

Rough sleeping responses to COVID-19 Forum
Held Tuesday 7 April 2020
Notes from Mike Byrne, Regional Coordinator NT Shelter

Victoria

They all really appreciated the Vic Government's guide for homeless services.

Victoria (probably Melbourne) has seen an increase in assertive outreach responses.

The Govt doubled the funding for emergency accommodation which has allowed homeless services to organise bulk billing of hotels.

They have a Homelessness Quarantine Service response with health, housing and other agencies involved – this is probably closest to what NT is doing.

They have had increased cross sector, health and homelessness collaboration and improved working relationships including staff sharing.

WA

They have set up Govt/NGO task forces and working groups of which the Homelessness Task Force is one.

They are running the Hotels with Heart pilot, it's at capacity and they are seeking to expand.

Lotteries West is a source of grant funding for Covid responses.

RHUA have developed a systems map.

They have seen a rapid reduction in volunteer operated homeless services but the Govt and NGO's have picked up the slack.

SA

Since 24/3 they have housed 256 homeless people in hotels.

Everyone housed is visited daily. These case workers trouble shoot, educate and connect people with case managers from NGO's they also support the hotel staff.

Everyone in the hotels has had a risk assessment VI SPDAT completed and is connected to ongoing case management which the Govt has increased funding to ensure.

SA also has a coordinated Homelessness health response – flu vax, mental health etc.

SA housing has allocated properties to assist in moving people from the hotels into permanent leases, they have also allocated resources to ensure there is increased support for the new tenants.

NSW

Govt has reduced the bureaucracy around program requirements giving service providers flexibility.

Also they have started a program “everyone who wants to can move off the streets” 300 rooms provided, more needed.

They have a coordinated Govt/NGO/Health/Homeless task force made up of working groups:

1. Assertive Outreach Working Group
2. Accommodation supply and Placement coordination working group -right properties for right people, gender and culturally specific hotels etc.
3. Accommodation Support working group – to engage with hoteliers, support those accommodated, food security, linking people to case workers and assisting people into permanent housing

Sydney has daily assertive outreach “huddles” where outreach workers share knowledge and highlight emerging issues.

They have concerns about keeping people in accommodation after the covid crisis and also worried about a rush of evictees into homelessness after the 6 mth moratorium.

NSW also have the premiers department involved in a regular working group discussing exit strategies from hospital and corrections.

Tasmania

The homeless sector have been asked by the Government to develop a statewide response to rough sleepers. It's with Govt awaiting a reply.

ACT

There are two working groups

1. Getting Rough Sleepers Indoors
2. Congregate Accommodation and Shared Occupancy

A local ACCHO was praised for its work in educating the homeless community.

Qld

were very brief as they spoke more about the ending homelessness projects that have already been established.

Professor Paul Flatau

Gave a tally of the number of people mentioned that had been accommodated and are off the streets since mid March – 750 by this group alone.

He also highlighted challenges:

1. New entrants to homelessness. The sector needs to be agile to respond to these groups
2. An exit strategy from the covid responses – NSW and SA are working towards this
3. Culturally appropriate responses are needed
4. PPE for homeless services. People working in Homeless services need to be recognised as essential workers – Minister Howarth has provided his contact details for organisations needing help accessing PPE
5. We need more research into entry into homelessness

City based responses need to be rolled out into the regions.