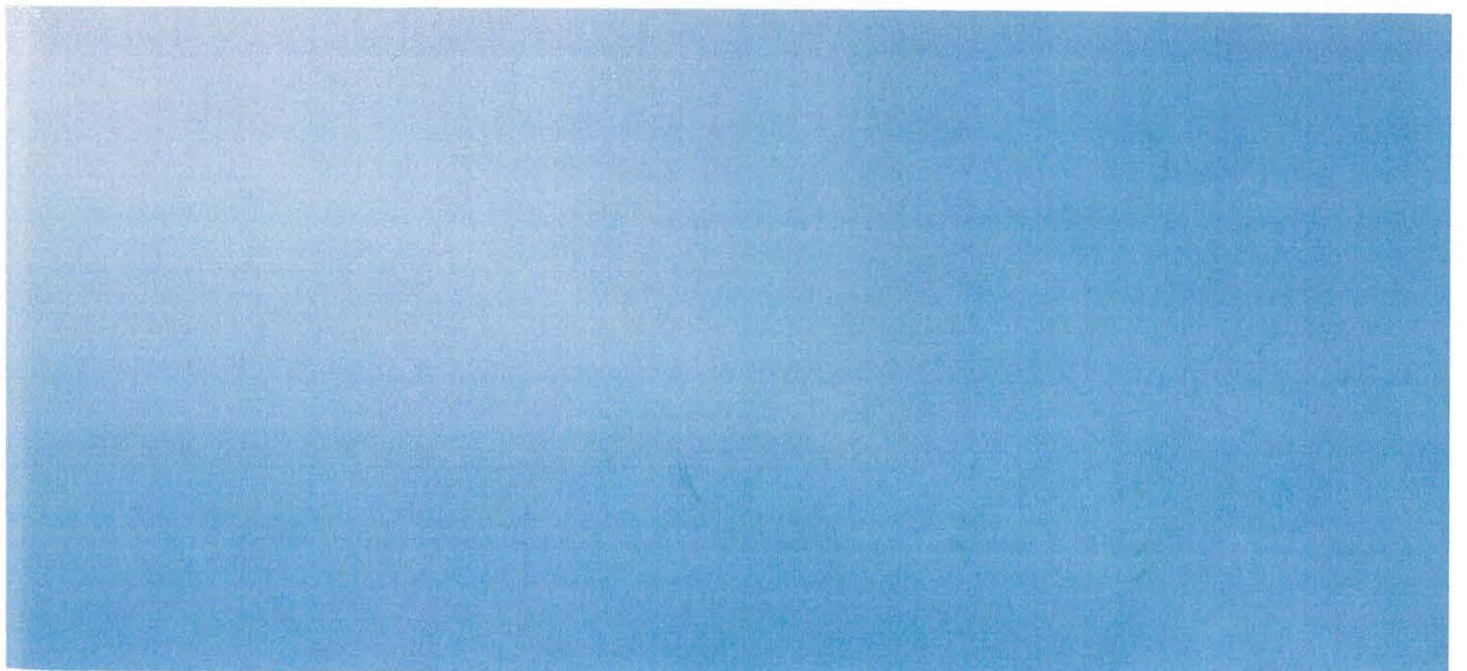


EAST DUBBO MINISTER'S ACTION GROUP

Discussion Paper Report



Document prepared July 2013 by the East Dubbo Ministers Action Group for the Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Women.

BACKGROUND

On 1 March 2012, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Hon. Pru Goward MP and Local Member for Dubbo, Troy Grant MP visited the Apollo Estate following media attention and community concerns in relation to anti-social behaviour events.

Following this visit, the Minister publicly announced that action would be taken to improve the lives of residents of the Apollo Estate and to address the anti-social behaviour.

On 12 April 2012, a Stakeholder Forum was convened for local agencies to identify a collaborative approach to address community concerns; this resulted in the formation of the East Dubbo Minister's Action Group (MAG).

The purpose of the MAG was to drive a program of change for the community, to respond to issues on the East Dubbo Apollo Estate and enable improved outcomes for residents living there. The MAG followed the Dubbo Transformation Strategy (West Dubbo Gordon Estate) and the East Dubbo Apollo Estate Building Stronger Communities Program.

The MAG authored a Discussion Paper which was presented to the Minister on 07 January 2013. Contained within that document were 43 strategies to tackle systemic issues and bring about sustainable change in Dubbo.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (MAG Committee Membership)

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| • Troy Grant MP (Chair) | Member for Dubbo |
| • John Watts | Dubbo City Council |
| • Narelle Jeffrey | Attorney General & Justice - Community Corrections |
| • Rod Blackman | Attorney General & Justice - NSW Police |
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| • Jason Collins | Premier & Cabinet |
| • Raphael Chapman | Western NSW Local Health District |
| • Julie Cooper | Western NSW Local Health District |
| • David Ryan | Uniting Care Burnside |

FORWARD

The Minister's Action Group was established on 1 March 2012 to clearly drive a program of change for the community, to respond to issues on the East Dubbo Apollo Estate and enable improved outcomes for residents living there.

This group's establishment followed previous incarnations of Whole of Government Human Services forums such as the Dubbo Transformation Strategy (West Dubbo Gordon Estate) and the East Dubbo Apollo Estate Building Stronger Communities program.


So why are we still here with yet another collaboration of State and Federal agencies essentially talking about the same people in the same location with the same issues, just a generation on? We came together then we drifted apart, we came together we drifted apart. It was only crisis and issues reaching a tipping point until we re-engaged in dialogue to integrate our efforts. I do not for a moment detract from many of the achievements made in the previous incarnations of human service agencies efforts nor the very best efforts of individual agencies trying to deliver services to a perennially and entrenched socio-economic group within the Dubbo City Local Government area.

We have arrived back at this point if we are honest with ourselves, because previously we have talked far more than we have walked in truly addressing the issues that drove us to the point of formation and frustration. We have previously failed as a collective to put forward strategies and grasp the opportunities that are present to us to address the fundamental drivers of the social and welfare issues engulfing our community. There has been an assumption that certain issues lay at the feet of a particular organisation when it is clear that these issues and their challenges are not mutually exclusive to one agency. We have repeatedly as service providers failed to identify or adopt the longer term sustainable options over the 'quick fix' more expensive options.

In the pursuit of the longer term sustainable options I concede that many of these opportunities are not easy issues to address or adopt, they are confronting, they challenge the status quo and to some they may be distasteful options. But they are necessary options because we have arrived yet again at the same point from which we have previously made many a start.

I feel strongly that we owe it to this community and the many other communities across New South Wales and potentially across our Nation to adopt the many options within this paper to achieve real change for the long term. This paper presents and articulates with evidence and a clear pathway the opportunities that present to the Government and Non Government Sector for adoption.

I thank and commend the Members of the Minister's Action Group (East Dubbo Apollo Estate) for stepping outside of their comfort zones and collectively presenting these opportunities to drive a program of change, not only for today but for the sustainable future.



Troy Grant MLA
Member for Dubbo



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by the Minister for Family and Community Services to examine 43 strategies submitted by the East Dubbo Ministers Action Group (MAG) as a means necessary to bring out long term sustainable change in the social housing estate known as East Dubbo Apollo.

The strategies were originally presented in a Discussion Paper (authored by the MAG) on 7 January 2013. The Hon. Pru Goward MP requested further work be undertaken to progress these strategies so that a more detailed Action Plan can be developed for the East Dubbo Estate. A Senior Project Officer was recruited and has worked on reviewing each of the strategies. This has involved extensive research within FACS, with other agencies (both State and Federal), and included detailed consultations with the local Council and the non government sector. The strategies have been classified into four main categories and extensive work has already been undertaken to implement a number of the strategies into normal business activities. The MAG acted on the Ministers request and presents this report as the outcome of that work.

Actions in Place:

The following strategies from the Discussion Paper have been implemented as part of normal business within agencies in Dubbo.

- 2.1.1 The MAG formed a Senior Steering Committee (SSC).
- 2.1.2 A Dubbo Management Group has been established.
- 2.2.1 FACS is conducting rights and responsibilities information sessions for tenants and community.
- 2.2.4 FACS has entered whole of sector dialogue regarding housing issues in and around.
- 3.1.1 FACS has funded the Rent It Keep It program.
- 5.1.1 FACS has implemented a schedule of Client Service Visits for public housing tenancies.
- 5.2.1 FACS has developed a process to reduce anti social behaviour and unauthorised occupants during disaster recovery periods.
- 5.3.1 Police are supporting victims of domestic violence as host to the Staying Home Leaving Violence program.
- 5.5.8 Police are improving relationships with community, supporting at risk youth and taking kids to school.
- 7.1.1 LAHC has commenced a program to de-concentrate the estate by selling 50 dwellings to owner occupier buyers.
- 7.1.3 LAHC has increased the portfolio of videofied security systems used to protect vacant property from vandalism and arson.
- 7.1.5 LAHC has tightened demolition procedures ensuring a timely response to fire damaged property.
- 7.2.3 Dubbo City Council has increased street sweeping services.

Actions that will be put in place:

The following strategies have received commitment from the various agencies involved and will be implemented in the coming months.

- 2.1.3 The newly formed SSC will establish a Local Interagency Network.
- 2.2.2 SSC will consult and inform the community.
- 2.2.3 The SSC will work with all agencies to develop the knowledge and capacity of our front line staff.
- 4.1.1 FACS will introduce a Local Allocation Strategy to improve social housing allocations.
- 4.2.1 FACS will offer greater levels of support and referral to all new tenants.
- 5.2.2 FACS will reduce under occupancy in public housing by encouraging tenants to downsize.
- 5.5.1 The SSC will consider requests to fund financial incentives for clients to engage and participate in programs.

5.5.2 Education and Communities will work with the local retail sector discouraging transactions with school aged children during school hours.

5.5.3 SSC will promote and develop community leaders.

5.5.4 SSC will continue to promote agencies delivering services from Apollo House.

5.5.6 SSC will support and coordinate recreational activities for youth.

6.1.1 FACS will provide additional support to tenants at sign up.

6.1.2 SSC will strengthen coordinated and multi agency case management practices.

7.1.6 FACS will promote the Handyperson and issue cleaning packs to all new tenancies.

Further discussion required or referred to other agencies:

The following strategies require further work before they can be implemented or the strategy requires approval before it can be progressed.

2.3.1 SSC has commissioned a paper aimed at improving engagement of at risk parents.

4.2.2 The Australian Government is considering a Housing Payment Deduction Scheme.

4.2.3 Mandatory bonds for tenant damage. To be referred to Land and Housing Corporation

5.2.3 Breach of Tenancy Agreement due to drug related matters. To be referred to the Department of Fair Trading.

5.2.4 The SSC will review options to better manage bail arrangements.

5.3.2 NSW Police to progress with Health proposals to better manage the illegal use of prescription drugs.

5.4.1 Property care – Pets. To be referred to Housing NSW

5.5.5 FACS to consider funding for the Resilience program delivered from Apollo House to for the period following 2014.

5.5.7 The SSC will develop mechanisms to place, at risk youth found wandering the streets at night in a safe environment.

