

INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS

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The Director
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Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS

The following is a submission by Holroyd City Council to the NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues and letter dated 6 July, 2015.

Holroyd Local Government Area is located in Western Sydney, approximately 25 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD and immediately south-west of the Parramatta CBD. It covers an area of 39 square kilometres which includes 17 suburbs, each with their own identity and demographics.

In 2011 the population of Holroyd was 99,163 representing an 11.5% increase on the 2006 Census population. It is estimated that the current population is at 111,000 and forecast to increase by an additional 40,000 by 2031.

Holroyd City is a socially, culturally and economically diverse area with residents from 128 identified countries, speaking over 60 languages and following 30 religions (Census 2011). Approximately 21.5% of the population group arrived in Australia after 2001 (Census 2011), placing Holroyd City amongst the top ten Local Government Areas in NSW for its intake of new settlers (DIAC 2009). The 2011 Census showed that 52% of Holroyd residents speak a language other than English at home and 43.1% of our residents were born overseas. 55.2% of the Holroyd community speak two or more languages with Arabic being the most commonly spoken language other than English in the LGA. Tamil, Hindi, Mandarin and Cantonese are the other most spoken languages in the community.

Holroyd City Council is a local government organisation which provides a wide variety of services to the community. In particular Council's Library and Community Services Department provides a number of direct services to the community, including those who are identified as having 'high social needs'.

These services include:

- Meals to the frail aged, people with disability and their carers

a place for everyone

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Centre Based Meals programs
- Dementia Specific Meals program
- Social support and home assistance for frail aged including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
- Social support for 18 to 65 years of age for those with a mild intellectual disability
- Access for those with a disability
- Assistance with learning the English language for those from CALD backgrounds
- A range of book collections in community language and basic English resources to assist those who have English as a second language
- Educational and information workshops, talks, and classes for those from CALD backgrounds
- Home Library services for those unable to personally visit the library eg. elderly, those with illness or disabled
- Children Services for children 0 to 13 years of age with additional needs
- Information and support for the vulnerable population within the community
- Paint Holroyd Read – Literacy Program

In the provision of these services, Council works with many communities which would be considered to have 'high social needs'. This includes:

- Frail aged and those with a disability
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Refugees
- Those experiencing domestic and family violence
- Those that are at or are at risk of homelessness
- Children 0 to 13 years of age with additional needs and require childcare
- Child Protection Committee

Holroyd City Council, in partnership with a wide range of services, organisations and government departments work together at the 'coal face' of communities who have high/complex social needs. As such Council would like to put forward the following points for the NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee's consideration.

- A) The extent to which government and non-government service providers are identifying the needs of clients and providing a coordinated response which ensures access to services both within and outside their particular area of responsibility.

Holroyd City Council actively partners with government and non-government service providers to provide a coordinated response to identified needs particularly in those communities which are considered to have high social needs.

The Living Holroyd Strategic Plan guides Council in its future operation and was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including residents, service providers and government agencies. To date over 2,000 participants have had the opportunity to provide input into the needs and aspirations of those living in the LGA.

As well as this, Council employs a number of other methods to ensure that by working in partnership with governments and service providers the needs of the community, including those with 'high social needs' are clearly identified and well documented.

These methods include:

- Working in partnership with key stakeholders in the community to provide information, hold events and programs and provide support which address identified need. Key program partners include but are not limited to:
 - State Library of NSW
 - Commonwealth Government – Department of Human Services – Centrelink
 - Family and Community Services – Ageing Disabilities and Home Care Merrylands
 - Parramatta Holroyd Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee
 - Settlement Services
 - Boronia Multicultural Services
 - Merrylands Local Area Command

Examples of information and support provided include:

- Community Education Classes – which are provided free to those in the community who are learning the english language
- Domestic and Family Violence Awareness campaigns – annual White Ribbon and 16 Days of Activism events
- Distribution of quarterly newsletters for the frail aged and those with a disability
- Workshops/talks/classes on a variety of topics and interests ie. health, fitness and exercise, safety and cooking etc.
- Events to raise awareness of specific days/weeks ie. Harmony, NAIDOC, Seniors, Youth, Children, Refugee, Child Protection & Families Weeks
- Coordination and facilitation of Holroyd Interagency and Holroyd Educators United which meets on a regular basis and membership consists of a wide range of government and non-government representatives who cover the Holroyd LGA.
- Advisory and Consultative Committees. Council coordinates and facilitates a number of committees who make recommendations and provide advice to Council. Some of these committees include:
 - Aged & Disability Advisory Committee
 - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Consultative Committee

- Library Advisory Committee
- Access Committee
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee
- Youth Services Advisory Committee

Council believes that the extent to which government and non-government services work in partnership to ensure access to services is satisfactory and will continue to improve in the future. With continued consultation, forward planning and working together needs are well identified. The real issue is securing the appropriate resources to address the identified needs.

