parking concessions as there is little public transport here, and people rely on their cars. There are two levers Council can pull fairly quickly – adjusting planning controls, and using its own land holdings.

Clr Cheyne suggested that the Housing Spectrum model needs to include health and other services in the first five levels (from homeless to supported accommodation) in a multifaceted approach, coordinated with different services.

Regarding headleasing, Nikki explained they are discussing this option with Property Council and others. Community housing providers will often do the headlease, and are able to guarantee return to the landlord and also attract Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Lesley asked whether the owners of the many empty properties in the coastal villages could be encouraged to put them up for lease. It was noted that the lack of public transport would present problems, e.g. for employed people to access TAFE courses after hours. Nikki agreed that transport is the Number 2 issue revealed by their survey. The Community Industry Group would like the government to expand transport on demand in regional areas.

Clr Alldrick added the transport problems that can confront homeless women leaving hospital

following childbirth – there are too few options.

Gordon Clark appreciated the attempt to clarify the meanings of “affordable housing”, “housing affordability”, “social housing” etc., agreeing there is considerable confusion in the community. This helps to explain what these are and where Council can step in.

Clr Findley asked that Community Industry Group send Council any short campaign and information briefings that could be disseminated.

REPORTS

HT18.8 NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

**HPERM Ref:
D18/243870**

Clr Findley advised that if Taskforce members have comments on the issues raised then they should continue to contact the Government.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Homelessness Taskforce note the release of the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 and receive the copy provided to members under separate cover.

CARRIED

HT18.9 Communication Strategy

**HPERM Ref:
D18/232830**

Jessica Rippon (Executive Manager, Communications) explained it had been a resolution of the Taskforce to create a communications strategy. Her report presents an initial draft, but she has many questions for the Taskforce to determine whether we are on the right track. There is a difference between a media strategy, and something more broad – whether to communicate everything the Taskforce is doing, or specific issues.

Clr Findley advised that the Taskforce’s last meeting had discussed digital representations of people’s stories. The Shoalhaven Anti Poverty Committee’s campaign a couple of years ago had been reasonably successful. Clr Findley said the key messages should centre on the humanity of people who are homeless, with the aim of overcoming stigma. Actual stories can show the difference that is being made.

Suggestions included: to raise the profile of homelessness in Shoalhaven; to articulate the purpose of the Taskforce; to outline what is occurring and how decisions are made.

There was a desire for the campaign not to look as if it is a Council campaign, but from the Taskforce. Should the spokesperson be the Mayor, or someone else? It need not appear to be coming from an organisation, but it can be presented as supported – the community must want to own the campaign as well.

Melissa Andrews (Community Development Officer) and Catherine Campbell (Senior Community Development Officer) raised the work of the Suicide Prevention Collaborative, whose media campaign has chosen key messages. They ran a 12 week campaign via media release, relying also on members to push the messages out. All the messages contained a call to action. This is a model the Taskforce could look at.

Gordon Clark recommended the Taskforce not reinvent the wheel, but adapt the large amount of information that already exists. For example, there are some 6 or 7 different generic client profiles that organisations often use in their campaigns – we can find local examples. Judy Stubbs had put together some useful information for Council, including simple generic profiles of people who could potentially be in housing stress in the Shoalhaven. They may be in work, but the wage level is

insufficient. It distils to basic terms the housing affordability issues.

Melissa agreed this is a message that many can identify with: being one paycheck away from homelessness. We should add a call to action, such as volunteering or donation opportunities.

Clr White noted that it is important to get a message out in the next few weeks, to coincide with the screening of a television series [‘Filthy Rich and Homeless’] which follows several prominent Australians as they become ‘homeless’, on the streets of Sydney. This will show how people experiencing homelessness live, and like War on Waste the program will generate media attention. It would be good to coordinate with this – also to show that homelessness is happening here and not just in Sydney.

The list of projects being addressed by the Taskforce is contained in the Ongoing Actions Table. Clr Findley noted past campaigns and recommended celebrating the wins along the way, and retrospectively; for instance, celebrate Safe Shelter starting in winter 2017 and the fact it is continuing. Also the coming together of the frontline services – making connections with one another.

One idea raised was to commission a documentary to portray how the Taskforce has progressed and how it is making a difference. Bronwyn Adcock, who produced an ABC special on Background Briefing, could be approached. People staying at the shelter could be asked to relate their stories; this would show there is an end result. The key purpose is telling the story about homelessness, their ongoing journey. A volunteer from the Taskforce could be nominated to drive the story project with Jessica.

Jessica cited some possible connections at Digital Business Hub (Kiama), where there are some talented young people with communications and media skills.