6.2.1 Specific Performance Order for Mandatory Support Plan. To be referred to the Department of Fair Trading

7.1.4 Restrictions for assistance. To be referred to Land and Housing Corporation

7.2.1 Dubbo Council has applied for funding to install CCTV cameras at the Myall Street shopping complex in Apollo.

The following items require no further action as policy changes have been made over the last 12 months that render the strategy complete.

2.2.5 The NSW Government has a media strategy in place. No further action (NFA) required.

3.2.1 Changes to social housing eligibility criteria. This can be managed by strategy 4.1.1.

7.1.2 Properties for affordable housing. Contingency strategy dependent on de-concentration program.

7.2.2 Increased maintenance of Apollo estates Lunar Park. NFA required

2.1.1 The Senior Steering Committee

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

There is a need for a Senior Steering Committee focusing on the Dubbo community that provides strategic direction, resource allocation and approval to pursue collective local goals and outcomes. A robust co-ordination framework is essential to enable the community, non-government agencies and levels of government to work efficiently and effectively bring about the changes necessary to improve the outcomes.

- Establish the Senior Officers Group for Dubbo with a Terms of Reference and nomination of members.

Discussion

The chair of the Minister's Action Group (MAG), and MAG members, agreed the MAG should conclude with the submission of this paper. Evolving from the Minister's Action Group is a Senior Steering Committee.

The Senior Steering Committee will:

- Provide the local leadership and guidance to the strategic planning and integrated program implementation across Dubbo.
- Be a strategic senior group that focuses primarily on the longer time horizon and sustainable activities being implemented.
- Report on strategic outcomes, issues and future actions to their 'heads of agencies' and, cascade information down through the Dubbo Management Group to the Local Interagency Network.

The committee will have communication relationships with the Regional Leadership Group, the formal mechanism to lead coordinated delivery of NSW 2021 Regional Action Plans, and the Social Housing Taskforce.

Membership comprises senior officer representatives from various NSW Government agencies including the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Dubbo City Council and the Local Member for Dubbo, Troy Grant MP. An independent chair has been engaged.

Local Government	State Government	
Dubbo City Council Member for Dubbo	Family & Community Services - Housing NSW - Aboriginal Housing Office - Aging Disability & Homecare - Community Services	Education & Communities - NSW Public Schools - Aboriginal Affairs - Sport & Recreation
Federal Government FAHCSIA	Attorney General & Justice - NSW Police - Community Corrections - Juvenile Justice - Fire & Rescue - Legal Aid	Premier & Cabinet Finance & Services - Land & Housing Corporation Health - Western NSW Local Health District
Peak Bodies Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working Party		

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the East Dubbo Ministers Action Group has evolved into the Senior Steering Committee.

2.1.2 The Dubbo Management Group¹

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The Ministers Action Group believed to drive the implementation of programs, projects and activities to ensure an improvement in service delivery and community outcomes, an emphasis needed to be placed on maintaining an effective managers group in Dubbo.

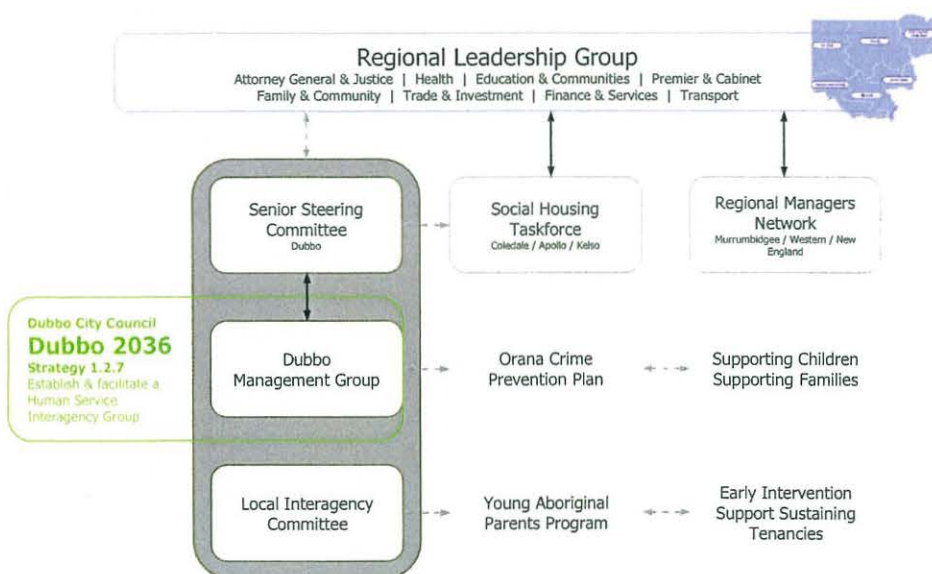
- Consolidate individual program groups so that either information or attendance is directly captured within the Dubbo Management Group so that there is visibility across all activity within Dubbo.

Discussion

To translate strategic planning to action and activity, a Dubbo Managers Group has been formed to work in tandem with the Senior Steering Committee. The Dubbo Management Group will:

- Translate strategic planning into actions and activity.
- Focus on the delivery of projects, programs and responses to ensure that they are being delivered in an effective manner.
- Be the focal point for managing service delivery escalations, crisis management and community consultations.
- Develop and maintain knowledge and competency within the interagency network.
- Educate, inform, consult and receive feedback from community.

Dubbo City Council with chair and provide secretariat aligning with councils Dubbo 2036 Community Strategic Plan.



Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note that the Dubbo Management Group will work across Dubbo.

¹ Formerly termed Operational Management Group

2.1.3 The Local Interagency Network (LIN)

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The premise for coordinated support to individuals and households is that an integrated and holistic approach will deliver enhanced benefits for the recipient and, provide a higher propensity for improved and more sustainable household functionality. This is problematic where agencies align their resources to their core business, do not acknowledge client needs beyond their core business and ignore the opportunity to collaborate with other agencies to provide solutions for individuals and households.

- Establish a Local Interagency Network concerned with complex client needs, that will provide sophisticated responses and advocating for brokerage funding / support).

Discussion

The Local Interagency Network (LIN), as it is termed in the Minister's Action Group Discussion Paper, is made up of front line staff and practitioners across government and non government agencies that provide service in Dubbo.

The LIN will not necessarily attend monthly meetings but rather is a directory of staff / services that can be convened, as required, to respond to individual client circumstances. The LIN will come together to develop and implement coordinated support plans for clients with unmet need, or, with need that extends across two or more agencies.

The Dubbo Management Group (DMG) will establish the LIN and act as an escalation point for integrated service barriers.

Relevant to the LIN:

- Western Family Referral Service is developing an induction process for new staff in the Human Service sector in Dubbo area. Currently the Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre is running "get to know" barbecues for new staff to Dubbo. The managers of Western Family Referral Service and the Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre will develop their induction process as an extension of these monthly barbecues.
- Western Family Referral Service, Dubbo City Council and Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre will consolidate Service Directories making it easier for staff to find and access services in Dubbo.
- Housing NSW and Community Services are conducting joint home visits for clients presenting with issues relevant to both agencies. A Joint Home Visit Protocol is in the final stages of development.
- Housing NSW and Community Services has commenced a schedule of information exchange meetings attended by front line staff across both agency streams.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note that the Dubbo Management Group will develop and coordinate this strategy.

2.2.1 Information Sessions with Tenants / Community

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Tenants and the general community are not aware of (or are reluctant to abide by) their entitlements, rights and obligations. To effect changes in Dubbo it is first necessary to establish a baseline that clearly articulates the expectations, community has for its members. Information goes a long way toward empowering people and building their capacity however, there is a mutual obligation that must be conveyed.

- Agencies to educate the community about products and services, entitlements, rights and obligations
- Develop a schedule of community workshops and information sessions that educate the community on available products and services and re-affirms entitlements, rights and obligations.

Discussion

Western Family Referral Service is providing outreach services in Apollo every second Thursday afternoon for two hours. The service delivers:

- A visible point of entry to the full range of services required by vulnerable families
- Initial needs identification and assessment of underlying risk to children or young people
- Identification of the most appropriate service response for families
- Active, supported referral strategies that can influence the uptake of service by families
- Sustained contact to support successful referral

Housing NSW Anti Social Behaviour Specialist officer is conducting information sessions at Apollo House. The Anti Social Behaviour Specialist attends existing workshops / groups hosted by Resilience and talks to participants about their rights and obligations as a social housing tenant.

The Dubbo Management Group will oversee ongoing information and education programs.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note increased service levels.

2.2.2 Regular interaction with Community – Updates and Feedback

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The Dubbo approaches will only become sustainable through the community owning the processes, committing to the necessary actions and supporting agencies to deliver the services. Without regular interaction with the community this will not be achieved.

There will be an important initial action for the elements of this Discussion Paper to be communicated to the community in which the strategies will be applied. Although not all of the strategies will be embraced by all members of the community it will be critical for embedding the strategies for the long term that there is recognition of the issues, understanding of the strategy to respond and, support from the community to contribute to the effectiveness of the strategy proposed

- SCC to develop a communication strategy for the Discussion Paper

Discussion

Content of the Discussion Paper remained confidential for the life of the Ministers Action Group preventing any genuine communication or consultation during this period. Authorship and intent of the document was communicated through media by the Dubbo Local Member and at a community forum hosted by the Ministers Action Group on 29 April 2013. Selected strategies were introduced in broad terms.

The Senior Steering Committee will lead community consultation activities as business as usual response to change as need arises.

A specific communication strategy exists for the De-concentration of Social Housing. Refer to item 7.1.1.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the role of the Senior Steering Committee in future communication and consultation activities.

2.2.3 Maintaining knowledge and competency within Interagency Network

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

To develop and implement effective coordinated support plans, operational staff needs to be well trained and maintain a sound knowledge of other agency products and services.

Agencies need to start thinking in a more integrated and holistic manner about coordinated support planning, to improve the access for the client, improve the efficiencies of the service delivery and secure some sustainable benefit for the community. To achieve this, it is important that operational staff is exposed to the operations of other agencies, are familiar with the full gamete of products and services, understand which non-government agencies are funded to provide what services and have initiated relationships with actual people in similar roles across the LIN so that engagement is encouraged and agency support is accessible

- SCC to create a program for the development of the LIN and their broad knowledge across Dubbo service network.

Discussion

The Ministers Action Group (MAG) has evolved to a Senior Steering Committee (SCC) supported by a Dubbo Managers Group (DMG). Developing and maintaining knowledge and competency within the interagency network will be a key focus for both committees.

