

SEMINAR H – FAIR GO OR FAIR GAME

Examining progress and efficacy of Homelessness Interventions in WA

Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

Pauline Bagdonavicius – Report on State Homelessness Evaluation delayed by new Minister.

Acknowledged Helen Smit, Executive Support

Are we there yet? Tony was chairperson of Taskforce and on monitoring committee. Cross government committee and auditor general involved. State Homelessness Strategy has provided a significant boost to people at risk of homelessness but not a panacea.

Definition of homelessness was pivotal. 2001 census first time we had a good count of people who are homeless. Working with and MacKenzie to repeat count in 2006.

Aim to

- lower primary homelessness
- Increase SAAP
- Lower numbers living with friends/relatives
- Lower tertiary homelessness

Better options for Housing

\$32M.

injection of \$21M over 4 years in 2001 from Gallop Government

Progress reports regular.

As at December 2005 - 59 of recommendations implemented. 9 presented challenges

One problematic recommendation: demonstration project in the city. Did not prove viable. Unable to identify land.

Performance indicators developed: Priority, headline, strategic change

Affordable Housing: 69000 received CRA when project started. 32% in 2001 were seen and identified in housing stress reduced to 29.5% in 2004.

Strategic change indicators

Social Housing – funding for public housing

Abor Housing make upgrades in aboriginal housing stock

Supported accomodation Number of beds available risen to 793

Private rental housing number of people accessing Number of bond loans decreased

20 new services funded in DCD

In 6 month period more than 1,000 clients, 559 new cases

Eg Private rental and advocacy services \$1M per annum funding. Practical assistance, mediation, advocacy. Over 500 per year 7% indigenous 17% CALD

Support for Young Parents who have been homeless: 86 parents in 2005, \$200,000 per year.

Evaluation anticipated to go to Cabinet in early June.

QUESTION:

Lack of housing in Geraldton and new welfare changes may create more homeless. How to stop this?

Requires further thinking, beyond the control of this program. No easy solution.

QUESTION:

Client qualified under TAS but no housing available in Geraldton. Paula will follow up with Housing and Works and come back to Geraldton Resource Centre with response.

QUESTION:

How has homelessness strategy linked in with Housing Strategy? Homelessness and welfare needs being addressed at the same time. DCD will work very closely with the DHW in the implementation strategy. Have a working party to address problems with difficult families. Strong families is another venue in which to examine problems and better help families on the ground. How to maintain momentum on the ground is a critical issue.

Paul Flatau, Murdoch University

The Nature and extent of housing need in WA

What are we trying to achieve, by what means, what constraints apply.

Homelessness is an element within housing need. Estimates of housing needs in WA, look at policy response and issues.

Aim for:

All people have a right to adequate, safe, secure housing.

All who experience a disability or a serious mental or physical health condition have a right to support services

Constrained by resources

Try to allocate resources efficiently, adopt right programs, ensure programs tailored to individual needs of clients.

Housing Need includes:

- Homelessness
- Hidden homelessness
- Marginal housing – overcrowding (1,265 per 10,000 in WA indigenous and 87 per 10,000 in WA non-indigenous), inadequate conditions (up to 8% of indigenous community housing not connected to water/electricity/sewerage), inappropriate dwellings or support levels, affordability
- Unsafe environments (violence in the home, highest level of SAAP support)
- Also, those who are at risk of homelessness

Census is an undercount of primary homelessness in indigenous communities.

Response

Not enough resources allocated. We need to reallocate from other parts of budget. Enhance program and deliver programs better.

WA Homelessness Strategy – focus on programs underdeveloped in terms of prevention. Extension of SHAP and SHAP Homeless Helpline.

Re-entry link and TASS, private rental support program

New mental health community initiatives

Maintain Homeless helpline and introduction of Wesley Homelink

Need more beds

Limited exit options

Exit with support when needed

Gate-keeping problems with complex severe difficult cases

How to bundle up services to meet individual needs. Requires govt to be flexible.

Mental health – independent living program excellent but waiting lists too long.

Public housing is fundamental exit point. Homeswest has reduced barriers in theory, but not in practice. Insufficient places.

Indigenous housing increased access to mainstream housing.

Need 1000 dwellings in discrete indigenous communities

In summary: Not meeting objectives at moment, can push for more resources and enhance programs.

QUESTION:

Has anyone looked a design improvements for indigenous communities?

Reduce overcrowding. Culturally appropriate. Developing capacities of communities to do their own work on maintaining housing. Links to other projects in areas and developing small business opportunities.

QUESTION

Residential program SAAP funded. Short to medium term. Problems with exit points. Yes, common problem. Need to increase number of exit options. Is priority wait 6 to 12 months? 70 to 80 days median waiting list for people on priority waiting lists, but possibly not accurate.

Leanne Burges

Examining progress and efficiency of homelessness program in WA

In my opinion it is a national shame that so many indigenous people are homeless in their own land.

Homelessness Taskforce established in 2001 by Labor Government. Willingness to work together, met regularly, collaboration in full swing. Addressed definition and measurements, who should be at the table, what was required, how to monitor strategy. Final report delivered on time.

Putting People First was government response. One non-government rep on monitoring committee.

Boosted but far from enough.

Exit points difficult
SHAP expanded
Some govt dept dragging their heels
Progress appears to be dwindling.
Not just a DCD or DHW responsibility
Appears that numbers requesting services steadily increasing
Problems more complex
Non government sector can work efficiently if government dept are.
Efficiency requires developing better relationships between service providers and taking more risks.
Many questions about who are what determines efficiency.
Need to be more realistic about timeframes of programs.
Still many gaps that homeless people fall through.
Non government sector needs more funding.
Are we there yet? No, I don't think so. We have only just started. Let's play a fair game.

QUESTION:

(Dulcie) Executive officers who run program get low wages, but have high performance requirements. Stock is low, repairs and maintenance training needed and a longer time for programs. Take 12 months to 2 years to really get on track. Great program, very successful, like more money poured into these programs.

What systems are in place to measure the programs? In terms of SAAP program, we get information from national data to see trends, but no individual tracking. Academic studies look at a cluster of indicators: Measuring outcomes in different ways, income before and after housing. Quality of life, perceptions of service.