It could also be an idea for a joint project with the Youth Centre.

Jessica will continue email contact with the Communications Working Party.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Homelessness Taskforce:

1. Receive a presentation on a proposed Communication Strategy at the meeting on 30 July 2018.
2. Endorse the proposed Communication Strategy having received and considered the presentation at the meeting.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That:

1. The Homelessness Taskforce receive a presentation on a proposed Communication Strategy at the meeting on 30 July 2018.
2. The communications strategy be circulated by email for the Taskforce’s endorsement, and if there is any dissent that be referred to a meeting of the small Working Party to work through the issue.

CARRIED

HT18.10 Everybody's Home Campaign - Support Request

**HPERM Ref:
D18/205917**

Clr White advised that an item of this nature needs to be determined by Council, so it will not be dealt with under delegated authority.

Gordon Clark explained this is a joint campaign between Shelter NSW and the peak body for community housing associations, created to lobby for the five areas identified in the report. One

can sign up as an organisation or an individual, offering support financially or by lobbying. Lake Macquarie Council signed up and wrote to other councils inviting them to join. Council would not necessarily be committing funds, just putting our name to it. The campaign has the support of all the main community housing providers, and the next stage is asking others to partner with them.

Council may wish to be aware that some of the five areas may be controversial, e.g. changes to rental laws, and to look at the detail before committing.

Information about the campaign can be found at <http://everybodyshome.com.au>

Recommendation

That Council offer its support to the Everybody's Home campaign, and write to Lake Macquarie City Council to affirm this.

RECOMMENDATION (By Consent)

That Council offer its support to the Everybody's Home campaign, and write to Lake Macquarie City Council to affirm this.

CARRIED

HT18.11 Ongoing Actions Update

**HPERM Ref:
D18/232268**

Agenda item HT18.12 (following) addresses item 3 in the Actions Table.

The following items can be noted as completed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11. The items regarding tiny homes (3), health representatives (8), monthly statistics (9), and Second Life (10) are still active.

Item 8: Melissa Andrews confirmed she has not heard anything from the Department of Health. Cllr Cheyne said that case management is needed – clients need to be provided with care plans and assistance to attend services. The potential involvement of FACS and community health should also be considered.

Organisations do already exist which are set up to facilitate this. Peter Dover said the Homeless Hub is working as referral service, but it is not always available. It is important to encourage clients to get out and engage with the services.

Items 5/6: Cllr Findley raised the forthcoming Community Open Day at the Safe Shelter, to which ministers and others have been invited. This takes place on 17 August (12.00pm).

Gordon Clark said that the planning proposal to change the Kinghorne Street site zoning so it can be permanent had been signed off the previous Friday, and should be gazetted this coming Friday (3 August). It was agreed to write a letter of thanks to the State Government once rezoning is complete

Action: When the planning proposal for rezoning Kinghorne Street is completed, to write a letter of thanks to State Government; and another to acknowledge the work of Gordon Clark and the team.

Action: Melissa Andrews to circulate information about the Safe Shelter Open Day on 17 August to Councillors.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Homelessness Taskforce receive this report for information.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Homelessness Taskforce receive this report for information.

CARRIED

HT18.12 Proposed Memorandum of Understanding - Affordable Housing Opportunities

**HPERM Ref:
D18/210107**

Clr Gash advised that this item should not be dealt with under delegated authority.

Gordon Clark explained the background. Amoveo, a modular building company, had contacted Council offering their services and products, and proposed the current Memorandum of Understanding. In Council's view we are not purchasing services or offering business to them. Nor would the relationship be exclusive.

It is not certain that there is any Council land we can provide, but Amoveo may have access to RMS to help free up some of their land. There will be no direct business as a Council in dealing with them.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Proceed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Amoveo and Southern Cross Community Housing to pursue a partnership to investigate and deliver affordable housing and emergency accommodation opportunities in Shoalhaven
2. Receive update reports, through the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven, as needed or required.

RECOMMENDATION (By Consent)

That Council:

1. Proceed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Amoveo and Southern Cross Community Housing to pursue a partnership to investigate and deliver affordable housing and emergency accommodation opportunities in Shoalhaven
2. Receive update reports, through the Homelessness Taskforce Shoalhaven, as needed or required.

CARRIED

GENERAL BUSINESS

HT18.13 Definition of Homelessness

**HPERM Ref:
D18/225339**

To discuss the definition of 'Homelessness' as used in Council's draft Homelessness Policy, POL17/88.

This matter has been added to the agenda following a request of Councillor John Levett for the definition to be further considered by the Committee.

This item was no longer required so was not addressed.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 5.46pm.

Clr Amanda Findley
CHAIRPERSON