Work to date:

- Joint training and team building activities are taking place within FACS as a direct result of Localisation and Co-location (office accommodation) reforms.
- Western Family Referral Service is developing an induction process for new staff in the Human Service sector in Dubbo area. Currently the neighbourhood centre is running "get to know" barbecues for new staff to Dubbo. The managers of Western Family Referral Service and the Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre will develop their induction process as an extension of these monthly barbecues.
- Western Family Referral Service, Dubbo City Council and Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre will consolidate Service Directories making it easier for staff to find and access services in Dubbo.
- Housing NSW and Community Services are conducting joint home visits for clients presenting with issues relevant to both agencies. A Joint Home Visit Protocol is in the final stages of development.
- Housing NSW and Community Services has commenced a schedule of information exchange meetings attended by front line staff across both agency streams.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note that the Senior Steering Committee will develop and coordinate this strategy.

2.2.4 Workshop with Accommodation Providers in Dubbo

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Access to accommodation in Dubbo is not restricted to social housing and there are some important issues that require a 'whole of sector' response.

- Initiate sector wide dialogue to understand the issues better, acknowledge the concerns and limitations of the sector, and explore together the opportunities for responding favourably for the community.

Discussion

A number of critical issues are affecting access for people to secure accommodation in Dubbo:

- Lack of affordable housing options
- Imminent impact of mining industry on local rental market
- Homelessness and overcrowding
- Ageing population
- Past tenant history
- Complex client needs
- Home ownership
- Disaster Recovery impacts
- General emergency / temporary accommodation needs

Dubbo City Council host regular meetings with the Real Estate Institute of NSW (Orana Division) and developers discussing housing; supply and demand, opportunities and constraints, and residential development requirements.

Membership has been expanded and Social Housing is now represented on the group.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note that social housing is represented in sector wide dialogue.

2.2.5 Media Strategy and Governance

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Need for a focal point for media matters and co-ordination of positive stories and agency announcements

- Implement a media strategy and governance framework for distributing media items within the MAG
- A central register of media items be retained either by the Local Member's Office or the secretariat provided to the MAG (currently provided by Housing NSW)

Discussion

The local Member for Dubbo, Troy Grant MP, has promoted the Minister's Action Group (MAG), and related activities, through standard media outlets on a regular basis.

Participating government agencies each have internal media protocols and are bound to comply with such.

Good news media items are released by government agencies, and the Member for Dubbo, in accordance with internal media protocols. A review of the delegation to approve good new media releases may increase frequency of positive media.

A record of media relating to East Dubbo (Apollo) has been maintained by Housing NSW.

Recommendation

- It is recommended the Minister note the media strategy.

2.3.1 Research Grant to Senior Steering Committee

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Evidence suggests that children committing frequent and significant acts of criminal and antisocial behaviour can have their actions traced back to learnt behaviours. In some preliminary studies undertaken to date it has been hypothesised that the influence of family, role models and the level of household functionality have a causal effect on framing the attitudes, values and behaviours of children from birth. Where the child is displaying excessive antisocial behaviour, exhibited through frequent and serious acts of criminal behaviour, invariably there are links to adverse impacts of the child's experience from birth. It would be ideal to achieve a study of this hypothesis for the Dubbo community.

- Determination of a Grant to the Senior Steering Committee to tender to appropriate qualified providers to explore and report on "The relationship between juvenile crime and the experiences of these children since birth – identifying risk factors and integrated support to achieve better outcomes".

Discussion

A review of existing research identified a plethora of information available on this topic. The Minister's Action Group decided to digress from the original recommendation and focus on how to engage at risk parents. A sub committee was formed to research and draft a regional service delivery model. The sub committee, led by Western NSW Local Health District, will respond to the Senior Steering Committee.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the action.

3.1.1 Courses for applicants – Prepared for Renting

East Dubbo Ministers Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Priority approved applicants are housed by HNSW at the earliest possible opportunity, invariably they will require a coordinated support by virtue of meeting the eligibility criteria. The General Waitlist however is populated with more functional applicant's that are awaiting social housing based primarily on being on a statutory income and not being able (or not trying to access the private rental market).

In social housing it is observed that applicants do not consider the rights and responsibilities at the time of sign-up, preferring to get the keys and move in but as time passes the lack of retention of information from the sign-up either leaves them unaware of their rights and possibly ignoring their responsibilities under the Tenancy Agreement.

It would be beneficial for applicant's to undertake a course that prepared them for renting into the future.

Consultation with the Real Estate sector might prove to have this course acknowledged as a redeeming action by the applicant.

- Offer Rent It Keep It (RIKI) course in Dubbo
- Consider reward system for applicants who successfully complete Rent It Keep it
- Confirm ability for Tenant Participation Resource Service providers to deliver Rent It Keep it (RIKI)

Discussion

Rent It Keep It (RIKI) is a tenancy training package developed by Housing NSW to assist people to secure and maintain a private rental tenancy. RIKI is particularly designed for people who have had little experience in the private rental market or who have had problems with their tenancies in the past.

Carewest run the RIKI course in Dubbo for clients accessing the Young Aboriginal Parent Program (Western NSW Regional Homelessness Action Plan Project).

Contact with real estates across Dubbo indicates a regard for the RIKI program and a willingness to receive certificates of successful completion as a qualification to be considered when reviewing applications for housing.

Housing NSW fund (up to 30 June 2014) the Tenant Participation Resource Services Program (TPRS) delivered by Centacare in Dubbo. Increased access to information, advice and opportunity (for social housing clients) are clear goals of the program which can be further defined as; informing clients of their rights and responsibilities and supporting clients with their housing needs.

Housing NSW has contracted the TPRS provider (Centacare) to deliver the RIKI program in Dubbo. Supported by Housing NSW (referral and guest speaking) and Carewest (training and mentoring), Centacare will run not less than six RIKI courses in Dubbo during the contract period. Sessions will be advertised and participation open. Housing NSW will refer clients presenting with urgent housing need, and clients on the general wait list for social housing. Certificates of attendance will be issued and can be used by participants to support applications for housing with private Real Estates.

Proposal to encourage participation by offering reward in the form of wait list escalation has not been supported. Policy and accessibility (to social housing) must be fair and equitable. RIKI is not a business as usual product and is not accessible in all locations (across NSW). Put simply clients who live in locations where RIKI is not offered, or offered infrequently, may be disadvantaged on the NSW Housing Register by not having access to RIKI.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note Rent It Keep It will be delivered in Dubbo.

3.2.1 Improving social housing allocations

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The appropriateness of social housing allocations can have significant impacts on the sustainability of individual tenancies and harmony within a community.

It is more likely that a person with higher risk factors and household dysfunction will accept an offer to a concentrated social housing area rather than seek private rental opportunities or decline that offer in the attempt that their second offer will be more acceptable.

Over time Estates become concentrated areas of disadvantage and high need tenancies. There inevitably is a 'tipping point' in which the level of dysfunction has diminishing returns for the level of agency support that is occurring and/or can be funded ongoing.

- HNSW to determine the Policy implications for gathering additional information at application stage and considering said information in the allocations process.

Discussion

The Discussion Paper acknowledges the need for social housing providers to consider client circumstances and to ensure that a housing allocation offers the opportunity to sustain a tenancy. It has been suggested that consideration of an applicant's rental history, household behaviour, social networks and support needs may offer 'triggers' for accommodation providers to discuss risk factors, promote coordinated support plans, and identify suitable allocations. It has been suggested rental history, references from former landlords and contact with relevant agencies to confirm relationship be incorporated into the application process.

Mechanisms to collect information relating to disability or medical conditions, specific housing needs, existing support arrangements and rental history exist within the current social housing application framework. Trigger questions prompt identification and exploration during the interview process using scripted interview questions. Outcomes are then managed via eligibility and fixed term lease policies. The process however relies on disclosure and client consent.

The gap, as raised by the Discussion Paper, is in fact how we manage and respond to non disclosure and/or no consent. Housing NSW does not intend to introduce validation or relationship checks in the social housing application process. Housing NSW will enhance the application and allocation process by implementing a Local Allocation Strategy (4.1.1) within the limitations of the product i.e. property is a fixed asset, matching clients with suitable allocations will always be limited by the scope of product available to be offered. Individual needs that can not be met or addressed by suitable housing allocation are supported by referral and coordinated support (with the clients consent).

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the decision not to change the allocation process to seek additional information than that already required. However, the proposed Local Allocation Strategy will help to reduce anti-social behaviour.

4.1.1 A Local Allocation Strategy

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Allocations and offers for accommodation are critical elements to a successful and sustainable tenancy. As an Estate becomes stigmatised it also seems to become the focal point for allocations due to higher turn over of tenancies. It is important to make allocations that will contribute to the East Dubbo Apollo Estate rather than intensify the social issues.

- HNSW develop a Local Allocation Strategy for the East Dubbo Apollo Estate (and the Alcheringa & Levers Street Precinct).

Discussion

Local Allocation Strategies (LAS) are a formal approach within a policy framework that takes into account the characteristics of an area, state or building, as well as the characteristics of clients when determining the most suitable allocation. LAS aim to ensure that all applicants including applicants for transfers are allocated dwellings that address their specific housing needs, and promote successful and sustainable tenancies.

A LAS for Dubbo has been drafted and is expected to be ready for implementation by the end of 2013.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the proposed action.

4.2.1 Sign-Up – Starting a Tenancy

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

HNSW has the opportunity to instigate non standard Fixed Term Leases for high risk tenants to reinforce the fragility of their tenancy should they breach or begin to ignore their responsibilities under the Tenancy Agreement. Determining the manner in which a high risk applicant might be accommodated involves a decision about the length of the Fixed Term Lease and communicating strict expectations, to ensure that right from the outset the tenancy has every opportunity for success.

- Coordinated Support Plan (6.1.1) offered to all new tenancies for high risk applicants.
- Implement practice whereby all high risk tenancies are signed to fixed term lease process.
- Visitor Sanction applied to all 3 and 6 moth fixed term leases.
- Provide clear expectations of compliance at signup
- Involve Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working Party (DACWP) in meeting with all tenants and communicating the cultural significance of the Dubbo area and the cultural expectations of each household. This would occur once a month with invitations to all new tenants to attend.