- B) Barriers to the effective coordination of services including lack of awareness of services and any legislative provisions such as privacy law.

Holroyd City Council believes that there are many barriers to the effective coordination of services being delivered to communities with high social needs.

A major barrier involves the lack of resources both financial and human to address the needs. There is always a cost to coordinating and providing services, even when volunteers are widely used in an effort to reduce costs.

Council's Library Service experiences the barrier of lack of funds to meet the needs in delivering English classes. There are not enough resources/space to accommodate the increasing demand. Funds are required to engage qualified teachers and to cover the costs of hiring venues, as rooms within the library cannot accommodate the growing demand.

Costs in providing service or resources continue to increase. In 2014 – 2015 the Basic English collection had 64 items not returned, resulting in approximately \$5000 worth of stock missing from the collection and requiring replacement. Limited financial and staff resources, result in barriers to the provision of services such as information and education workshops, computer classes for CALD communities, expansion of home library services and services for children with additional needs.

In regard to lack of resources when coordinating services for communities experiencing domestic and family violence. These communities traditionally under report the incidence of domestic and family violence due to cultural stigma, traditional gender roles and family expectations (Morgan & Chadwick 2009, Tually et al. 2008). Add to this the limited availability of appropriate translator/interpreter services when the translators themselves are often part of the cultural community in which they live; limited support networks including social and geographical isolation; lack of awareness about the law and how to access to support services; ongoing abuse from their immediate family, cultural and religious shame; and religious beliefs about divorce (Benevolent Society 2009; Morgan & Chadwick 2009; Pease & Rees 2007).

An additional barrier can also be immigration issues with women who may not have permanent residency in Australia fearing deportation if they report the abuse (Office of Women's Policy Victoria 2002). There have been recent changes to immigration legislation in regards to victims of domestic and family violence but more needs to be done to ensure this information is available to this cohort. A coordinated approach to the culturally appropriate dissemination of this information is required.

A distinct lack of programs to refer CALD families to greatly hinders service coordination and the ability of local services to provide holistic care to the family. There are reportedly no language specific men's behavioural change programs available (Morris 2007).

The need for culturally appropriate recidivism reduction strategies is a key part of crime prevention with this cohort, with more evidence based programs needed to assist communities manage the cultural change required to effectively prevent domestic and family violence (Pease & Rees 2007; Runner, Yoshihama & Novick 2009).

Adding to the barriers faced to effective coordination of services is that most initiatives promoted by both government and non-government campaigns and policy centre around the concept of the separation of perpetrator and victim(s). This approach fails to take into account the cultural pressure placed on victims to stay within the family unit and the wider consequences that occur if they leave which includes social ostracisation from community and rejection by extended family members.

In the case of refugees and asylum seeker communities within the Holroyd LGA, barriers to the effective coordination of services include the lack of locally based settlement service providers within the local area. All settlement service providers are currently based in outlying LGA's such as Parramatta and Auburn. Given the transportation issues faced by this cohort (ineligibility for concession fares, lack of driver's licence etc), this distance is a barrier when it comes to creating strong referral pathways by local services.

Many refugee and asylum seeker communities come from cultures where government agencies are not involved in community service provision. This results in a lack of awareness of services available and perpetuates misinformation about the Australian system.

Our asylum seeker populations face the additional challenge of not being eligible for many mainstream services, leading to difficulty when coordinating services that are required to assist them. An example of this occurred with 'Damon' an Iranian asylum seeker who came into contact with Council through his work with local artists and partnership with Settlement Services International (SSI). Damon was very keen to contribute to art exhibitions hosted by Council but had no ongoing income which made it very hard to attend meetings and take up the opportunities offered to him.

The Parramatta Holroyd Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee (PHDFVPC) was so inspired by his work they commissioned him to create pieces for their White Ribbon Day art auction. Due to his visa restrictions they were unable to give him monetary remuneration which led Council to create innovative solutions. Council staff used their networks in order to secure free use of a local artist studio space for Damon as a thank you for his contributions.

The recent introduction of My Aged Care by the Commonwealth Government has caused some barriers to the effective coordination of services to the frail aged.

Whilst it is understood that this is a new system which has teething problems which may be resolved over time, there are major concerns with its current operation.

