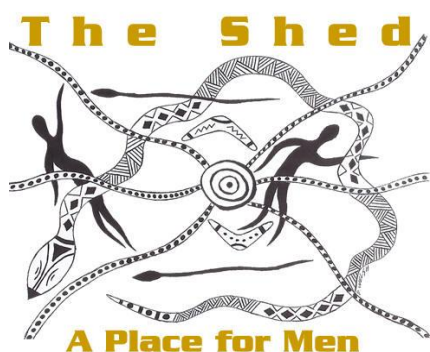


**INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN
COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS**

Organisation: The Shed

Date received: 14/08/2015



The Shed
Building Resilience for Men in Western Sydney
auspiced by the Men's Health Information and Resource Centre at UWS

Mr Stewart Smith
The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House, Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

By email: socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Smith,

Inquiry into service coordination in communities with high social needs

I make the following submission on behalf The Shed.

We seek confidentiality of this submission and also seek to make verbal submissions, I am also in the process of gathering letters of concern from service partners involved in the "Mt Druitt AVO Pilot Project" and there concern with the conduct of Legal Aid NSW.

I understand that the Standing Committee on Social Issues ("Standing Committee") has been asked to inquire into and report on service coordination in communities with high social needs. The terms of reference include consideration of:

- (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 of their particular area of responsibility;
- (b) barriers to the effective coordination of services, including lack of client awareness of services and any legislative provisions such as privacy law;
- (c) consideration of initiatives such as the Dubbo Minister's Action Group and best practice models for the coordination of services; and
- (d) any other related matter.

Preliminary comments

The Shed is an Aboriginal male targeted suicide prevention service. Aboriginal males have the highest rate of suicide in the nation. The Shed lead by its Aboriginal male peers, had preference to open the service to the wider community, therefore no-one is refused a service (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal males and females are welcome).

The Shed is located in Emerton Western Sydney (Postcode 2770). The Shed has two full-time staff, and we model our service around the social determents of health (as defined

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/ , and we invite relevant service to become partners according to client need.

We consider the Shed to be a “Safe Space” for the Aboriginal and wider community, and we invite service in order to address client need. We partner with commonwealth, state and local government agencies as well as Non-Government Agencies, and the private sector. We engage with clients and refer them to agencies, we then provide a continued relationship with clients to ensure they remain engaged with services (e.g. if a client is not getting on with the staff member, we approach the service and have the staff member changed, to work with a particular client, as the client - staff relationship is a determining factor in keeping clients engaged).

We have a total of 28 service partners that is inclusive of:

- Law and Justice Services;
- Health Services (Mental and Physical);
- Housing Services;
- Financial Services;
- Aboriginal Culture – men re-engaging in culture ;

The Shed and Collaborative committees;

The Coordinator of The Shed is also active on other collaborative committees, which include:

- Greater Sydney Family Law Pathways Network (Deputy Chair)
(<http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/SearchPages/generalservice.aspx?Resourceid=2493&source=FPN>) :
- Aboriginal Family Law Pathways Network (Co-Chair);
- NSW Law Society – Indigenous Issues Committee;
- NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing – Warruwi Indigenous Program
- Federal Circuit Court of Australia – Reconciliation

UWS Publication on The Shed:

http://www.uws.edu.au/mhirc/mens_health_information_and_resource_centre/publications#theshed or <http://www.menshealthweek.org.au/TheShedPaper.pdf>

The following submission is direct responses to the Terms of Reference (ToR)

TOR (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 of their particular area of responsibility;

The Shed is an NGO funded by Commonwealth Department of Health, we take a strong advocacy role and a person centred approach to holistic wellbeing of individuals.

The experiences I have had, is that there is quite often a culture of what I would consider to be “victim blaming” towards disadvantaged or complex needs people by agencies and services.

We quite often work with partner agencies that can determine that clients can be, ,

- Too complex,
- Not complex enough;
- Wrong age;
- Wrong gender;

This is mainly due to the number of gaps in policy and guidelines for both a government and NGO's, the “human” side of staff can see the need, but are unable to change the bureaucracy.

