



Southern Youth and Family Services

## SOUTHERN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES (ASSOCIATION INC.)

Accommodation and Housing Services Youth Outreach Support Services Youth Out of Home Care Services  
 Community Services Youth Employment, Education and Training Services Family Support Services

SubmissionInquiryPublicSocialAffordableHousingAdditionalInformationMay2014

26<sup>th</sup> May, 2014

The Director  
 Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing  
 Parliament House  
 Macquarie St  
 SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Select Committee,

**Re: Answers to Questions on Notice  
 Southern Youth and Family Services  
 Hearing: Wollongong, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present evidence at the Hearing and to provide clarification of questions on notice. Our responses are beneath the copied highlighted sections of the transcripts forward to us.

**Transcript page 18:**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** Have you done an analysis or has there been an analysis done, in terms of the cost benefit?

**Ms CLAY:** It is hard for us to do that long-term benefit but I think there have been different things that show that, if you put that investment up front, you can save a lot of money. There was a project done around health, I think about keeping people out of mental health facilities, for example.

**Ms BACKHOUSE:** We can give you some research that was done, I think by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, but I will confirm that. It was a longitudinal cost of intensively supporting people early in the cycle of issues, against the long-term costs of interaction with the criminal justice system, ongoing accommodation needs and interaction with the health system. It is not based on a young person in a foyer but it is indicative of what we are talking about. We can forward that to you. It is a short 12-page research costing.

**Response:**

The research referred to is: McLausland, R. & Baldry, E. (UNSW) and Johnson, S. and Cohen, A. (PwC): *People with mental disorders and cognitive impairment in the criminal justice system. Cost-benefit analysis of early support and diversion.* August 2013. Available at: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/Cost%20benefit%20analysis.pdf>

A copy of the twelve page report is also enclosed.

As stated, this research is not specific to the Youth Foyer model. It is however an example of economic modelling that compares the cost benefits of early intervention, including providing intensive housing assistance and support in comparison to lifetime costs of homelessness, hospitalisation and incarceration.

One of the three case studies presented is of a 20 year old Aboriginal woman who has an intellectual disability and has been diagnosed with a range of mental and other cognitive conditions. She has a long history of self-harm, physical abuse and trauma. She has had a high level of institutional contact from a young age, particularly with police. Her lifecourse institutional costs by age 20 are itemised, including agency costs in Police, Juvenile Justice, Health and Other Agencies and have totalled \$5,515,293. This is then compared to a scenario where from age 7, she would have been provided with an intensive early intervention package of \$150,000 pa. and from age 18 provided with supported accommodation services at \$250,000 p.a. These intensive supports appear to be large investments, but by the age of 20 the savings to Governments are \$2.9million.



Such modelling has potential to identify lifecourse savings by providing intensive accommodation and support services to young people. The Southern Youth and Family Services' Southern Youth Foyer, for example, requires a recurrent annual budget of \$1.4million to deliver high quality services. Currently the Foyer receives almost \$900,000 funding for education, training and employment services, accommodation. This includes a \$260,000 component previously provided by a Commonwealth pilot program that was ceased nationally. It supports between 32 and 35 clients at any one time but this could be extended with increased dispersed properties. Dependent on the length of stay the Service may assist 45-50 clients per year. In addition the Education, Training and Employment Service attached to the Foyer can support an additional 50 to 70 young people who not live in the Foyer.

If a similar cost-benefit analysis, as undertaken in the quoted research, could be applied to the Southern Youth Foyer, the long-term cost savings could be calculated using outcome data. The Southern Youth Foyer's current funding through HAP is to provide accommodation and support for 32 young people per annum. In 2012/2013 we provided services to 51 young people:

- 82.6% of who had been evicted from their family home.
- 70% were too young or lacked the necessary skills to access and maintain accommodation in the private or community housing markets.

The SYFS Foyer clients had the following characteristics on entry (2012/13 figures):

- 35% displayed risk taking behaviour on entry
- 13% experienced conflict at school
- 22% were early school leavers
- 17% of young people presented with mental health issues
- 26% of family members had mental health issues
- 30% of young people disclosed drug and alcohol problems
- 26% of families reported drug and alcohol issues
- 87% of young people experienced some level of abuse or domestic violence
- All experienced financial difficulties.

On average, young people required the service for 15 months. Twenty three (23) young people left the service in this period:

- 65% successfully to independent housing,
- 17% were restored to family homes or home of relatives
- 18% moved into the community and other independent living situations with some level of continuing supports provided.

Of those young people leaving the service:

- 26% were participating in the education system
- 43% were involved in vocational training
- 30% were employed, and
- 87% regularly involved in constructive community activities

Outcomes for the clients exiting the service in the 2012/2013 period:

- All were on an income when they exited
- All gained knowledge of other agencies and learnt how to access these services
- All had improved their living and social skills

- All gained, or retained access to the ‘Housing Pathways’ waiting list for Public and Community Housing
- All who had been engaged in risk taking behaviour at the time they came to the Service, had begun to acknowledge the risk taking and begun action to reduce the risk behaviours and / or reduced the behaviour, and
- All who were in unsafe situations increased their level of safety.

The Southern Youth Foyer is an evidence-based model that breaks the cycles of homelessness and disadvantage for young people.

### **Transcript page 18/19**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** That is great, so there is a partnership model with the different agencies. Do you have any information that you could provide the Committee, in terms of what is happening in Western Australia?

**Ms CLAY:** I could certainly put you in contact with the key people for those services who might better be able to. I have some information but they will have much more up-to-date information on that and I am happy to do that.

### **Response:**

This discussion was in the context of information provided on SYFS’ Southern Youth Foyer and the uncertainty of its future funding from the NSW Government or through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The funding for the Southern Youth Foyer since 2010 has been through the Homelessness Action Plan Program which draws on matched Commonwealth and State funding made available through the NPAH. The contract expires on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2014. Whilst the Commonwealth has committed another year (2014/15) of NPAH funding, the NSW Government has yet to make a commitment on matching the funding or a commitment to how it will allocate the combined funding. The situation has arisen where NSW is potentially closing Foyer/s and is falling behind other States in its commitment to the Foyer model.

This is at a time when both Victoria and Western Australia are committing to capital and recurrent expenditure for Foyers. The Victorian Government, through the Victorian Department of Human Services is delivering a \$30.1 million Youth Foyer initiative, building three new Youth Foyers in the 2013/14 period. The Victorian Minister for Housing, Hon. Wendy Lovell has written an article in *Parity* (Vol.27, Issue 2, March 2014, pp.13-14) and states: “For me, the most exciting initiative in the housing and homelessness sector during my time as Minister has been the development of three Youth Foyers...I am proud of the Victorian Coalition Government’s \$30.1million investment across four years to establish the state’s first three 40-bed Youth Foyers. We are thinking outside the square - intervening early to help young people avoid getting caught up in the cycle of homelessness”.

Western Australia has funded its first Foyer – Foyer Oxford, a purpose-built facility that accommodates 98 young people including 24 young parents and their children. It was opened on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 by the WA Premier. Foyer Oxford received capital funding through the WA Department of Housing (\$9.1mill), the Commonwealth (\$10.7mill) and Lotterywest (\$3.1mill)., BHP Billiton and the WA Department for Child Protection and Family Support will provide joint operation funding of almost \$10 million over the first five years of the project. This Service received NPAH funding and has already been informed by the WA Government of its continuation for 2014/2015.

### **Transcript, page 20:**

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** I am interested in how that model works in detail. Perhaps we could get some more detail from you, particularly where you tap in to the State Government providers, things like mental health and counselling and how that works? Perhaps concerning the Commonwealth as well? We have heard a lot of evidence from people about the sort of

model you are talking about and we need something more comprehensive on site for our housing estates. This could be helpful in that regard as well?

**Ms CLAY:** It is an interesting point. I would have to say with frankness that it is a nightmare to manage and that every bureaucracy has its own bits and pieces. The bureaucracy keeps giving us new agreements to sign and asking for all sorts of requirements. We would be really happy to share the information and give some suggestions for improvement.

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** Thank you, that would be most appreciated.

**Response:**

This question relates to two components :

1. The integration of the 44 funded services of Southern Youth and Family Services into an integrated, seamless model of service provision, and
2. The partnership arrangements that Southern Youth and Family Services has with State and Federal Government agencies to provide clinics and services on-site at our facilities.

**1. *The integration of SYFS Services:***

In providing a holistic response to young people and families, SYFS provides services funded through both State and Federal funding programs. The funding comes from a variety of Departments and a variety of funding programs within the Departments. To give a picture of this complexity some of the funding sources are listed below:

NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS NSW)

- Community Services:
  - Early Intervention and Prevention Program
  - Out of Home Care Program
  - Getting It Together Program
  - Drug Summit Program
- Housing NSW and the Community Housing Division:
  - Crisis Accommodation Program (Previously called and provided capital for homelessness properties)
  - Supported Housing Initiative Program (capital)
  - Homelessness Action Plan Program (Was previously managed by Community Services, Funded through NPAH)
  - Specialist Homelessness Services Program (Was previously managed by Community Services).

NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice: Juvenile Justice NSW

- Joint Support Program

NSW Health Department

- Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth (jointly funded with Commonwealth)
- Joint Commonwealth State program administered under NSW Health NGO Grants Program

NSW Department of Education

- Links to Learning Program

Federal Department of Social Services:

- Reconnect Program
- Family Support Program
- Targeted Community Care (Mental Health) Fund
- Financial Management Program including Emergency Relief

The complexities of providing an integrated service model for young people with so many funding sources include:

- Contract lengths vary: one-off project grants, 12 month contracts, 2 year contracts and occasionally three year contracts. When offering a holistic model, this means that components are always up for renewal, or expiring, or changing so that stability in the model is hard to achieve. Shorter-term contracts also require more administrative work, for example, re-applying, re-tendering, frequent reporting, contingency planning, short-term staff contracts, cash flow budgeting etc.
- Different Government Departments and funding programs within each Department have different reporting and accountability requirements. Financial statements, progress reports and other accountability documents can be requested 3 monthly, six monthly or annually depending on the particular funding program. Different information is requested – making a centralised, uniform data collection system a complex task.
- The appetite for reforms and reviews – both levels of Government currently have a high appetite for reforms and reviews of their funding programs. This means that at any given point, several programs are being reformed. Changes to targeting, criteria etc in one Program can have flow on effects for the effectiveness of other Programs and the access by young people and families to the range of supports they need. This makes an integrated approach almost impossible and leaves the Services constantly struggling to find other funding sources to fill gaps. It also makes for a very stressful environment and undermines morale. It inhibits good planning and is a barrier to reflective practice.

In providing supports to young people in social housing and supported accommodation, it is important to ‘wrap the services around’ the young people and families. The complexity of the funding system as explained above can limit the service delivery agency’s ability to wrap these services around the clients in a sustained and systematic manner.

## ***2. Partnership arrangements with Government Agencies:***

SYFS has negotiated a range of clinics and services to be provided by teams/ Government Departments on site at our facilities, including the Youth Foyer, the Community Health for Adolescents in Need facility, outreach offices and accommodation / housing facilities. These are typically negotiated with the local teams within the Government agencies. Examples include:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – partnership for clinical supervision of staff
- Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) – provide sexual health clinics at SYFS Services / premises; Drug and Alcohol team provide outreach drug and alcohol counselling at SYFS Services / premises; Hospital Maternity Services co-locates a seconded midwife in SYFS service to deliver maternity services for young people.
- Illawarra Institute of TAFE – partnership agreement for co-delivery of tailored courses for homeless / at risk clients

- Local High Schools – SYFS staff provide education, group programs in schools
- NSW Legal Aid – provides a specialist homeless legal advice clinic on SYFS sites
- Centrelink – provides advice clinic on SYFS sites and SYFS has provided outreach clinic in their offices.

In all, SYFS maintains over 60 partnership agreements with Government and non-Government agencies, community groups and businesses for joint provision of services, mentoring, voluntary support etc. The arrangements with Government agencies to provide clinics and support on site are enabled because:

- Time has been spent on nurturing relationships
- SYFS offers a reasonable scale of service provision and has a good reputation with the client-group, which assists in making the clinics well attended
- The premises offered by SYFS have suitable spaces for the clinics, particularly the health related clinics that are based in our youth health facility (CHAIN)
- SYFS' staff resource the clinics through advertising to clients, supporting clients to attend, being on the premises etc.

These do not always require a formal written partnership agreement. In fact where that occurs it often over-complicates the arrangements. These arrangements are possible at a local level with pro-active and positive working relationships. They need support from Ministers to Heads of Agencies but the support should be in the form of permission to develop local arrangements and not a prescriptive formal process.

The majority of the arrangements with Government agencies do not require SYFS to pay the agency for the services delivered as they fall within the core responsibility of the individual government agency. These services are not a replacement for the support services offered by SYFS, but complement them by adding specialist advice and expertise in particular fields.

**Transcript, p. 23**

**Ms JAN BARHAM:** You mentioned accreditation being made easier. What are the hurdles that you currently jump?

**Ms CLAY:** How long have I got?

**CHAIR:** Two minutes 30.

**Ms JAN BARHAM:** You can give us a snippet and put as much as you like in a further submission.

**Response:**

As stated in the Hearing, we agree that accreditation, registration and meeting standards are important. SYFS is accredited for the provision of Out of Home Care Services through the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, as a Social Housing Provider in NSW and for the provision of health services through Quality Innovation Performance (QIP). There are similarities and differences in the accreditation processes. A system that enables an agency to pass accreditation once for matters pertaining to governance and financial management, staffing practices and risk management would assist. Then for additional specific service types, the agency need only go through the process for those additional elements specific to that area.

However the process should be simple and not an onerous and costly process. The processes we already undertake often require a great deal of administration and take up a great deal of time. Often we have experienced unnecessary duplication, rigid timetabling with little consideration to other pressures in the Agency at a given time, and too often are requested to comply with overly prescriptive formats for policy and procedures which may be different from Department to Department and so need to be more general in nature. The process must be undertaken by Staff and Managers in the Agency as it is important they are

involved. This requires careful planning and relief staff are often required at key times to ensure the services can still be delivered while undertaking these processes.

The agency resourcing costs of participating in accreditation are high. In addition there can be costs to pay for the accreditation that are often not funded. To illustrate, we have paid up to \$15,000 for a previous accreditation and the costs for that accreditation are running at around \$6,500 per annum for a three year contract.

### **Transcript, p. 23**

**Ms JAN BARHAM:** We hear big Government constantly talking about cutting red tape for business; do you think there is a real need for cutting of red tape for non-government organisations?

**Ms CLAY:** We have been through this. I have been around for 30 years and I cannot tell you how many cutting red tape processes I have been through which at the end have always increased red tape. Currently when you talk about cutting red tape it often means that the bureaucracy looks at how to cut red tape for them. I look at examples where you say we are going to go from 400 contracts to manage 120 contracts. That does not actually help the community provider, that helps the government department. I wonder where the resources then get moved to when that happens. Red tape must be cut. Ms Backhouse and I did a submission to this current Government and the previous one and recommended all sorts of things.

**Ms JAN BARHAM:** That might be valuable to pass on to us.

### **Response:**

In summary, our suggestions include:

- Reducing the number of contracts: It is not cutting red tape for community agencies when Government restricts the number of providers, reducing the number of contracts that the Government agency administers. The issue is the number of contracts a non-Government agency has to manage from Government. Instead of having three or more contracts with a Government Department, the NGO needs one contract with the different service agreements included.
- These Service Agreements also should be simple and fair and practical. We have seen Departments move to this system and then overly complicate the service Agreements, defeating the whole purpose. Contracts and Agreements should also be fair. We have seen an increasing tendency for these contracts to become legalistic and simply provide power to the governing department and often are quite unfair to the provider.
- Once accredited, the NGO should not have to reproduce evidence of financial viability, Governance practices etc in every funding submission and tender. If passing accreditation on these elements, it should suffice to provide evidence only of the accreditation.
- Longer term contracts – minimum three year and preferably five year contracts would reduce the time spent on re-applying or re-tendering. Longer term contracts make sense in terms of long term planning, staff retention and training and more effective services for clients. This would reduce micro management and time wasted on processes that are unnecessary. It is essential the Government move to a position of supporting the long term commitment a Services needs in its community. Short-term funding is counter productive.
- Shift from the propensity to fund pilots and ensure that there is an ongoing funding source should pilots be successfully evaluated. Many funding programs ask for innovative pilots, often with the criteria that if an agency has previously delivered a similar service, it is not eligible to apply for that program. This is resulting in a loss of evidence based services and projects, as once piloted and proven effective, they are no longer eligible for funding. New programs need a long implementation phase that allows for proper evaluation and assessment of effectiveness. Decisions about ongoing

funding need to be made well before the end of the contract to ensure continuity of services. Too frequently, such decisions are made with only a month or less till the end of the contract and disruption to staff retention, planning and service delivery has already occurred.

- Reduction in the number of reforms and reviews – when a NGO delivers multiple services from multiple funding sources, many of which undergo reviews and reforms at the same time, there is considerable additional work imposed on the NGO – attending information sessions, consultations, providing additional information, re-applying under new guidelines, working with clients who can become ineligible due to changed criteria or targeting, restructuring staff etc.
- Annual reporting and financial information – reporting schedules need to be annual and all programs that require quarterly or half – yearly progress reporting should shift to annual reporting.
- Commitment to program minimum data and avoidance of the tendency to collect too much information which is not used.
- Governments at both State and Federal level are increasingly contracting private consultants for a broad range of policy development, consultation and other work. This is an additional cost that could be better targeted to those tasks that require independence.

Thank you for considering this information, and thank you for your interest in the needs of young people in social, public and affordable housing policy and programs.

Respondents:

Ms Narelle Clay, AM Chief Executive Officer Southern Youth and Family Services	Ms Helen Backhouse Policy Advisor Southern Youth and Family Services
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