

# Eastern Sydney Home and Community Care Forum

C/-Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc ,  
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The Eastern Sydney Home and Community Care (HACC) Forum welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Public Accounts Committee in relation to the Home and Community Care Program Inquiry.

**The Eastern Sydney HACC Forum** is made up of over eighty services that provide a diverse range of community support services within the City of Sydney, Woollahra, Waverley, Randwick and Botany Local Government Areas to enable frail, older people; people with disabilities; and their carers to continue living in their own homes and community.

Many HACC services in the Region are at full capacity and can't meet the demand for their services, meaning that needy people are missing out on essential care. The demand for services is growing all the time, due to an increasing aging population, more old people living alone and without traditional forms of family support and care. Every day services are faced with pressure to provide more services as shown in the statistics they collect, increasing waiting lists, increasing referrals and difficulty of transitioning clients to more appropriate services as their needs increase. It is likely that pressure on more costly health services, such as hospitals and residential care facilities, are increasing because people are finding it difficult to get basic support and preventative levels of care in a timely manner.

At the same time, HACC services are waiting two years and more to find out if they have received growth funding through the annual Regional planning process.

## **(1) The efficiency and effectiveness of the joint arrangements by the Commonwealth and NSW State Government for approval of the annual expenditure plan for the HACC program, with a focus on the timeliness of agreement of the plan and discharging of grants;**

The delay in funding allocations significantly impacts on service level and regional planning, and reduces services available to the community.

When the funds become available they are often allocated to services without adequate information and negotiation.

By the time services receive funding the demand for services has increased, and other government priorities and policy initiatives, such as changes to Department of Housing allocations or availability of Community Aged Care Packages, may have significantly changed the mix of services required to respond effectively to community need.

There is a lack of clear information about how Regional planning processes inform the State plan.

The State plan and information about the progress of allocations is not available to the sector to inform ongoing planning processes.

There is a lack of clarity, integration and planning between different community care and programs such as Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and National Respite for Carers Program.

The delay in allocations, lack of information about likely allocations and timeframes has made service level and regional planning extremely difficult and confusing. The same regional priorities are often put forward year after year to ensure that funding is available to critical services that impact on the functioning of the service network as a whole, and because it is not known when or what mix of services will eventually be funded. This may result in critical service types, such as Home Care services, receiving regular growth funding but at the expense of growth funding being made available to other types of support services that when available prevent the need for more costly services. This in turn creates a cycle that increases pressure on a range of services to address unmet demands that become more difficult to resolve effectively through the annual planning process.

**Recommendations:**

Commonwealth and State Governments to:

- move to a three year planning cycle
- develop a Memorandum of Understanding to assist communication processes and timeliness of allocations

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to:

- release HACC State plans, timetable and progress reports to the sector
- improve the information flow between Central and Regional Offices
- commit to negotiating funding allocations with service providers to ensure the funds are targeted effectively
- provide the Region with adequate, consistent and transparent information in relation to determining funding allocations
- communicate with other government departments to improve understanding, integration and planning between different community care and health programs

**(2) A follow-up inquiry of the Auditor-General's review of the NSW Home Care Service in terms of:**

- (a) Strategies for addressing unmet need in the context of growing demand for services from eligible parties
- (b) The effectiveness of Home Care Service processes for managing access to services, across service types
- (c) The extent of consumer input to Home Care Service design, management or delivery of programs and other mechanisms for assessing service quality
- (d) The implementation by DADHC and Home Care Service of systems and processes to plan, monitor, report on and improve accountability of the service;

The Forum is not clear how the recommendations from the Auditor-General's review are being implemented or progressed by NSW Home Care.

The capacity of NSW Home Care services to respond to demand significantly impacts on other community care providers in the Region. In the past, the inability of Home Care services to respond to need, and the delay in grant allocations, put significant pressure on the Eastern Sydney service system. This was especially so for case management services, which were forced to broker services out to higher cost private providers to meet demand for Home Care services. Although Home Care services are currently available, largely due to the recent funding of other providers in the Region, long term planning strategies to meet demand in a timely manner are not known.

The need to network closely with a range of services, especially other Home Care service providers in Eastern Sydney, has been identified by Forum members.

Common reports from within the Region suggest that low need clients may not be receiving an adequate service, especially if they require a service out of normal business hours.

### **Aboriginal Home Care**

Eastern Sydney has a significant Aboriginal population and the demand for HACC services is high. The demand to support clients with a range of complex needs is increasing, especially given the difficulty of transitioning clients to more appropriate services that are funded to support clients with complex needs.

Eastern Sydney Services are concerned that the service delivery area of Alleena - Aboriginal Home Care Service has been expanded to cover a very large part of Sydney without extra resources. This decision was made without sector consultation and hence without regard for the impact on other services, Aboriginal service networks and infrastructure. The pressure placed on Alleena to respond to these demands with limited resources within Eastern Sydney, as well as other areas, is unacceptable.

The Aboriginal Access Officer positions are currently under review by DADHC. The Forum is concerned that these positions will not be continued or will be amalgamated with development roles. Aboriginal Access Officers play a critical role in ensuring Aboriginal people get access to a range of services and inform mainstream services of culturally appropriate practices.

### **Recommendations**

NSW Home Care to:

- develop a communication strategy to ensure regional strategies to meet demand and information about service capacity are known within the Region
- commit to regular involvement in local network meetings and to participate in regional planning processes

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to:

- adequately resource and support Aboriginal Home Care Services
- reduce the service delivery area of Alleena Home Care to a realistic level
- retain the Aboriginal Access Officer position at Alleena and ensure adequate resources are provided to the service to enable the role to be fulfilled
- consider funding an Aboriginal HACC Development Officer for Eastern Sydney

### **3) Any other relevant matters**

#### **Data collection**

The collection of quality data is imperative for service, Regional and State planning purposes. Services welcome the DADHC commitment to improve the ease of data

reporting through the minimum data set (MDS) and improvements to the system to enable service level interrogation of the data.

### **Recommendations**

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to:

- investigate providing services with Regional and Local Government Area reports collected through the MDS
- investigate the inclusion of service capacity and qualitative data in the MDS collection

### **Commonwealth Government Reforms**

The Commonwealth Government aims to significantly change community aged care service provision under the *Way Forward* reforms. They are moving towards implementation of these reforms with out adequate consultation with HACC providers and without consideration of the impact on the HACC target group.

Services in Eastern Sydney are particularly concerned that the needs of people with a disability are not adequately being considered in the development of strategies to streamline assessment services.

### **Recommendations:**

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to advocate to the Commonwealth for adequate consultation with HACC services in relation to Commonwealth Community Care Reforms.

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If you have any queries or seek further information please do not hesitate to contact, Chris Bath, on 02) 9698 7784 or [haccdo@inet.net.au](mailto:haccdo@inet.net.au).

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of the Eastern Sydney HACC Forum