



## Orientation to the NWMR Homelessness Service System – October 11

# Program

9.30– 9.45 am

Welcome

9.45 – 10.45

Introduction and context

10.45 – 10.50 am

Short Break

10.50 – 11.40 am

Service system context

11.40 – 12.10 pm

Big Break

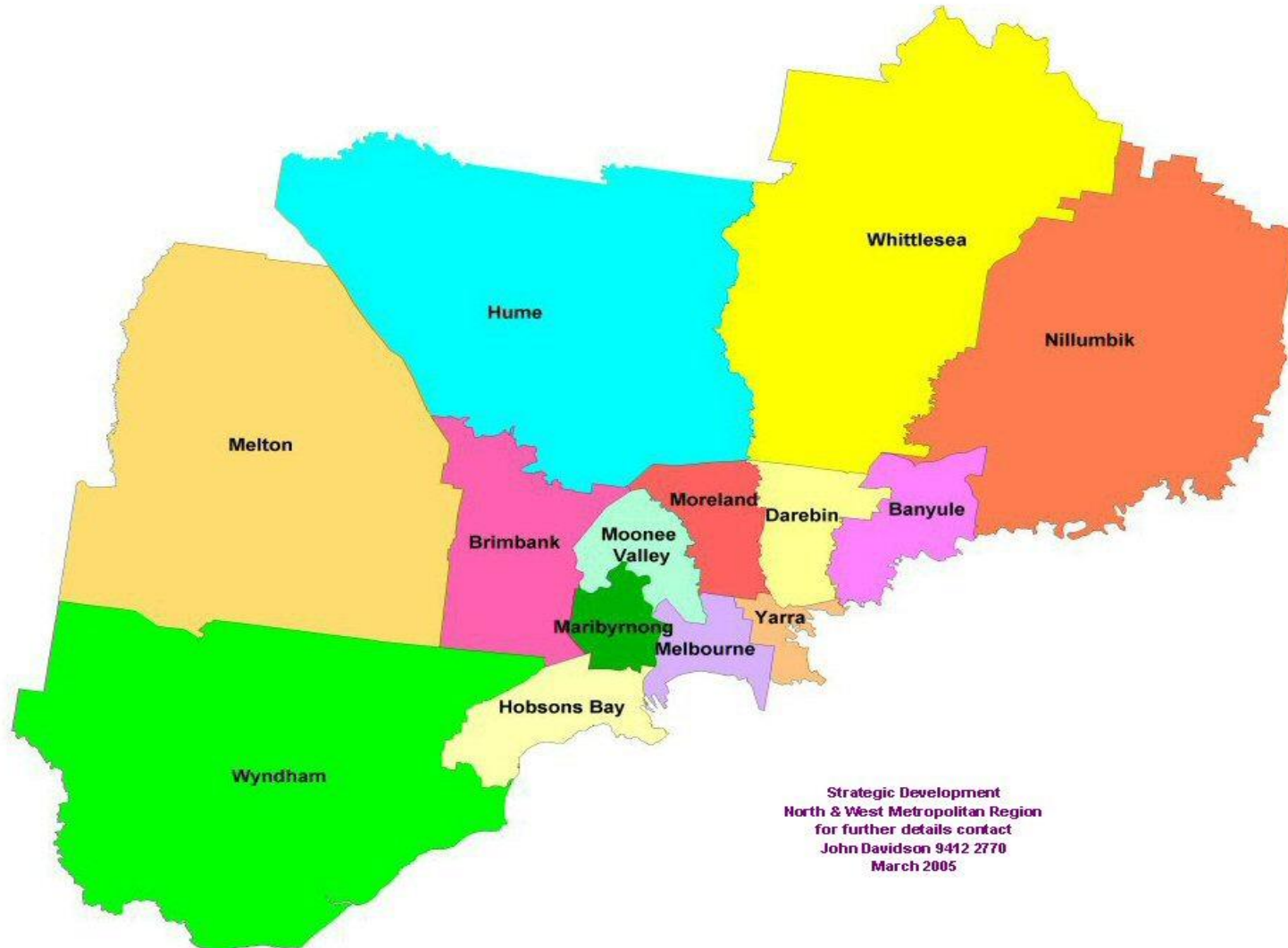
12.10 – 1.30pm

Operational guide  
Q&A, discussion and feedback



# **Section 1: Regional operating context**

# North & West Region



## North West Metropolitan Region at a Glance

- Population of 1,525,119 (30% of Victoria)
- 11 of the 14 most disadvantaged local government areas (LGAs) in Melbourne
- Children 0 – 17 years of age are 22% of region's population (333,535)
- 7,287 Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people live in the region (1/4 of the state's and 1/2 of Metropolitan Melbourne's Aboriginal population)
- 20% of population born in non English Speaking countries (Victoria 13.3%)
- Half of the refugees arriving in Victoria settle in the NWMR
- 10.6% of households have housing costs greater than 40% of income
- Only 10.2% of rental housing is considered affordable (compared with 21.3% across Victoria)
- 32% of the population reside in the four growth corridor LGAs
- Growth corridor areas are expected to grow by 55% in the next 12 years.

## Definition of homelessness 1

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (1994) identifies that a person is homeless:

*if he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.... if the only housing to which the person has access:*

*(a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or*

*(b) Threatens the person's safety; or*

*(c) marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:*

*(i) adequate personal amenities; or*

*(ii) the economic and social supports that a home normally affords;*

*or*

*•(d) Places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.*

•The Act stipulates that this definition includes people who are in crisis and at imminent risk of becoming homeless and people who are experiencing family violence and are at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

## Definition of homelessness 2

Developed by two Australian researchers, Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) categorises homelessness into three broad areas. These are:

**Primary homelessness:** People without conventional accommodation, such as rough sleepers, squatters etc.

**Secondary homelessness:** People who frequently move between temporary accommodation, emergency shelters sleeping on couches etc.

**Tertiary homelessness:** People who have insecure tenure and who may be staying long term in boarding houses where they do not have private bathroom or kitchen facilities.

## Estimations of homelessness in the NWMR

		2006 'Counting the homeless' <sup>1</sup>		OoH new applications 'priority' segments (2008/09) <sup>2</sup>		CRA recipients paying > 30% income in rent (2007) <sup>3</sup>	
Region	LASN	n	%	n	%	n	%
North & West Metro	Northern	4,214	18.10%	1,279	20.50%	7,163	17.10%
	Western	2,339	10.00%	957	15.30%	6,072	14.50%
	<b>NWMR</b>	<b>6,553</b>	<b>28.10%</b>	<b>2,236</b>	<b>35.80%</b>	<b>13,235</b>	<b>31.60%</b>

## **What is the Homelessness Services System in the NWMR?**

Since December 2009 homelessness assistance services have been operating as a coordinated homelessness service system:

- Five transitional housing management (THM)/access point services
- 55 homelessness support agencies providing 200 programs
- New National Partnership Agreement – Homelessness and Rooming House Taskforce programs
- Housing Establishment Funds
- ‘Joined up’ programs with the Corrections, Mental Health, Youth Justice and Alcohol and Drug service systems
- Service system support and capacity building services
- Coordination occurs through the North West Homelessness Network and North West Homelessness Local Area Service Network

## Who are our clients?

### People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:

- 20,500 people were homeless in Victoria on census night 2006: 42 in every 10,000 people.
- In 2010, **3,500** new households presented to access point services seeking homelessness assistance.
- From July 2009 - June 2010:
  - Initial assessment & planning services assisted 18,324 households, with 5,787 accompanying children, through 56,700 contacts; and
  - Homelessness support agencies (SAAP) in the N&WMR assisted 8,056 clients with 4,240 accompanying children through 13,648 support periods
  - 1,872 households were accommodated in transitional housing.



## Need for homelessness services

**Demand for homelessness assistance is overwhelming in the NWMR and well in excess of capacity:**

The 2009/10 VHDC data suggests:

- just over half the numbers of people presenting to access point clients will receive case managed support.
- just under ¼ of homelessness support clients will be housed in transitional housing.

***This is not reflected in the current reality:***

In September 2011 **3,915 households were awaiting homelessness support** and/or transitional housing in the NWMR (7,626 individuals).

**428** households/individuals presented to the homelessness service system for the first time in September 2011.

During July to September 2011 there were **361 vacancies for transitional support and 207 transitional housing vacancies** to assist all these households.

## Who are our clients?

The primary reasons people access homelessness services in the NWMR are:

- Family violence (twice as many people identified FV as the primary reason for seeking assistance as any other reason – 35% of support clients and 4% of THM clients)
- Eviction (18% - THM)
- In the NWMR in 2009/10:
  - 69% of support and 55% of THM clients were women
  - 32% of support and 21% of THM clients are 15-24 years of age
  - 26% of support and 30% of THM clients were between 25 and 34 years of age
  - 6% of support and 3% of THM clients are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders
  - 58% of support clients and 50% of THM clients are single people
  - 33% are of support clients and 30% of THM clients single people with accompanying children

## Role of Clients

- All programs are voluntary
- Consumer charter guides client rights and responsibilities
- Clients must give consent to transfer of information across the HSS
- Consent is updated every six months
- Access to the Homelessness Advocacy Service
- LASN is committed to improving client feedback and participation mechanisms to inform service system planning
- Client Feedback Group developing a practice guide, conducting client feedback forums and working with the LASN to bring the client perspective into LASN planning

## Feedback from clients

Following an explanation of the *Homelessness Assistance Service Standards* relating to client involvement, most participants were interested in having a say on systemic issues relating to homelessness.

- ‘We’re the experts.’
- ‘I’ve got not problem telling them (homelessness services) what I think because things can always get better.’
- ‘The input that we’d like to have is in the creation of safe housing. That’s it. That’s the key.’
- ‘Being involved in the safety of people who are homeless.’
- ‘Case management meetings are about how I’m going. I want to look at the bigger picture.’
- ‘I’d like to see a consultation process of how we can restructure the system in relation to recurring homelessness and how we can change the current situation from a realistic voice’ (i.e. from the clients’ perspective).
- ‘I would like to talk about broader issues.’

## **Client feedback mechanisms**

### **Peer Education Support Program (PESP)**

The CHP Peer Education Support Program (PESP) is a volunteer program that provides people who have experienced homelessness an opportunity to have a powerful voice in decisions that have a direct impact on their lives.

PESP provides members with training, skills and experience in consumer advocacy and homelessness sector policy, including submissions to government, presentations, media interviews, consultations and focus groups with people experiencing homelessness, and more

### **The Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS)**

Service to assist clients who have experienced a problem with a Government funded Homelessness support or accommodation service HAS will provide clients with advice on their rights and on how to make a complaint.

Free Call 1800 066 256

Email [has@chp.org.au](mailto:has@chp.org.au)

### **Client Participation and Feedback Guide**

Developed by the LASN Client Feedback Group to assist LASN services to garner client feedback and improve client participation in the homelessness service system.

### **LASN Client Focus Groups and survey**

The LASN will survey a proportion of clients annually and conducts client focus groups.

## Homelessness service system coordination

- LASN commenced mid 2008
- All homelessness funded services in NWMR are members
- Developed a model for service system coordination
- December 2009 – implemented the Opening Doors Framework
- Services now work in coordination with shared responsibility for clients

## Coordination: Role of the LASN

- **Departmental/Sector partnership to:**
  - o Monitor homelessness service system arrangements into future
  - o Undertake coordinated service system planning and development, informed by client perspective
  - o Advocacy
  - o Share information
- LASN makes recommendations to the Department of Human Service.
- Since August 2011 the Sector has managed the LASN.
- **LASN priorities for 2011:**
  - o Practice development
  - o Monitor and develop HSS arrangements under the Opening Doors Framework
  - o Progress strategies for shared sector concerns

# DHS/HSS partnership

## VCOSS/DHS Partnership Agreement:

### DHS responsibilities

- To oversee the appropriate and effective spending of public money
- To enact government policy
- To ensure that clients are receiving appropriate responses
- To work in partnership with the HSS to progress service system developments (quote from DHS/VCOSS Partnership Agreement)

### Sector responsibilities

- Provide responsive services to clients
- Operate within guidelines and standards
- Meet annual funding targets
- Advocate
- Operate as an active member of the HSS

# **DHS/HSS arrangements**

## **Guidelines and accreditation**

- Accreditation against the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards
- Homelessness assistance guidelines and conditions of funding
- Housing provider registration
- Opening Doors Framework
- NWMR Opening Doors Manual

## **Acts of Parliament**

- Residential Tenancies Act
- Supported Accommodation Assistance Act
- Human Rights Charter

## **Departmental agency core monitoring arrangements**

- 3 agency visits per year
- Annual desktop review

## Mechanisms for development and problem solving

- **Innovation and Improvement Log**- log of systemic issues or innovative approaches.
- **Practice Advisory Group (PAG)** - progresses Innovation and Improvement Log issues and advises LASN on practice development opportunities.
- **North West Homelessness Network** – network of all homelessness funded providers in the region
- **LASN Support Working Group** - six weekly meeting to discuss issues of shared concern to support providers, opportunity to develop more consistent practice
- **LASN Client Feedback Group** – resources LASN to gather client feedback
- **DHS/Access Point/THM meetings**: six weekly meetings of all THM and access point services to discuss governance, strategic and operational issues.
- **Program and Service Advisors** - every service has a DHS PASA who can provide information, advice and assistance with strategic issues.
- **LASN** - all services are represented on the LASN and any LASN member can agenda an item for discussion.
- **LASN Reference Group** – manages LASN meetings and other organisational matters
- **Family Violence Committees** – partnerships between family violence and allied services developing family violence responses.



**Short Break**



**Section 2:  
Overview of the NWMR homelessness service  
system**

# What is the role of the HSS?

## Broad aim:

To provide assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to support them:

- to find or maintain stable long term housing; and
- to address those issues that have contributed to homelessness or homelessness risk to reduce the likelihood of recurring homelessness.

## •The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act identifies that the overall aim of homelessness support services is:

*To provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Within this aim the goals are:*

- (a) To resolve crisis; and*
- (b) To re-establish family links where appropriate; and*
- (c) To re-establish capacity to live independently of homelessness support.*

## Principles guiding the HSS

2008: *Opening Doors Framework* released for implementation across the State: a practice and systems approach to provision of timely and effective access to homelessness and social housing services to people seeking assistance.

Principles now guiding provision of homelessness assistance are:

- A consumer focussed and strengths based approach
- Equity of access to the resources of the HSS
- Reasonable care to address the risks faced by each person who is homeless
- Maximising the use of available homelessness resources
- Support for skilled workers with training, supervision and efficient tools
- Collaboration and partnership between agencies and DHS



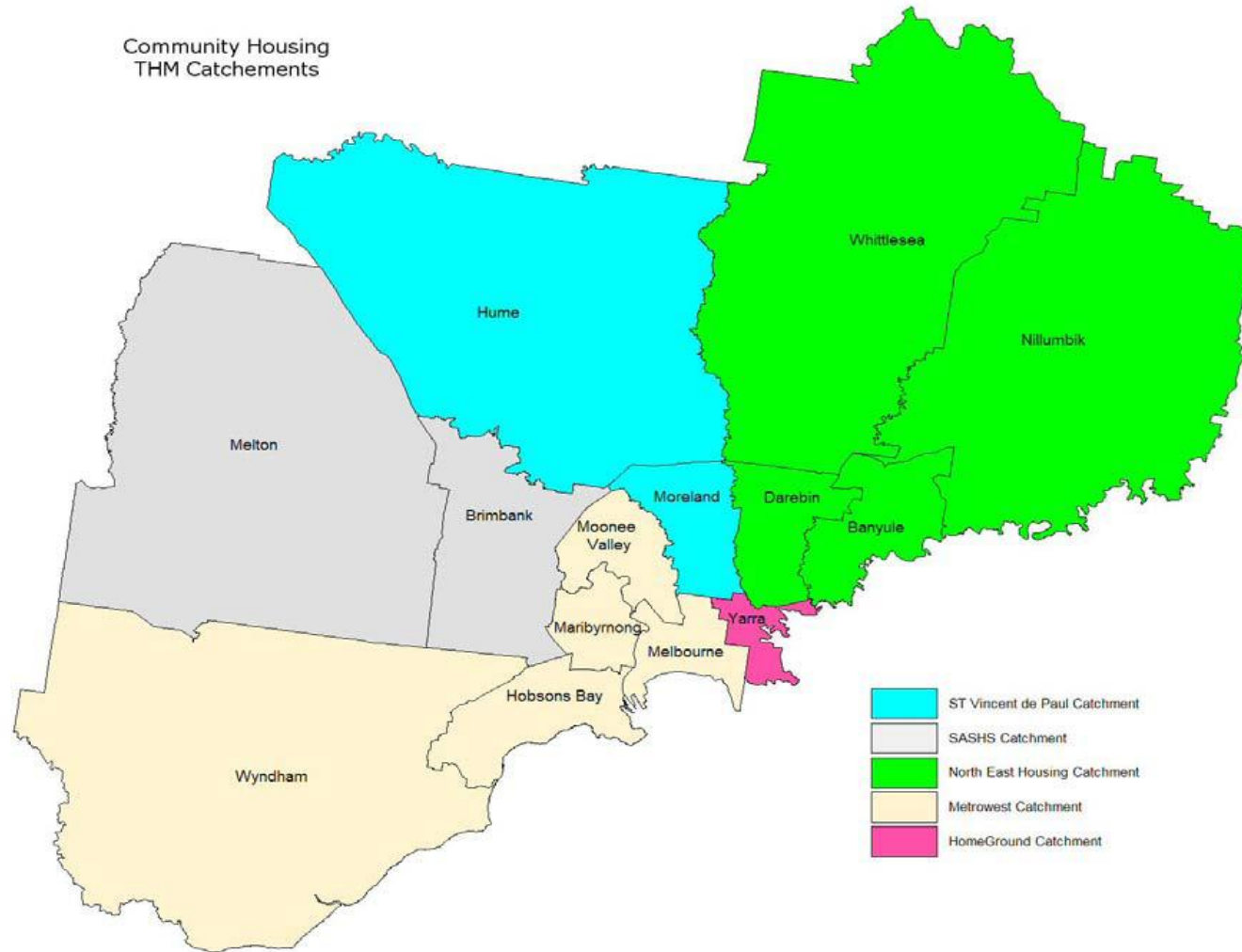
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## **Pathway through the service system**

## Access to the service system

- **Five access point services** - Initial assessment & planning responses: HomeGround, North East Housing Service, VincentCare Housing Service, Yarra Community Housing and SASHS Western
- **Two family violence specific entry point services** - Women's Health West and Berry Street Family Violence Services
- **Melbourne Youth Support Service** - direct assistance to young people and referral to a range of youth refuges
- **Two outposts:** Melton and Werribee
- **SAAP supported referral services** - services providing assertive outreach to people who are geographically and/or culturally isolated
- **Specialist services** - multi- area or 'one of a kind' services providing direct assistance
- **1800#** - 24 hour access. Diverts to access points during the day and to St Kilda Crisis Contact Centre after hours.

# THM/Access Point catchments



## **Tier 1 responses: Initial assessment & planning**

- Clients call or drop in and are 'triaged' according to presenting need.
- Clients are assessed and prioritised at first contact where possible.
- Emergency accommodation needs and presenting issues are addressed at first contact where possible.
- Planning occurs with clients to manage future needs.
- Priority of need can be changed to better reflect client circumstance.
- Not all clients assessed as requiring support and/or transitional housing will receive it (system capacity insufficient).
- Clients being supported outside the HSS can still be prioritised for access to transitional housing if they have a current assessment at an Access Point

## Tier 2 responses: Housing Establishment Funds

- Brokerage funds, held by THM and homelessness support services to:
  - o Provide people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with direct assistance in accessing emergency accommodation, private rental housing and securing private tenancies at risk.
  - o Promote exit points out of the HSS and into long-term affordable housing.
  - o Target resources to those in greatest need.
  - o Be provided in conjunction with a plan.
  - o Complement other services to individuals and families in housing crisis; and
  - o Increase understanding of the extent and nature of housing crisis through a comprehensive data collection system.
- Homelessness support services advertise HEF levels monthly on Resource Register.
- Surplus is forwarded to access point services every six months.

## Tier 2 responses: Interim Response

### Interim Response 1

- Telephone 'check in' with those most vulnerable
- Primarily by access points

### Interim response 2

- Short term targeted assistance to individual/households who have been assessed and are awaiting housing and/or support:

**Prevention/early intervention** – short term assistance to help a client maintain current housing and avoid the need to enter the HSS

**Short term support/crisis intervention** to provide assistance to clients to avoid an escalation of their crisis whilst awaiting access to support/housing.

Being piloted in Moreland/Hume, West and Yarra/CBD.

## **Tier 3: Homelessness crisis support services**

### **Crisis supported accommodation services (CSAs):**

Youth refuges, women's refuges and supported accommodation for single men, single women and families providing short term supported accommodation for people who are homeless and whose support needs are significant enough to require intensive support to assist them to stabilise a crisis.

### **Crisis support services**

Short term case managed support for people who are homeless and whose support needs are significant enough to require intensive support to assist them to stabilise a crisis.

## Tier 4: Transitional Housing

- Managed by the five THM services in the region and Women's Housing Ltd.
- These services manage 1,100 transitional housing properties owned or leased by the Director of Housing.
- Approximately 200 of these are attached to 'joined up' initiatives.
- Providing medium-term accommodation (20 weeks on average)
- Residents enter into an occupancy agreement of a determined period
- Subject to the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).
- All tenants must be receiving support.
- Support is provided in accordance with the Housing and Support Partnership Agreement.
- From November 2011 properties allocated proportionately to need from the prioritisation list.

## **Tier 4: Transitional support**

- Case managed support to assist people in crisis to move to independent long term housing.
- The average duration of support is 13 weeks.
- Support is generally provided on an outreach basis. Some support is directed to tenants of transitional housing.
- Support provision includes: assistance to find housing, emotional support, advocacy, assistance to obtain income, parenting support, active referral to other service systems, assistance with living skills, assistance to access employment, education and training.

# Longer term housing options

## Public Housing

### Segmented waiting list:

Recurring (1) Homeless

Supported (2) Housing

Special (3) Housing  
Needs

General (4) Housing

### Social Housing Advocacy & Support Program

## Bond Loan Scheme

### Private Rental market:

Private Owners

Real Estate

Boarding House

### Private rental brokerage programs

HEF

## Long Term Community Managed

Rooming House,

Group Housing, sponsorship etc

Supported Residential Services

### Housing Associations

## Capacity building services

**North West Homelessness Network** – network of all homelessness funded services in the NWMR. Resourced by two Network Coordinators.

**Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program** – works with homelessness services in supporting young people to improve their relationship with their family through family mediation, family conferencing, individual counselling, group and family therapies.

**Children's Resource Coordinators** - to assist the homelessness sector in identifying and addressing the specific needs of children experiencing homelessness. providing a range of support to homelessness services in the North and West Metropolitan Region who work with children in homeless families.

**Council to Homeless Persons** - the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness with a mission to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.



**Big break**



# **Introduction to NWMR Opening Doors Manual**

## **Section Two: Client consent**

- VHDC/SHSC informed consent approach utilised
- Consent lasts six months
- Consent applies to transfer of information across the homelessness service system

## **Section 3: Assessment**

- **Assessment is narrative based**
- **Recorded in a standard format across the State**
- **Two part assessment:**
  - a) Initial assessment - Access Points**
    - Incorporates risk assessment
    - Assessment of support need, housing need and personal vulnerability
    - Standard assessment format generated through CMS
  - b) Case management assessment - Support Agencies**
    - Comprehensive assessment during and following engagement to inform case plan

## Section 4: Prioritisation

Standard approach to prioritisation of resource allocation across State

- Individuals/households are 'active' clients of the HSS once assessed
- Determines housing need, support need and level of personal vulnerability
- Need determined as high, medium or low
- All clients assessed included in prioritisation list for access to support and/or housing
- Prioritisation list can be filtered for 'best matching'
- Prioritisation for level 1 interim response while waiting
- Prioritisation for support and housing resources

## Resource Register

- Tool to record all resources in the homelessness sector
- Tool for access points to view resource vacancies – to ‘best match’ and refer
- Information source for LASNs
- Generation of reports for LASNs and agencies

## Section 5: Resource Allocation

- All resources listed on Resource Register
- Agencies identify the access point/s for resources
- Holder of resource responsible for 'publishing' and describing resource
- Access Points 'best match' to available resources
- Access Points refers to resource
- Agency arranges access to resource

## **Section 6: Referral and Feedback Loop**

1. One prospective client identified for each vacancy (except shared properties)
2. Client informed of referral
3. Referral faxed to support agency/phone call
4. Support agency accepts first eligible referral
5. Support agency contacts client as soon as possible
6. Support agency sends confirmation fax back to Access Point and 'unpublishes' resource
7. Post referral feedback process/cross regional referrals

## HSS Tools

- Statewide 1800#: 1800 825 955
- Resource register
- Standard referral form
- Standard prioritisation approach
- NWMR Practice Manual
- After hours responses
- Statewide protocols – Cross regional referral and Prison Exits
- Common forms: ie. Fax sheet and feedback form
- Client Information Sheet

## Mechanisms for development and problem solving revisited

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## For further information...

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