

HOTELS WITH HEART – PILOT PROJECT



The Pan Pacific Perth, one of the city's most recognisable landmarks, is now the site of an innovative State Government pilot project to protect some of the most vulnerable members of our community – the city's rough sleepers – in the face of an unprecedented health crisis.

The pilot was instigated by one of the Department of Communities' taskforces established in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, made up of Government representatives and sector leaders in homelessness. The trial model of service is being developed and delivered through a partnership with two other community service organisations who, in turn, are working with health professionals, social workers, researchers and others from the Department of Health, Homeless Healthcare, the University of Western Australia and, of course, Pan Pacific Perth.

Some other service providers and sector professionals have already been involved in identifying those who might be best suited and benefit most from the pilot project. However, at this stage, it is a trial project for around 20 people who have been rough sleeping, so wider sector involvement has been limited.

If the trial is successful, it could be scaled up to support and ensure the safety of people experiencing homelessness, family and domestic violence and mental health issues. If that happens, it is anticipated that the collaboration with other service providers will be expanded.

Immediate aims

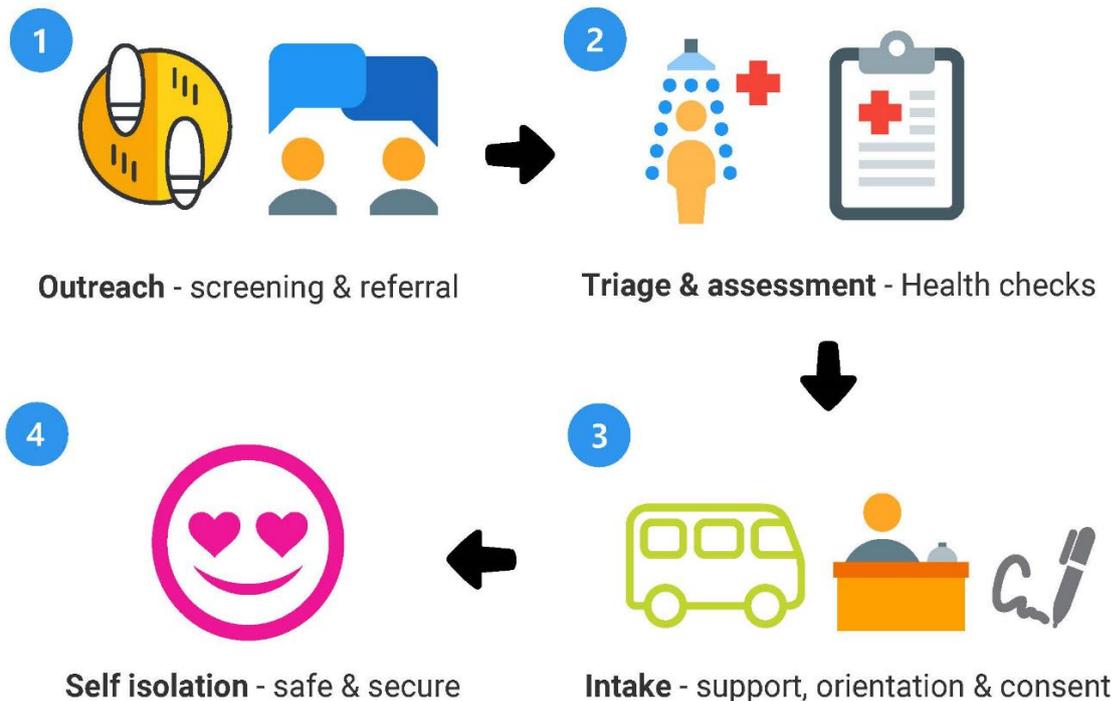
The immediate aims of the pilot project are to reduce the health risks for people experiencing homelessness during this difficult period; and to deliver both health outcomes for the community and an economic stimulus to the hotel sector. Most importantly, it is focussing on rapidly housing rough sleepers who are at greatest risk, to keep them safe and out of hospital.

The pilot model

The process being tested starts with a screening using a bespoke tool to help identify those rough sleepers who are most at risk and might benefit most from the Hotels with Heart experience.

The next step is triage and assessments including health checks for each participant and detailed discussions about expectations, social responsibility and rights.

All going well to that point, the 'guests' are transported to the hotel and 'checked in' – a thorough process where bags are checked, orientation material and fresh clothing is provided while laundry is done, and all the guests' rights and what is expected of them are once again explained.



Guests are then shown to their room which they're encouraged not to leave, though they can access an outdoor area for exercise and smoking, if necessary.

While at the hotel, guests receive good nutritious meals and snacks, and significant support from medical and support workers with issues including detoxing, existing health conditions such as diabetes or mental health. The Cancer Council has thrown its support behind the pilot with the provision of quit aids and the Busy Bees Pharmacy is providing dispensing services.

Support and security staff are at the Pan Pacific 24/7. Guests are checked in on regularly and can access staff at any time.

Issues?

What's being undertaken is a 28-day pilot of the service model. There is evidence of this working interstate and overseas, but it is expected there will be issues along the way that will be respond to and from which the sector will learn.

In the first few days of the trial, there have been no unexpected issues and most have been related to alcohol and drug withdrawals – and acclimatising to being in a room, sleeping in a bed and living within the property.

Lessons learned

As the first week of the trial draws to a close, the Hotels with Heart team has commenced collecting 'lessons learned' – ways in which the sector can adapt and improve the way it responds to vulnerable cohorts as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, and in the face of crises which may come in the future.

Further information

This is the first of a series of sector updates designed to share information, insights and learnings arising from this pilot project.

In the meantime, if you have general outreach and triage queries, please contact Gayle Mitchell at gayle.mitchell@UnitingCareWest.org.au. For matters relating to operations inside the Pan Pacific Perth, please contact Matthew Nichols at Matthew.Nichols@ruah.org.au