Discussion

Housing NSW offer a fixed term lease of six months to former tenants who were classified as unsatisfactory, or less than satisfactory (due to having a record of substantiated nuisance and annoyance), and applicants who had a history of nuisance and annoyance as an additional household member in another person's tenancy. Where a six month tenancy is applied the tenant must have demonstrated an ability to sustain a successful tenancy² to be approved for lease extension. Six month leases can be extended for a further six month lease (up to three times) before graduating to a 2, 5 or 10 year lease. Housing NSW will issue a Notice of Termination under Section 84 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* if the tenant is not eligible for lease extension

Housing NSW will apply a fixed term lease process in Dubbo for high risk tenants³ under a Local Allocation Strategy (4.1.1). The length and number of fixed term leases offered will align with current policy, differing from the explicit recommendation in the Discussion Paper, to mitigate workload impacts. The delegation to issue a Notice of Termination under Section 84 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, where the high risk tenant is not eligible for lease extension, will be elevated to the Area Director.

Support plans are offered at application and reviewed at signup (refer 6.1.1).

Housing NSW will continue to apply Visitor Sanctions in line with current policy i.e. automatic application at sign up will not be adopted.

Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working Party (DACWP) advised inability to provide regular information sessions with new tenants as recommended in the Discussion Paper.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the proposed action.

² Eligibility for Social Housing Policy - Ability to sustain a successful tenancy:

- To be eligible for social housing, the client must be able to sustain a successful tenancy. This means that they must be able to meet the obligations of their tenancy, with or without support. When determining whether social housing is the most appropriate housing option for an applicant, the social housing provider will consider whether the applicant is able to: pay their rent, and look after their property, and not create a nuisance and annoyance to their neighbours, and live independently with, or without support, and live in the property on an ongoing basis.

³ High risk tenant (applicant) is defined as:

- Former tenants eligible for fixed term lease under Housing NSW Types and Lengths of Lease policy, or
- Complex clients as defined in the Housing Pathways guide to prioritising assessment Housing Register, Priority Housing, Transfer and Change of Circumstances applications.

4.2.2 Mandatory Rent Deduction

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Housing NSW encourages tenants to pay their rent through Centrelink's automatic Rent Deduction Scheme (RDS). Although new tenants are required to sign an authority for automatic deductions (RDS), the scheme is voluntary and authority can be withdrawn post tenancy commencement.

- Explore with the Federal Government (Centrelink) the possibility of a Mandatory Rent Deduction Scheme.

Discussion

As at April 2013, over 11,500 households living in FACS (HNSW) and NSW Aboriginal Housing Office properties were in arrears, with over 2,500 having arrears of more than four weeks. The vast majority of social housing evictions (over 80%) are due to arrears. In 2012 the number of evictions due to arrears doubled compared to 2011 – from 116 as at June 2011 to 233 at June 2012.⁴

*The Australian Government released an exposure draft of a Bill aimed at assisting in the prevention of evictions and possible homelessness of public housing tenants (including tenants of state owned and managed Indigenous housing) due to unpaid rent. The draft Amended Public Housing Tenants' Support Bill 2013 will allow public housing costs required to be paid under a public housing lease to be deducted from the lessee's income support payment providing they are either in arrears or are at risk of arrears. Not all tenants of public housing will be included. Tenants will have deductions made from their income support payments as a last resort to prevent build-up of arrears and possible eviction from public housing.*⁵

The Public Housing Tenants Support Bill was introduced into parliament on 29 May 2013 and referred to the Senate on 18 June 2013.


Recommendation

- It is recommended the Minister continue to encourage the Australian Government to adopt the measure.

⁴ Expected Benefits of the HPDS for NSW – Housing System Reform – 08 May 2013

⁵ www.fahcsia.gov.au – 16 April 2013

4.2.3 Mandatory Bond for Applicants with Tenant Damage History and / or Vacated Debts



East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Many tenants vacate properties with debts and tenant damage but are unlikely to repay these debts even when they return to social housing for assistance.

Minister Pearce (NSW Department of Finance & Services) has indicated that the NSW Government will look at using bonds and other strategies to curb deliberate vandalism to social housing properties which costs millions of dollars every year to repair.

- Land & Housing Corporation will explore a number of strategies to discourage tenants from damaging homes including the payment of a bond (especially for high risk applicants with a history of damaging properties and who are requesting to be considered for re-housing).

Discussion

The feasibility of introducing a bond scheme was investigated by Housing NSW in 2002 and 2003 but was not pursued as it was determined that the cost of administering payments outweighed the financial benefits.

The Land and Housing Corporation and Housing NSW are currently working together on a joint strategy called Management of Tenant Damage Project. The project aims to reduce property damage, increase tenant's responsibility and improve the recovery rate of repair charges.

Strategy 4.2.3 of the Ministers Action Group Discussion Paper was stayed in favour of the mentioned Management of Tenant Damage Project.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the stay in favour of the Land and Housing Corporation and Housing NSW Management of Tenant Damage Project.

5.1.1 Client Service Visits

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The scheduling of regular Client Service Visits is a critical strategy for the Dubbo social housing community; to support tenancy agreements, determine general household functionality, identify unauthorised visitors and address issues of property care / tenant damage.

Housing NSW has implemented a temporary project team in the East Dubbo Apollo Estate to focus on tenancy management activities. A schedule has been developed and implemented to ensure that all tenants have received a formal Client Service Visit. The feedback from the tenants has been favourable and in a number of instances, tenants have engaged local trades to have tenant damage repaired to standard at their own cost.

- Housing NSW ensure that regular client service visits are conducted for tenants within East Dubbo Apollo Estate (and Dubbo)

Discussion

Housing NSW makes regular contact with its tenants. This enables Housing NSW to maintain LAHC properties and help to sustain tenancies. Client Service Visits (CSVs) promote communication, build relationships between tenant and landlord, identify tenancy management issues and sustain tenancies through early intervention.

Housing NSW conducts CSVs within eight weeks of the start of any new tenancy, then as required where a tenancy is identified as being at risk, or to keep up to date with tenancy management needs:

- Finding out about problems a tenant may be experiencing with their tenancy such as maintenance issues, problems with neighbours, difficulties paying rent or property care issues
- Identifying if tenants need support to live independently, or need to be linked in with support services to maintain their tenancy
- Ensuring that a tenant aged over 60, or 45 if Aboriginal, has been contacted
- Confirming who is living at the property and that the correct amount of rent is being paid
- Updating Housing NSW's information about the condition of the property
- Discussing any plans Housing NSW may have for the property, such as painting or other maintenance
- Confirming both the tenant and Housing NSW are meeting their obligations under the tenancy agreement

Housing NSW has developed a scheduled approach to CSVs in Dubbo targeting high risk tenancies / areas. Each visit will include a full internal and external property inspection and referral or coordinated support will be offered where tenancy issues are identified. Deliverables for Dubbo Client Service Team:

- Biannual CSVs in Apollo Estate
- Biannual CSVs in South West Dubbo
- Biannual CSVs in selected unit complexes
- 100% 8 week CSVs to all new tenancies across Dubbo

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the proposed approach to Client Service Visits.

5.2.1 Managing Visitors – Disaster Recovery Periods

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

A significant spike in anti-social behaviour was experienced in 2012 during the prolonged relocation of people from far west communities due to flood disaster. Many people relocate to families and friends without advising the FACS Disaster Relief teams. Flood disaster periods often extend well beyond the maximum of 28 days that a visitor may stay in a LAHC property.

- HNSW apply a Visitor Sanction to all properties in the Dubbo community following the instigation of a disaster recovery operation (in the far west).
- HNSW to develop a letter / advertisement that would be sent out to tenants / placed in local papers when a disaster recovery operation was instigated.
- HNSW would follow up with schedule of field trips and Clients Service Visits during this period

Discussion

There is a risk that applying a Visitor Sanction and/or reinforcing tenancy obligations during disaster relief periods may be misinterpreted as discouraging support to disaster victims.

We know many people affected, or at risk of being affected, by disaster choose to evacuate pre declaration and often relocate to neighboring towns to stay with family or friends. In the case of Dubbo, antisocial behaviour and undeclared additional occupants increase during disaster periods in the far west.

There would be sufficient ground to apply a precinct visitor sanction to the Apollo estate during disaster periods based on evidence of ongoing criminal behaviour and anti-social behaviour perpetrated by visitors that can not be addressed by applying sanctions to one or more individual tenancies. Visitor sanctions are however difficult to administer and any impetus would be lost without timely face to face follow up. The Dubbo CST who would not be in a position to increase field presence having already diverted significant resource to crisis response in disaster affected areas.

In lieu, Housing NSW has drafted a letter of support that will be issued to public housing tenants in Dubbo following instigation of a disaster recover operation in the Orana Far West catchments. The letter takes a softer approach to reminding tenants of their tenancy obligations by acknowledging the effects of disaster, offering support (advice and referral), and encouraging contact to declare additional occupants.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the proposed action.

5.2.2 Reduce occurrence of Property Under-Utilisation

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Properties can become under utilised as the household complement changes over a period of time. A property that is under utilised has a number of potential risks and implications including (but not limited to): attracts unauthorised occupants, has a financial implication – the NSW Government is losing money while the property is not fully occupied.

- HNSW analyse the households that are under-utilised and approach these tenancies to negotiate relocation to alternative stock that meets their housing needs.
- If households were reluctant to relocate, HNSW and LAHC could then discuss more prescriptive approaches such as consider change to the subsidy arrangement for that household based on potential income from the household.

Discussion

On 26 June 2013 the Minister for Family and Community Services announced new initiatives to fill vacant bedrooms and free up public housing for those who need it most by:

- ✚ Tenants under occupying current accommodation who apply for a transfer to a smaller property will go straight onto the priority housing list, speeding up the process.
- ✚ If Housing NSW asks a household to move due to under occupancy and they decline two reasonable offers of suitable accommodation, a Vacant Bedroom Charge will apply; \$20 per week for singles and \$30 per week for couples.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note that the new policy will be implemented in Dubbo from September 2013.

5.2.3 Breach of Tenancy Agreement – Drug Related Matters

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Drug related breaches of the tenancy agreement are particularly hard for Social Housing landlords to manage at the Consumer Trader and Tenancies Tribunal (CTTT).

- Change legislation from the current requirement to establish 'use of premise' to something like 'illegal act in or on premise'. This would be more aligned with the constituting a breach of the Tenancy Agreement in a social housing premise and the inherent impact that this activity has on vulnerable communities.
- Legislation reviewed to ensure that any defense in terms of the Tenant not being aware of the illegal act being perpetrated in or on their premise was diminished.
- HNSW to work with Tribunal to establish the standards required to secure a Notice of Termination due to the use of a premise for illegal activity as it currently stands.

Discussion

Housing NSW achieves termination in only 41% of cases referred to the Consumer Trader and Tenancies Tribunal in relation to illegal use of public housing premises. Significant factors influence termination outcomes.

Discretion: Housing NSW has experience of matters where the CTTT has declined to terminate tenancies despite illegal use having been established. In a recent appeal to the District Court of New South Wales (*Land and Housing Corporation v Cain – 23 May 2013*) it was determined, in relation to Section 91(1)(a) of the Act, the landlord need only satisfy the breach occurred, and the provisions of the act do not permit the exercise of discretion other than to determine the length of possession date.

Definition: Drug related breach of the tenancy agreement occurs only where manufacture, sale, cultivation or supply of a prohibited drug in or on the premise and within the meaning of the *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985* is established. Put simply, it is not an 'illegal use of premise', and therefore not a breach of the tenancy agreement, to use or possess non indictable quantities of prohibited drug in or on social housing premises. The impact of illegal drugs within social housing estates stems not just from cultivation or supply, but also from prolific use. Community do not feel safe when they see drug use, when they see the effects of drugs use, and when they see discarded syringes or drug paraphernalia in their streets.

Knowledge: It is a term of every residential tenancy agreement that the tenant is vicariously responsible to the landlord for any act or omission by any other person who is lawfully on the residential premises that would have been a breach of the tenancy agreement. In the case where an additional household member (or visitor) is charged with drug related crime on the premises, the landlord must demonstrate the tenant "intentionally or recklessly caused or permitted" the action. The Tribunal frequently dismisses drug related termination action, even when cause or permit has been established where drugs / paraphernalia are located in plain view such as on the kitchen table and in the family fridge.

Timing: Illegal use matters are often adjourned until the criminal matter against the tenant concludes so that the tenant will not incriminate themselves in the hearing, and police do not jeopardize prosecution by giving evidence in the termination proceedings. This often results in excessive delays.

The precedent set by the recent District Court decision (Cane appeal) goes some way to strengthening HNSW response to drug related crime, but, legislative change is needed if we are to genuinely combat the effect of illegal drugs in social housing estates:

- Introduce the presumption that the presence of illegal drugs is an automatic breach of the tenancy agreement regardless of quantity and whether or not the tenant had knowledge of the drugs.
- Extend the absence of discretion (refer above District Court outcome) to termination action under Section 87 of the Act where drug related crime is the cause for action.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that this action be referred to the Minister for Fair Trading.

5.2.4 Bail Arrangements and Child Placements

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

A number of instances have occurred whereby the Magistrate has accepted a proposal for a juvenile / adult to be bailed to an address within the Estate, or that problematic juveniles are placed with families within the Estate.

This is a difficult situation in which a balance needs to be made between identifying a suitable place for a person to be bailed / paroled / placed and, the capacity for the proposed household to accommodate the person and the arrangement to not adversely affect the Estate community.

- Orana Crime Prevention Committee to lobby Attorney General's Department for mandatory notification of bail arrangements.
- NSW Police to notify HNSW so that Tenancy Management activity can be implemented.
- HNSW to discuss communication issues with Corrective Services (Probation & Parole).
- Community Services to work with HNSW and NSW Police to develop a process for the notification of placements within Dubbo.

Discussion

Bail Matters - NSW Police

Given the identified crime 'hot spot' within the Apollo Estate, particularly with regard to property crime and anti-social behaviour, the impact of accused persons or children on bail in the area is considered. Currently no formal process exists to highlight the impact of persons being bailed into a specific area, at the risk of placing such persons with like minded individuals or groups. Although astute prosecutors on the question of bail will address some of the potentials for harm, when appearing, largely due to the timing and volume of applications the issue remains un-addressed. Additionally, each application is ultimately considered by the tribunal (generally Local/Children Court Magistrate) and up to their discretion. The MAG recognises the potential for improvement in this area by highlighting the importance and impact of bail arrangements upon the community, particularly in the Apollo Estate.

Actions to date include; increased awareness and focus by police prosecutors to address particularly on the areas of community impact when considering bail applications, availability of crime mapping and statistical data to support applications, encouragement to seek adjournments to clarify information when proposed on behalf of bail applicant, availability of contact person in Housing NSW to confirm residential status of proposed address and further background information on other occupants and working with other stake-holders to procure alternatives.

Parole Issues – Corrective Services

The management of sexual offenders at Dubbo is supported by the advice, guidance and direction of a Regional Supervising Sex Offender Program Psychologist. This senior Psychologist provides detailed, regular support and supervision to Community Corrections Officers supervising sexual offenders in Dubbo and its catchment area. Management of sexual offenders also incorporates a collaborative approach with Orana LAC noting police are also managing these offenders as a requirement of the Child Protection Register. In certain cases there is also additional monitoring by a number of agencies under the Child Protection Watch Team format. Housing NSW is a member of the Child Protection Watch Team.

Dubbo office has weekly contact with Orana LAC intelligence in relation to both sexual and other higher risk offenders and in a number of cases a collaborative framework for the supervision and monitoring of offenders released to Dubbo is developed. Dubbo office has had a positive relationship with Housing NSW staff and recent contact with Housing NSW Team Leader has confirmed the same. The strengthening of interagency work between both agencies and other invested stakeholders is promoted by Dubbo Community Corrections Division.

Stability of housing is an important issue in the management and reintegration of offenders being released from a correctional centre back into the community. Frequent changes of address are taken as a sign by the Community Corrections Service that an offender has not "adapted to normal lawful community life" which he/she is obligated to try to do as a standard condition on all Parole orders and breach action may follow if a Parolee disobeys a direction in relation to Accommodation. While parole officers endeavour not to place an offender back in a home where there may be other

people, family or friends, whose lifestyles may expose the offender to substance abuse, family violence or criminal activities and perform exhaustive pre release home visits to determine the suitability of the nominated address, parolees have very limited choice when it comes to accommodation and homelessness for any length of time very often results in re offending.

However parole officers do not permit offenders to reside with known criminal associates nor do they place at risk a "person in need of protection" under the terms of a current Apprehended Violence Order, by allowing a perpetrator of domestic violence to return to live with their victim. These are also very careful in the placement of released sex offenders in regard to the presence of children in the home or in the proximity, depending on the specific nature of the offenders offending behaviour or paraphilia. Current policy requires that an exemption is sought from a Senior Officer in relation to a sex offender wishing to live inside a standard 500 meter exclusion zone from bus stops and schools. Sex Offenders are always placed in consultation with Police as they must all be placed on the sex offender register compiled by Police under which they are obligated to keep Police informed of a variety of personal details and movements. Parole office continue to liaise with Police regarding the progress of sex offenders throughout their orders.

However, following the release of the MAG report, it appears that there may be a number of ways in which CCS Dubbo may build on the work it is already doing in the supervision of offenders and the reintegration of parolees into the Dubbo community. The following suggestions are provided for the consideration of the Senior Steering Committee:

1. New procedures devised by HNSW in relation to the acceptance of residents into departmental accommodation in Dubbo, including participating in a Coordinated Support Plan, obedience to Specific Performance Orders and agreeing to conditions of residence in a lease could be made mandatory by CCS as a condition of a Parole Order.
2. Prior to the release of an offender, at the time Dubbo receives a request for a Pre Release Home Visit, it will notify the Officer preparing the release that the offender will be required to enter into an agreement or plan and abide by restrictions set down by HNSW. If necessary such arrangements could be agreed to by the offender as a condition of their release to Parole to live at the address specified and a suitable condition could be added to the parole order so that breach of the Housing agreement would be a possible ground for a Parole Breach report to be sent to the State Parole Authority.
3. Parolees will be encouraged to participate in programs run by Community Services under the Promoting Good Parenting initiative. Additionally, the DCS NSW program relating to increasing the parenting skills of fathers entitled "Hey Dad" could be run periodically by CCS staff on site where possible, for example, from Apollo House. There are also other programs relating to substance abuse and domestic violence run by Dubbo CCS which Parolees are required to attend.
4. Offenders who are required to perform community service work under the terms of an order could be required to work on common areas of an estate or for disabled or aged pensioners living on the estate, doing graffiti removal, painting or ground maintenance.

Some of these proposals would obviously require further work at the level of the Dubbo Management Group or the Local Interagency Network. Metrics for the implementation of such proposals could be devised and reported back to the quarterly SSC meetings.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note agency responses will be referred to the Senior Steering Committee for review.

5.3.1 Domestic / Family Violence – Support Arrangements in Tenancy

East Dubbo Ministers Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

In numerous situations, households experiencing domestic / family violence are afflicted by extreme emotional suffering and repeated levels of excessive damage to the property. Is it appropriate that whenever an incident of domestic / family violence is reported, that the Local Interagency Network (2.1.3) is advised so that they might engage with the household and establish suitable measures to support all parties. An intervention point is sought that provides solid support to the household members and mitigates the repeat nature of what is observed in social housing properties where domestic / family violence is occurring.

- DV Coordinator (NSW Police) to work with HNSW and Local Interagency Network to establish approach.

Discussion

Domestic/Family violence remains an issue across the community and a dominant focus for police and other agencies. Orana LAC maintains inter-agency relationships and addresses supported tenancy considerations as part of core business. Additionally, Orana LAC host the Staying Home Leaving Violence program which addresses supported tenancy through agency and inter-agency collaboration.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the action.

5.3.2 Oxycodone Response

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Numerous serious crimes including robbery and aggravated break enter and steal offence have been recorded at Orana LAC with a causal nexus to Oxycodone based products. A draft 'National Pharmaceutical Drugs Misuse Framework for Action' (NPDMA) has been developed however currently is not available for public distribution. The key recommendations in the draft NPDMA of relevance to policing which NSWPF strongly support will dramatically reduce the availability and clandestine supply of Oxycodone dramatically.

- A detailed business case has been prepared by Health and NSW Police.

Discussion

On 1 May 2013 Detective Inspector Blackman and Ms Katie Hall (NSW Police Force - Drug and Alcohol Policy) met with Minister Skinner (Health). In addition to the recommendations of the previously submitted Oxycodone Paper (attached to Minister's Action Group Discussion Paper) discussions surrounded the key recommendations in the draft National Pharmaceutical Drug Misuse Framework, as supported by the NSW Police. That is the introduction of national real time recording of prescriptions, improved training/support for doctors especially in areas such as opioid prescribing and, improved regulation and monitoring including giving appropriate access to relevant agencies to assist in identifying and responding to high level prescription shoppers.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister notes the information provided.

5.4.1 Property Care – Pets

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Tenants within Estates have a disproportionate level of pet ownership and this has adverse impacts on property care. Pets are seldom de-sexed or micro chipped. Anecdotal evidence suggests many applicants construct homelessness circumstances in order to meet social housing eligibility purely because we allow pets. Proliferation of mixed breed dogs and stray cats in the Estate increases the potential risk for child safety.

- Impose a restriction on pets in social housing – 'a 'one pet' policy in respect of cats and dogs
- Establish a social housing pet register with a requirement that the animal be micro-chipped

Discussion

Housing NSW policy states tenants who live in properties owned by Housing NSW may keep pets if the property is suitable for the animal, the pet does not interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort and privacy of neighbours, and they comply with any council requirements and the Companion Animals Act. Tenants may not keep restricted dogs, as defined by the Companion Animals Act, or *dogs that have been declared dangerous by a local council, local court, or under the Companion Animals Act*. Despite the policy statement, compliance with the Companion Animals Act is not a term of the Residential Tenancy Agreement and therefore is not a legally binding or enforceable condition of tenancy.

"Many of the issues we have that originate from Department of Housing properties include strays, dog attacks, and barking dogs. Many of these stem from too many animals being owned (often due to animals not being desexed)... Ideally tenants would have their animals desexed, have no more than 2 and have them microchipped, registered and vaccinated"

Dubbo City Council, Manager Environmental Control - 21 May 2013

A residential tenancy agreement may include additional terms if they do not contravene the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (the Act), the regulations, or any other Act. Under the current Act, Housing NSW could limit or prohibit the keeping of pets by updating the standard residential tenancy agreement, or annexing individual agreements for localised implementation. A comprehensive review of risks, issues and benefits would be required before Family and Community Services would consider change to the tenancy agreement.

A recommendation to establish and maintain a pet register is considered impracticable (resource prohibitive) and duplicates the NSW Companion Animal Register. A more efficient method would be to negotiate access to NSW Companion Animal Register however this would require a change in access as access is currently limited to the function of the Companion Animals Act.

Locally, and independent of any change to Housing NSW pet policy, Family & Community Services and Dubbo City Council are delivering:

- A social housing specific pet brochure. Brochures will be issued in new tenancy kits and discussed at 8 week Client Service Visits,
- Dubbo City Council Rangers to participate in Housing NSW Walk and Talk activities,
- Housing NSW has applied for funding to support Dubbo City Council 2013 Pet Month⁶, specifically to offer free registration and micro chipping services to social housing tenants.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note local actions.
- It is recommended that the Minister consider if a change to the pet policy would be appropriate and whether further work should be undertaken by Housing NSW to explore possible policy amendments.

⁶ Dubbo City Council host annual Pet Month activities. The program aims to educate community and promote responsibilities of being a good pet owner. Workshops are held in various locations, including Apollo House in East Dubbo Estate, and the Companion Animals Act promoted via activities such as photo and colouring competitions.

5.5.1 Courses for Tenants – Incentive for Attendance

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The Apollo House, Schools as Community Centres (SaCCs) and the PCYC have the capacity to host programs to improve living skills, parenting, employment opportunities, diet and nutrition, adult numeracy and literacy, and relationship management. The issue has always been co-ordination by providers and commitment from people to attend.

- Consider rental credit inducement for tenants to attend programs.

Discussion

Coordination of, and commitment to deliver, programs across Dubbo is expected to improve with the introduction of the Dubbo Management Group (2.1.2). The ability to engage community and secure attendance is therefore the focus of this strategy.

Land and Housing Corporation may consider offering financial inducement to encourage tenant participation, and Family and Community Services may consider a voucher reward for the same purpose, on a course by course basis. Both agencies will promote willingness to receive inducement funding submissions through the SSC and DMG. Submissions will be considered and determined with regard to the target group, relevance and benefit (to social housing). Outcomes may vary subject to the availability of grant funds at the time of application.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the action.

5.5.2 Truancy

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Concern remains amongst agencies and within the East Dubbo Apollo Estate that an excessive number of children are not at school during school hours.

- NSW Education to distribute telephone number for truant students to be reported.
- Work with Retail sector to ensure school aged children is not served during school hours.
- NSW Police (Aboriginal Liaison Officer) and NSW Education officer do a sweep of Estates after school commences to collect any truant children and take to school.
- Dubbo Management Group establishes a 'walking bus' in Apollo Estate.

Discussion

Public Schools NSW employ a number of strategies to tackle student absence, including but not limited to:

1. Home School Liaison Program: Home School Liaison Officers (HSLO) are trained teachers who support schools by working with students and their families when regular attendance is an issue. Aboriginal student liaison officers work specifically with Aboriginal students and their communities to improve attendance.
2. Get Smart Program: Attendance records referred to HSLO's who make contact with parents of children absent for 10 days or more in the previous term.
3. Phone Intervention Program: Schools make contact with the parents of absent children.
4. Late Intervention Program: Schools interview parents and children who consistently arrive to school late.

Additional programs run in Dubbo include, but are not limited to:

5. Operation Street Beat: Police and school principals canvass streets on a weekly basis.
6. Operation Roll Call: Uniformed police, in the course of their general duties, approach children of school age and who are out of school. If a student does not have a leave pass (tamper proof, common leave passes issued to all government high school students), they are directed to return to school and details passed on to the school for follow-up action.
7. Street Sweeps: HSLO's and uniformed police target areas such as shopping malls, internet cafes and the railway station. Officers approach compulsory school age children and enquire about why they are not at school. Students can be directed to return to school and again their details are provided to the school for follow up.
8. On Time Program: NSW Police program working with youth at risk of becoming young offenders. Police pick kids up from home three days per week, provide a healthy breakfast, conduct personal training sessions and take the child to school. Participant numbers fluctuate between 10 – 20 children on any given week.

Contact details, to report children absent from school, have been distributed.

Education and Communities has successfully engaged the retail sector to not serve children during school hours in the past and has agreed to work with the Dubbo retail sector.

Consultation failed to identify interested partners / group willing to reestablish the school 'walking bus' program.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the action.

5.5.3 Community Leadership – Empowerment through Information

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Community members in the estate would like to understand more about agency products and services, in addition to that which would be obtained from proposed information sessions for tenants / community (2.2.1). Agencies could deliver workshops for interested members of the community that would improve their understanding of agency products and services, and provide additional resources in the community to open the access to support services.

- Dubbo Management Group to co-ordinate this strategy; nominations from community members and schedule of workshops with agencies.

Discussion

Agencies interact and communicate with volunteers at Apollo House. It is through this medium that active members of community, referred to in strategy, are engaged and informed about products and services. The Dubbo Management Group will coordinate this strategy as they oversee and encourage greater agency commitment to offering service from Apollo House.

The Dubbo Management Group may also consider inviting community leaders to agency meetings and / or sponsor community leader to attend leadership training.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the Dubbo Management Group will develop and coordinate this strategy.

5.5.4 Community Engagement – Services at Apollo House

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Community members would like to see agency and NGO staff at the Apollo House more often. Agencies and NGO's to make a commitment to regularly informally drop into the Apollo House to raise their awareness of what programs are being conducted and to gather information from participants from the community through informal conversations. Agencies and NGO's would work with the Dubbo Management Group to schedule more formal visits or community days in the Estate.

- Dubbo Management Group to co-ordinate this strategy; schedule of formal visits and community days.

Discussion

Apollo House boasts over 59 partnerships: 32 of these deliver direct services from Apollo House, 11 of these services are 'drop in', and 16 of these services are external partnerships or referral pathways.

Commitment to Apollo House will be a requirement for agencies represented on the Dubbo Management Group (DMG) confirmed by the terms of reference.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the Dubbo Management Group will develop and coordinate this strategy.

5.5.5 Certainty of Funding for Co-ordination of Services at Apollo House

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The Resilience program, delivered by Leader in Development, is an inter-agency collaboration between Housing NSW, Greater Western Area Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Service, Community Services, Department of Premiers and Cabinet and Leader in Development. On 29 January 2013, the Minister approved funding of \$283,000 to extend the program to 30 June 2014. Need for the program extends beyond 2014 and longer term funding commitment is essential so that agencies and community can plan around said commitment.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Resilience project and Leader In Development. Prepare a business case for further funding if effectiveness of the project is established.

Discussion

The Leader in Development team operates from Apollo House, located in the centre of the Apollo Estate, making them ideally located to provide a direct and timely service to the residents.

The program aims to build social inclusion so that people in the community have the resources (skills and assets, including good health), opportunities and capabilities they need to participate in education and training (learn), participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities (work), are able to engage and connect with other people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities; and have a voice to influence decisions that affect them (as per Commonwealth of Australia 2009 The Australian Public Service policy design and delivery toolkit).⁷

On 29 January 2013 the Minister for Family and Community Services announced a funding extension for Resilience to 30 June 2014 and requested a review of the program to make sure the right services were being delivered for residents. Housing NSW engaged an external consultant to survey residents with in Apollo Estate as well as partner agencies to gauge the success of the program. This evaluation will comment on the programs effectiveness in developing sustainable tenancies.

There is a need for the Resilience program to continue to 2016/17, coinciding with Land & Housing Corporation sales program, at which time it is anticipated the estate will have become comparable to other contemporary areas of Dubbo and so the need for the Resilience program and Apollo House facility will no longer be required.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister consider funding for Apollo House beyond 2014.

⁷ SCHEDULE 1 Resilience Funding Guidelines (Housing NSW 2012-13)

5.5.6 Recreational Activities – Youth

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Community concern is that there are not enough recreational activities for the youth in the area. Agencies need to establish a response that is not reliant on re-current funding from agencies and increases participation, alignment with mainstream recreational opportunities and involvement / ownership from the community.

- NSW Sport & Recreation and Dubbo City Council to develop an approach to recreational activities.
- Dubbo Management Group to co-ordinate this strategy; work with NSW Sport & Recreation and the Dubbo City Council to develop a schedule of activities for the youth.

Discussion

Dubbo City Council gives serious consideration for the ongoing development of activities and entertainment for the young people of Dubbo and to build on current youth activities. Dubbo City Council:

- Employs a full-time Youth Development Officer
- Supports the Dubbo City Youth Council as an avenue for youth to provide direct input to Council on youth issues and to involve youth in local government decision-making processes
- Develops and delivers programs in consultation with appropriate youth agencies (like 'Battle of the Bands' and Youth Week)
- Supported the redevelopment of the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC)

School holiday activities are hosted by Dubbo City Council, Education and Communities Sport and Recreation, PCYC and Apollo House.

The Dubbo Management Group, as part of their terms of reference, will develop a coordinated approach to recreational youth activities in partnership with the Dubbo City Youth Council and Apollo House.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the Dubbo Management Group will develop and coordinate this strategy.

5.5.7 Applying the Child (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Concern has been expressed that there are too many children on the streets, particularly late at night that are possibly not receiving adequate parental supervision and engagement. The Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997 created powers with the NSW Police to remove children and young persons from public places and return them to their parent (and/or suitable adult family member) to ensure their protection and care.

- Dubbo City Council work with NSW Police and Attorney General's to establish Dubbo as an operational area under the legislation.
- FACS facilitate the development of a practical response for when NSW Police are unable to leave the child at the parent (and/or adult family member's) property.

Discussion

A meeting was held on 9 May 2013 at Dubbo City Council with John Watts, Manager Social Services, Dubbo City Council; Mark Shervashidze, Director Partnerships and Planning, Family & Community Services – Community Services; Jenny Rolfe, Family & Community Services – Housing NSW; Rod Blackman, Crime Manager, NSW Police Force.

Police advise the issue that impacts on their service is when children are identified by Officers as being at risk and may be wandering the streets, the same children are picked up by Police and then finding emergency care for them is difficult. Contact with the FACS Helpline is problematic, as the FACS staffs do not recognise the children as being at significant risk of harm, and will not make contact with the on call FACS caseworkers to initiate emergency care arrangements.

What generally happens is that Police have nowhere to take them and are then required to care for the children at the Police Station as no alternate care arrangements can be made.

It was agreed at the meeting all Police Officers in the Dubbo Command from 26 May 2013 to 30 June 2013 would be instructed to contact the FACS Helpline should a child be identified at risk and require emergency care. Details of these contacts will be kept by Police and the FACS Helpline to determine the numbers of children that have emergency care provided by FACS and those that have been left in the care of Police Officers.

During this time FACS (Community Services) would also assess these emergency care placements and determine the capacity of the Non Government Sector to place children.

Following this review period all information collected will be referred to the Senior Steering Committee along with recommendations in early August 2013.

Recommendation

- It is recommended the Minister note the proposed action.

5.5.8 Introduce the 'Adopt-A-Cop' Program to Dubbo

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

A NSW Police initiative is the 'Adopt-A-Cop' program. This program was developed for young people faced with challenges such as racial tension, lack of facilities, few job opportunities and boredom. The program aimed to address problems faced by Aboriginal young people by involving them in police-sponsored activities. The program resulted in a reduction of appearances by young people before the court and savings through reduced crime.

Notwithstanding the efforts by NSW Police in Dubbo to date, consideration could be given to expanding the principles of the 'Adopt-A-Cop' program to include the involvement of all MAG Members and other agencies.

- NSW Police to facilitate the development of the broader 'Adopt-A-Cop' program.

Discussion

Consideration was given to implementing an 'Adopt a Cop' style program in Dubbo in order to divert children from criminal offending. Orana LAC has experienced a significant increase in property crime over the last two years including break enter and steal offences, stealing from motor vehicles and larceny generally. One of the factors affecting this increase has been a changing of attitudes in the Children's Court, effectively having more repeat offenders at liberty or under less onerous supervision than in previous years. Additionally, traditional methods of policing including conducting bail compliance checks, have been reduced due to both attitudinal and case law changes.

The largest factor however has been the ongoing issue, of family dysfunction and lack of parental guidance/supervision or positive role models. The presence of multiple break and enter offences where only food was stolen was a significant precursor to Orana LAC trying both reduce crime and assist the young persons responsible or involved in this cycle.

Towards the end of school term 3, 2012, Detective Inspector Blackman put together a group of sworn and unsworn officers including the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, Crime Management Unit, Police and Citizens Youth Club officers to brain storm a rudimentary program with a couple of key objectives; engage the highest risk (of offending or on the fringes with offenders) youth, address some of the issues affecting their offending (hunger, boredom, lack of role models, supervision, education, health etc.) and get them to school 'On Time'.

As such a small program was established this essentially consists of the following:

- children are picked up from their homes on Mon, Wed and Fri, 6.30-7.00am and taken to Dubbo PCYC,
- they get changed into exercise clothes,
- they undergo a physical training activity (boxing, basketball, team building exercises etc.) for an hour,
- they have access to locked shower/bathroom facilities and personal hygiene kits,
- they have breakfast and are taken to school 'On Time'.

Numerous Police participate with the children in order to foster positive relationships. The program has expanded since inception with the inclusion of one of the Orana Detectives who has been diverted to the program full time as well as further time allocations for Crime Management Unit officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. Such has been the early value of the program. Some children have now got bail conditions to attend the program or are conducting community service within the program. Future direction includes; sustained Mon, Wed & Fri mornings including a preplanned variety of activities (cooking classes, kitchen duties, laundry duties, healthy eating and living input, outsourced community engagement etc.) afternoon involvement with our allocated detective and others, family involvement and inter-agency involvement.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister notes the "On-Time" program.

6.1.1 Providing Support at Sign-up

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Coordinated support planning recognises that social and/or health issues can impact on an applicant's capability to sustain a tenancy. An applicant may approach HNSW and already be working across a number of support agencies who may have their own support plans. HNSW would seek consent however to review and discuss the support plan and, encourage periodic feedback from the tenant and support provider as to commitment and outcomes of the support plan. Housing NSW (HNSW) would provide an opportunity to all applicants without existing support plans to commence their tenancy with a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), especially those applicants that present with risk factors for sustainable tenancies, complex and/or support needs.

- HNSW to identify Risk factors and complex support needs to be targeted in this process.
- HNSW to arrange implementation (including Community Housing providers).

Discussion

To be eligible for social housing, the client must be able to sustain a successful tenancy. This means that they must be able to meet the obligations of their tenancy, with or without support. Where the client needs support to maintain a tenancy, they must show that they have access to appropriate support services. Social housing providers will make appropriate referrals to other agencies in situations where the client has not accessed available support services. Eligibility and support requirements are reviewed at allocation (when a client is offered housing).

Housing NSW conducts Client Service Visits within eight weeks of the start of any new tenancy. Housing NSW asks if tenant needs support, or needs to be linked in with support services to maintain their tenancy, during the visit. Where required, and with the tenants consent, Housing NSW will engage the LIN (2.1.3) to develop and implement coordinated support for clients with unmet need, or, with need that extends across two or more agencies.

All new tenancies with or without risk factors and / or complex support needs are targeted in this process.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister notes the action.

6.1.2 Engaging Support when Tenancy at Risk

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Following the commencement of a tenancy, HNSW may become aware of triggers in the tenancy that are placing that tenancy at risk. A tenant may be identified as potentially struggling to sustain their tenancy due to non-compliance with the lease, social and/or health problems, disconnect with support plans.

Effort should be made to gain cooperation from the Tenant for a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP). If a CSP is determined as appropriate, the tenant retains their right for self determination and so involvement in the CSP is remains voluntary. However, the tenant should be advised that any breach of the tenancy agreement, perpetuated following the discussion or occurring thereafter, will result in action being initiated in the Tribunal.

Serious breaches of the Tenancy Agreement would not involve a CSP but rather, be referred directly to the Tribunal for appropriate action.

- HNSW to develop policy
- HNSW to arrange implement (including Community Housing providers).

Discussion

FACS has undertaken a review of interagency case coordination models and developed a Service Delivery Framework for People with Complex Needs. The Framework, scheduled for implementation as part of the FACS Localisation reform, seeks to extend, re-focus, integrate and streamline current interagency case coordination activities.

The model centers on the operation of Regional Panels which enable service providers to work collaboratively to change the trajectory of client's lives and improve service systems where business-as-usual programs and policies have not achieved the required result.

In this Framework clients with complex need are those who's multiple and complex needs require strong coordination of services across agencies and service providers in order to avoid very poor immediate outcomes and/or to improve long term outcomes. This includes:

- Children, young people or adults
- Individuals or families
- Children and young people whether or not they are reported to Community Services as being at risk of significant harm (ROSH)
- Those being served by a number of agencies at one time or who have been involved with multiple agencies over a period of time
- Those who require short-term intervention, or more intensive and lengthy support services
- Those who, despite interventions, present with ongoing difficulties or behaviours that may place them at high risk to themselves or others
- Those who currently experience lower levels of need or risk, but are highly likely to experience very poor future outcomes and greater long term costs if they are not responded to while an opportunity is present
- Those who seek assistance, are difficult to engage or refuse to participate.

It can involve out-of-guidelines decision-making and the provision of brokerage for clients where there are child protection concerns, under the Keep Them Safe (KTS) initiative.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister notes the proposed approach.

6.2.1 Specific Performance Order for Coordinated Support Plan

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

There needs to be a process that creates compulsion and value in remaining within the Coordinated Support Plans (CSP) arrangements. CSP would be initially voluntary for tenants, however it is when the person is most dysfunctional and in need of the support, that they decline that support and become at risk for termination of their Tenancy Agreement and become homeless.

When a household is affected by an event and is at its most dysfunctional, that is when the household declines the support and the household is at risk of possible Tribunal activity. When a breach of the Tenancy Agreement occurs HNSW has limited options to sustain the tenancy and invariably has to seek termination in the Tribunal that disrupts the household and renders them homeless.

- To give effect to the above principles, a change to legislation might be necessary to enable the CTTT to provide a 'Specific Performance Order' compelling the Tenant (and household) to co-operate with the CSP.

Discussion

The general opinion of government and non government agencies represented on the Ministers Action Group is that compulsion has not proven an effective tool to engage clients in regard to participating and receiving support. Further consultation with senior managers within Family and Community Services supported this position. As a result the Specific Performance Order for Coordinated Support Plan strategy was shelved as a contingency should providing support at signup (6.1.1) and voluntary coordinated support plans (6.1.2) not produce a positive outcome.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the action as a contingency strategy.

7.1.1 De-concentration of Social Housing

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Concentration of social housing has been determined as a contributing factor to high levels of disadvantage. Research shows that benefits for the community are derived from a de-concentration of social housing and the generation of a broader mixed tenure of ownership and social advantage within an area. Housing NSW (HNSW) has identified that a 30% reduction in social housing has a noticeable improvement in the outcomes for Estates.

- LAHC submit a proposal to the Minister for a de-concentration program in East Dubbo Apollo Estate.
- LAHC identify and proceed to dispose of 30% of the social housing properties in East Dubbo Apollo Estate (i.e. 50 dwellings and 8 vacant parcels of land)
- HNSW co-ordinate the relocation of tenants to other properties within Dubbo over a three (3) year period
- HNSW / LAHC to consult with relevant stakeholders (including Dubbo Aboriginal Community Working party) in respect of the process and relocation arrangements
- LAHC identify and dispose of properties in the Alcheringa & Lever Street precinct as part of the standard disposal program to reduce the concentration due to low demand and amenity of these properties. Disposals are more likely to be driven by the vacant sales in this precinct rather than relocations

Discussion

The proposal to de-concentrate Apollo estate received ministerial approval and was announced at a public forum hosted by the Ministers Action Group on 29 April 2013.

The program to sell 50 dwellings and eight (8) blocks of land over three years will reduce concentration of social housing in Apollo Estate from 84% to 54%. The sales have been factored into the LAHC Disposal Program estimates. Properties (cottages) will be sold by public auction to owner/occupiers with a clause in each contract of sale precluding the property being offered for rental for a minimum period of 7 years.

A dedicated Relocation Coordinator (Housing NSW) has been made available to work with households affected under the program.

LAHC will identify and dispose of properties in Alcheringa and Lever Street precinct as part of the standard state wide disposal program.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the program has commenced.

7.1.2 Affordable Rental Arrangement – Reduction in social housing

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

If the de-concentration program does not deliver the desired outcomes of social mix and community stability, the next option would be to offer a percentage of the properties as affordable rentals to further alter the social and tenure mix.

- Offer a percentage of the properties as affordable rentals to further alter the social and tenure mix

Discussion

Strategy deferred pending implementation and review of approved de-concentration program.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note affordable housing as a contingency strategy.

7.1.3 Vacant Dwellings – Protection from Vandalism and Arson

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Vacant dwellings in the estate can be vulnerable to attacks of vandalism and arson.

- LAHC to continue to utilise CCTV on their vacant properties in East Dubbo Apollo Estate.
- HNSW to arrange for list of vacant properties in East Dubbo Apollo Estate to be sent to NSW Police and NSW Fire Brigade each Friday.
- LAHC to prioritise vacant restoration work as it occurs in the Dubbo estate.

Discussion

LAHC use Videofied security systems to protect vacant property from vandalism and arson in Dubbo; battery operated wireless outdoor motion activated cameras. When the alarm system is armed and the motion detector senses motion or movement, the detector transmits a signal and activates the camera which captures a 10 second digital video segment. The alarm and video segment are reported via a control panel to a central monitoring station, and can also be sent to an email address for viewing.

LAHC have increased their portfolio of security systems to 17 units available for use in Dubbo which are fitted to high risk vacant properties. Risk is determined by local staff based on location, recent events and police intelligence.

Void restoration is scheduled by LAHC in consultation with the Multi-Trade Contractor and vacant properties located in high density and/or high risk areas, such as Apollo Estate, are prioritised.

Housing NSW provide the NSW Police with a list of all the vacant properties in the East Dubbo Apollo Estate each Friday.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note use of videofied security systems to protect social housing assets.

7.1.4 Restrictions for Assistance

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Perpetrators of significant damage to houses in the social sector are rarely pursued in the Civil Court for recovery of cost by LAHC as the person(s) invariably are on statutory income and have no capacity to repay the debt.

- LAHC and Housing NSW to explore strategies for dealing with persons in social housing that inflict significant damage on social housing properties / private dwellings within the communities in which they reside / are visiting.

Discussion

The Land and Housing Corporation and Housing NSW are currently working together on a joint strategy called Management of Tenant Damage Project. The project is related in that it aims to reduce property damage, increase tenant's responsibility and improve the recovery rate of repair charges. Outcomes of the project may or may not influence the Ministers Action Group strategy, but it is prudent to defer further action pending outcome, evaluation and review of the project.

That said, there is a clear need to provide consequences for significant and malicious damage to property and the following is noted for future consideration:

- Housing NSW may make an application to the Tribunal for termination where the tenant, or any person who although not the tenant is occupying or jointly occupying the residential premises, has intentionally or recklessly cause or permitted serious damage to the rented premises or any neighbouring property. The *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* defines neighbouring property in this regard:

Section 90(5)... neighbouring property means: (a) property adjoining or adjacent to the residential premises, or (b) property owned by the landlord in the general locality of the residential premises.

- When an applicant who is a former public housing tenant re-applies for social housing, the provider will review their tenancy history to determine eligibility for social housing before approving their request for assistance. The provider will however only consider the tenancy history of the main applicant. Policy is silent on additional applicants' and therefore an additional person's former tenancy category on a new application for assistance (and/or public housing debt) does not affect eligibility for a new tenancy.
- Housing NSW will not approve a request from a former unsatisfactory tenant to join an existing tenancy as an additional occupant. There is however no specific provision to terminate a tenancy if the tenant allows the additional person to remain in the property as an unauthorised occupant.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister consider if a change to the legislation would be appropriate and whether further work should be undertaken by Housing NSW to explore policy amendments.

7.1.5 Demolition Notices – Removal of damaged dwellings

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

Extensive damage to properties requires timely demolition to remove the structures and maintain satisfactory levels of street presentation.

- LAHC to implement a streamlined process for timely demolition of fire damaged and vandalised properties.
- LAHC to establish a list of selected providers to perform demolitions where asbestos is present.
- Dubbo City Council to monitor private dwellings and take appropriate action where properties are identified as unsafe to community.

Discussion

Working Together Protocols⁸ between LAHC and Housing NSW, together with LAHC policy and processes, guide the decision making, actions and procedures when managing fire damaged and/or vandalised properties.

A list of contractors who hold the necessary licenses for the removal of bonded asbestos and managing friable asbestos is maintained and PVA spraying is undertaken for all fire damaged properties where there is a risk of friable asbestos being present.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the procedures in place.

⁸ The Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) and Housing NSW (HNSW) have joint responsibility for the administration of the Housing Act NSW 2001. In order to meet these responsibilities the Working Together Protocols are designed to describe how both agencies will work together to deliver core asset related business services and housing and homelessness assistance. The Protocols detail the day to day interface between both agencies and apply to the management of AHO and LAHC properties managed by HNSW Housing Services, without exception.

7.1.6 Handy Person Role

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

LAHC and Housing NSW to review the role and activities of the Handyperson and see what other tasks can be incorporated into this service.

- Introduce reporting protocol whereby the handyperson will report any properties that are exhibiting poor property care so that assistance can be offered to that household
- Develop and implement procedures for handyperson to home visit all new tenancies to; introduce his role and present Housing NSW issue cleaning pack
- Develop and implement procedure for handyperson to deliver Housing NSW Property Care Postcard program

Discussion

The Handypersons Program, managed jointly by LAHC and Housing NSW, provides a quick response to minor housing maintenance and repair needs to social housing residents. The program is contracted to 30 June 2014 and is not expected to continue post implementation of the New Maintenance Contract in 2015. The Dubbo handyperson meets with local LAHC and Housing NSW staff weekly and reports properties observed to have poor property care and/or tenant damage.

The Property Care Cleaning Package and Property Care Postcard programs were initiatives of Building Stronger Communities. The programs supported social housing tenants by providing a package of cleaning products and equipment at tenancy commencement (or during the tenancy where poor property care is identified), recognising good property care by way of posted certificate, rewarding exemplary property care with a \$25.00 gift voucher to be spent at Bunning's.

Housing NSW has applied for non recurrent grant funds to reinstate both the above programs in Dubbo in 2013/14. Housing NSW Client Service Officers will identify nominees for Property Care Postcards. Recipients will be placed into a draw for a monthly prize - \$25.00 Bunning's voucher. Property Care Cleaning Packages will be issued to all new tenancies by the Handyperson within 21 days of tenancy commencement. The Handyperson will not just leave packages but will instead use the opportunity to meet new tenants and explain his role in providing minor maintenance support.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the Handyperson Program.

7.2.1 Anti-social Behaviour concentrated to Myall Street Shops

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

It is suggested that the Myall Street shops are a drop off point for persons returning home from a late night out and that the taxis will not drop a person at their premise in East Dubbo Apollo Estate after nightfall. A restriction on 'point to point' delivery of residents from events in broader Dubbo means that tenants are less likely to go to functions in Dubbo or, are vulnerable in making their way over some distance to their home in the darkness. This is a barrier to tenants being included in the broader Dubbo community activities.

- NSW Police confirm whether Myall Street shop is a 'hotspot' for antisocial behaviour and whether any crime / antisocial behaviour can be attributed to people being dropped at that point.
- Consultation with the Transport Working Group to understand the reasons for the 'no go' zone in East Dubbo and to develop some option for resolving this issue.

Discussion

Dubbo City Council met with the Transport Working Group who advise 'there are no issues going into the estate', specifically 'there are no 'no go' areas in the Apollo Estate'.

Myall Street shops and Lunar Park are identified as crime 'hotspots' by NSW Police. This is supported by crime statistics showing 24% of crime reported between May 2012 to May 2013 for the Apollo area was located in Myall Street, and 13% located in Wheelers Lane (Lunar Park is bordered by Myall Street and Wheelers Lane).

The lead agency, Dubbo City Council, has applied for \$66,000.00 grant funding through the Attorney General National Crime Prevention Fund. If successful, the proposed activity will provide two cameras, one installed at the Myall Street shopping complex and the other to be installed at Lunar Park. The camera's (CCTV) will add to police resources targeting criminal activity and antisocial behaviour.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that the Minister note the proposed action is subject to funding approval.

7.2.2 Recreational Spaces

East Dubbo Minister's Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

"Core to the notion of safety and a sense of wellbeing is the feeling of the community that an area is safe and well maintained; fit for purpose". The look and feel of East Dubbo streets and parks were highlighted as areas of concern in relation to cleanliness, maintenance and usability.

- Dubbo City Council raise the priority for planned maintenance of Lunar Park to ensure that it is always at a standard for use and to ensure that it is available to support other activities.

Discussion

Dubbo City Council categorise Lunar Park a "local medium grade park" subject to SCHEDULE 4 of the Strategic Asset Management Policy - PARKS AND LANDCARE SERVICES DIVISION MAINTENANCE SERVICE LEVEL (SPECIFICATION).

"Lunar Park is mowed 14 times per year as per the Service Level Agreement for this type of facility. Each additional mow costs \$1,928.34. Council will not increase the service level on the park due to funding and uniformity considerations of similar park types. That is, if Lunar Park gets an increase then other similar parks would also get an increase. This would be not possible given the limited funding available" Dubbo City Council

Recommendation

- It is recommended the Minister note Dubbo City Council's position.

7.2.3 Street Sweeping

East Dubbo Ministers Action Group 14 December 2012 Discussion Paper

The Ministers Action Group drew attention to the link between safety, wellbeing and the feeling of the community that an area is safe and well maintained; fit for purpose. The look and feel of East Dubbo streets and parks were highlighted as areas of concern in relation to cleanliness, maintenance and usability.

- Establish Dubbo City Council increases the number of street sweeps in East Dubbo on a needs basis rather than scheduled response.

Discussion

Dubbo City Council schedule sweeping activity and circle the city every six weeks. Apollo is swept early in the morning, identified as the safest time to sweep and least disruptive to traffic.

Responsive sweeping has been rejected by Dubbo City Council: "there is only a short window of time where the Estate can be swept safely without the risk of encountering children on the street so sweeping in the middle of the day is not an option. We take this matter quite seriously based on a previous incident elsewhere... So the servicing frequency is a factor of how often we can get back there within that special time window rather than being able to daily monitor the state of cleanliness of the area and respond accordingly. We have too many other commitments in the commercial precincts particularly, to be as reactive as the Department wants hence the premium cost to sweep more frequently".

In lieu of responsive sweeps, Dubbo City Council has increased service levels to Apollo from monthly to three weekly sweeping (more frequently than other residential areas). Council is unable to consider further increases without financial compensation.

Recommendation

- It is recommended the Minister note the increased service level.