Another issue is the lack of education clients have on their rights, which relates to different sectors such as legal, Housing, Health (mental and physical health), disadvantaged populations such as Indigenous people are unaware of their rights, and often issues including a limited education, low socio-economic status, diagnosed or un-diagnosed mental health/illness such as schizophrenia, trauma, victims of violence, victims of sexual abuse can have such a complex life that they live “day to day” and “pay to pay check”, living with issues and when self-medicate by using it can make it more complex for agency to work with them.

Some of the key issues in terms of disadvantaged people accessing justice are inclusive of;

LEGAL

- Lack of legal representation for Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders;
- Lack of legal representation in NCAT Tenancy Hearings;
- Lack of proper cultural contact in FaCS care plans for Aboriginal children;
- Lack of legal practitioners (including Legal Aid NSW) properly litigating Aboriginal Cultural Contact plans for respective parents in NSW Children’s Court and Family Law Court’s*

* Cultural contact plans are not commensurate with the Convention of the rights of the child Australia became a signature to this convention in as follows

Link: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Australia became a signatory to the Convention of the Rights Of the Child on 22 August 1990.

NSW Children’s Court orders in general have a minimum of 4 to 6 contacts between parents and children. The majority of Aboriginal children are placed with non-Aboriginal foster carers and in general “care plans” emphasis that foster carers allow children to watch NITV and attend a NAIDOC Event and cultural plans emphasis. Culture is a lived experience not one can be learnt from watching TV. Aboriginal children are not getting learn their culture, and not visiting kin on country (within the child’s respective Aboriginal nation), and not experiences their own respective Aboriginal culture)

HEALTH

- Limitation of services capacity to take People on Community treatment orders (CTO), and financial Management orders; including the HASI program (Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative) link:
<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Changes+to+Social+Housing/Partnerships/Housing+and+Mental+Health/Housing+and+Accommodation+Support+Initiative.htm>
-

HOUSING

- Lack of referral to therapeutic services such as financial counsellors and advocacy services from Housing NSW of people at risk of homelessness (generally due to arrears and anti-social behaviour);
- Lack of accommodation/refuges for males; (in general males are the defendants in Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) matters and are more likely to have conditions that restrict them from returning to the home.)

ToR (b) barriers to the effective coordination of services, including lack of client awareness of services and any legislative provisions such as privacy law;

The Shed lead a “Mt Druitt ADVO Pilot Project” at the Mt Druitt Local Court, service partners included;

- Legal Aid NSW
- Sydney West Area Health Service (Aboriginal Mental Health Clinical Lead)
- NSW Probation and Parole (Mt Druitt Office)
- Centre of Addictive Medicine (Substance abuse counsellors)
- Indigenous Money Mentors (Financial Counsellors) (National Bank of Australia indigenous project)
- Wentworth Housing (Community Housing Provider)
- Centrelink (Community Engagement Officer)

The Court registrar and the sitting Magistrates was in agreement with and supportive of the project. We was allocated a carryover court room (Court room 3)

The project from a suicide prevention of view, was highly effective as we would have people and families engage with therapeutic services that they would not either be aware of or perhaps have a capacity to access (due to the distribution of services across the western Sydney area e.g. mental health at Blacktown , Financial counsellors in Penrith etc.

ToR (c) consideration of initiatives such as the Dubbo Minister's Action Group and best practice models for the coordination of services; and

In the opinion of The Shed it is better to advocate for people/clients if you are a NGO and if you are not aligned to the government agency for which services ***“Do not want to bite the hand that feeds them”***. The Shed is unique in the fact that we work on a collaborative basis with multiple agencies and we are able to maintain strong relationships, but we also monitor services and agencies to ensure that our clients are provided with proper due process and representation if needed.

e.g. it is common to have an agency such as FaCS (housing services) do an outreach at The Shed at same time we have Homeless People Legal Service provide an outreach, it is also common for The Shed to support clients into NCAT tenancy hearings with services such as Greater Sydney Aboriginal Tenancy Support Service, and to take have scope to take appeals to the district courts with use of PIAC (Public Interest Advocacy Centre) or private law firms.

ToR (d) any other related matter

I have only had a very short timeframe to work on this submission, I basically found out about it 3 days before the closing of submissions, I have a lot more information that I would like to put forward as verbal submissions.

I have only had 1 day to work on this due to commitments with mental health and legal sector partners that have been in place for a number of months.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make this submission.

Regards,

Rick Welsh
Coordinator
The Shed