The concept of one control contact point has its merits; however Council staff have reported the following concerns:

- My Aged Care staff are currently overwhelmed due to the high demand for service
- Clients contacting My Aged Care are waiting far too long (some clients have reported waiting on the telephone for 2 to 3 hours). Council has encountered a client who was so upset by her experience with My Aged Care that by the time she was contacted to arrange service she was very abusive and refused any assistance from the staff/Council.
- There is an issue of clients not wanting to speak to several people especially CALD clients who have a more limited understanding of English. Clients are becoming confused.
- Some individuals are not being referred to the service provider that they request. Council is aware of a gentleman who requested a service provided by Council but was referred to another organisation.
- Lack of awareness or promotion for the public, health professionals or service providers.
- Clients being referred to different organisations to provide different services when one organisation could provide all services required, reducing confusion and the need for clients to deal with multiple numbers of people.
- Smaller organisations providing similar services are amalgamating to ensure they stay competitive and in the market, hence reducing the number of services to choose from.

Services for people with disability are to be rolled out under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Whilst the impact to clients/services under the new scheme is still to be determined, clients and services providers in Holroyd have expressed some initial concerns. These include:

- Uncertainty of costs for service
- Possibility of eliminating some services
- Choice and control
- Organisation readiness
- Industry workforce need for more flexible workforce to respond to client request, may be increased need for casual workforce.
- Communication and information being provided especially from those from CALD backgrounds.

Recommendations

Council would like to put forward the following recommendations for consideration:

- Increased funding/resources be provided to assist in the provision of services to communities with high social needs
- Greater promotion of services available to those from communities with high social needs
- Materials to be provided to services in relation to My Aged Care to assist with community awareness
- Provide opportunities for local service providers to hold roadshows with Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS), My Aged Care staff, Regional Assessment Services (RAS) and Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) to inform the residents of the changes and also what their needs are in the area in relation to services
- Alternate approaches are required, including the provision of a variety of service options for victims and a targeted awareness campaign for the different CALD communities aimed at changing community attitudes and expectations of behaviour. In the 2015/2016 financial year Holroyd City Council will partner with PHDFVPC and Cumberland Women's Health Centre to run a series of community forums aimed at educating local community leaders about the damage domestic violence does to our community and its children. The forums will be held in community languages and will ask the communities to assist in providing solutions to the issues, especially in light of the assumption that using government intervention to address 'family conflict' undermines male authority and family cohesiveness (Peas & Rees 2007), with women also assuming that if they sought assistance within the mainstream community, they would not be believed (Peas & Rees 2007).
- Develop ways to improve the dissemination of relevant information.
- Providing resources, support and space for CALD family programing within its childcare centres and community centres could encourage an increase in innovative programs that address the dearth of CALD specific behavioural change strategies in our community.

- Holroyd City Council has recently attracted funding through the Clubs for Holroyd funding scheme to fund and train the trainer for the 'Babyshed' program, the aim of which is to train male community members/workers from CALD backgrounds to deliver a three week program to 10 fathers in community languages. The program will prioritise the importance of the father in the physical, social and intellectual development of children and the part they play in raising a well-adjusted, happy and successful child. The outcomes of this program include forming stronger positive family attachments that respect and promote healthy relationships.
- C) Consideration if initiatives such as the Dubbo Minister's Action group and best practice models for the coordination of services.

Holroyd City Council supports any initiative which delivers improved results to the community, especially for those that are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

All levels of government working in collaborating with service providers and the community will have the greatest capacity to deliver the best results.

Council's initiatives and suggestions for best practice models include:

- Council facilitating case coordination meetings where NGO's and government agencies could discuss strategies to assist their refugee and asylum seeker clients. Council could build on the community Education Workshops that are already run by further facilitating an outreach space where settlement service providers could base themselves, enabling clients to gain access to required assistance locally instead of having to travel to Parramatta or Auburn.
 - By actively participating in the Parramatta Holroyd Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, Council supports partnership and collaboration between government and non-government agencies as a way forward when dealing with domestic and family violence in our community. Council's involvement in joint projects greatly increases understanding between involved agencies and encourages best practice and innovative approaches to raising awareness and reducing the incidence of domestic and family violence in our community.
 - Actively encouraging participation in crime prevention strategies by CALD community groups and recruiting CALD community leaders as champions could be considered as a positive method of engaging communities.
- D) Any other related matter
Nil to submit



Holroyd City Council appreciates the opportunity to provide information into the inquiry into service coordination in the communities with high social needs.

Council hopes that the information and recommendations provided assist in improving the quality of life for the nominated target group.

For any further enquiries, please contact Council's Manager of Community Services, Christine Piper on or by email

Yours sincerely

Greg Raft
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER