

North and West Homelessness Network

Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012

January 2011

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NORTH AND WEST REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS NETWORK

STRATEGIC PLAN

2009 - 2012

1. Introduction

The Strategic Plan (SP) reflects the “big picture” of the North and West Homelessness Network (NWHN) and its future directions. It explains the objectives and goals of the NWHN and the specific strategies and tasks required to meet those objectives and goals. Through it, we can examine the progress of the NWHN - it’s vision, aims and objectives, it’s governance, the role of the Networkers - as well as the strategic environment in which it operates.

The NWHN Steering Group (SG) is elected to represent the NWHN membership, and is responsible for creating and monitoring the Strategic Plan. This is done by examining and reflecting on the key objectives of the current Strategic Plan and by consultation with key stakeholders in order to set priorities that reflect the current environment.

The Strategic Plan is developed around three outcome areas:

- Planning and Communication
- Advocacy
- Capacity Building and Service System Development

2. Purpose and role

“Regional Homelessness Networks provide an opportunity for all Homelessness Assistance Service provider organisations to come together at the regional level in order to improve the responses to people experiencing homelessness in their local communities” ¹

¹ 2005-06 SAAP Program Framework and Funding Guidelines.

The original Regional Homelessness Network Guidelines (draft 1996) identified five key functions which continue to underpin the operation of the network:

- Consultation
- Planning & Needs Identification
- Community Education/Advocacy
- Development & Training
- Coordination & Linkages

3. NWHN Vision and Aim

Vision

An end to homelessness

Aim

We aim to achieve this vision by creating opportunities for all N & W Homelessness Assistance Services to come together to:

- Develop an informed regional voice on homelessness
- Address the causes of homelessness
- Advocate for improved responses to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Build the capacity of the NW Homelessness Service System in all facets of service delivery

4. The Governance of the NWHN

A Governance Model was developed in 2008. This articulates the operational relationships and the specific roles and responsibilities of NWHN stakeholders. **See Appendix 1** for details of the NWHN Governance model.

5. The Operation of the NWHN

The NWHN receives OoH funding to employ two Network Coordinators (NCs). These positions are auspiced by Wombat Housing & Support Service. The principal function of the NCs is to operationalise the Strategic Plan. The NCs develop an annual Work Plan in consultation with the Auspice and Steering Group. This Work Plan reflects the vision and aim of the Strategic Plan and covers all identified key deliverables. Progress Reports are written by NCs and presented every six weeks at the SG meetings. These Progress Reports detail all activities completed by the NCs and will assist in planning and prioritising future NWHN activities.

See Appendix 2 for further details on the NWHN Core Documents and how they determine, guide and monitor the NWHN's operation.

6. Key Deliverables of the NWHN

The funded annual key deliverables and how the NWHN will meet them are detailed in the plan, and briefly are as follows. The NWHN will deliver a minimum of:

- two Position Papers each year
- two Submission responses each year on specific issues
- two Working Group reports
- two Bulletins ²
- Twelve network meetings, encompassing SG and WG meetings
- Four quarterly forums or special events

² In July 2010 the NWHN launched its website. On average the NWHN is now posting between 30 – 40 items of news and information each month thus negating the need for bulletins.

NWHN STRATEGIC PLAN - KEY OUTCOMES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Key Areas	Objective	Strategic Actions	Timeline
1. Planning and Communication	1.1. Strategic Plan reviewed and endorsed annually	Consult annually with the NW Sector on directions and goals of the Strategic Plan (via NW LASN and website) Review and ratify the Strategic Plan annually at the first SG meeting of each year	09 –12 09 - 12
	1.2. Effective communication within network and with its stakeholders	Improve membership involvement in network planning through targeted consultations, via forums and attendance at meetings, by using electronic surveys and by the NCs taking all sector contact as an opportunity to listen, inform and discuss HSS concerns and issues Maintain & refine the NWHN website as a primary communication tool Resource sector with timely information about relevant policy and program developments via website, email lists, meetings, consultations & forums Communicate regularly & effectively with DHS and LASNs through a planned calendar of meetings Develop quality assurance process	09 -12 09 -12 09 -12 09 -12 09 -12
	1.3 Increase membership participation of in Network	Actively encourage participation through targeted consultations, via forums, by using electronic surveys and by the NCs taking all sector contact as an opportunity to encourage sector participation Monitor participation	09-12 09-12
2. Advocacy	2.1. Advocate for a more effective homelessness response	Ensure effective regional engagement with current Homelessness Strategies	09-12

		Maintain a watching brief on emerging issues - Federal, State and Local	09-12
		Engage with homelessness related activities and research (i.e. ABS Census Count etc) and homelessness focussed publications (i.e. Parity etc)	09-12
		Develop responses to key issues where necessary i.e. submissions/position papers	09-12
		Provide leadership to improve sector capacity to advocate	09-12
		Assist sector to develop appropriate evidence bases to support advocacy	09-12
		Convene two working groups (WG) per year on identified sector priorities that require advocacy	09-12
		Advocate for adequate resources for the NWMR HSS at every appropriate opportunity	09-12
3. Capacity Building and Service Development	3.1 Sector informed of relevant policy and service system/program developments	Provide information and updates on current policy and programs through website, emails to members, forums and position papers and by continuing to provide secondary consultations for the NWMR HSS as required	09-12
	3.2 Encourage and facilitate critical involvement in service system development	Liaise with members and key stakeholders	09 - 12
		Create opportunities for informed critical debate about current and required service responses	09 -12
		HASS – Engage with ongoing development	09 -12
		Build sector capacity to effectively participate in service development forums and represent their issues back to government and through other appropriate channels	09 - 12

	<p>3.3 Advocate to DHS and government about the impacts of or implications of current policy and program development and implementation</p>	<p>Identify issues and gaps, make recommendations for change or improvements that will mean the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the NWMR are able to be met more equitably and efficiently</p> <p>Address issues raised in the LASNs</p>	<p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p>
	<p>3.4 Capacity building</p> <p>Assist the NW HSS to build its capacity to participate in service system developments. Priority will be given to developments that are responsive to the needs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • CALD communities • Aboriginal services and communities • Young people 	<p>Take a leadership role in assisting member agencies to participate effectively, for the benefit of their clients, in sector reforms.</p> <p>3.4.1 Sector Capacity Building Assist membership to participate strategically and effectively in sector reforms</p> <p>3.4.2 Children Collaborate with N&W Regional Children’s Resource Program (NWCRP)</p> <p>3.4.3 CALD communities Members to utilise LASNs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate cultural competency in sector • Devise comprehensive engagement strategy <p>3.4.4 Aboriginal services and communities Incorporate awareness of Aboriginal issues in planning and sector activities</p> <p>Assist Aboriginal services to participate effectively in sector development processes</p> <p>Resource the Lodjbra Network to develop and advocate improved responses to indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness</p> <p>Take a leadership role in assisting homelessness services to develop cultural competence</p> <p>Assist the sector to implement actions from the Regional Aboriginal Homelessness Project</p> <p>Participate in N&W <i>Aboriginal Service Planning</i> Reference Groups</p>	<p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>09 - 12</p> <p>2011</p> <p>09 - 12</p>

		3.4.5 Young people Liaise with and support subregional Youth Homelessness Networks Assist sector to appropriately participate in Creating Connections sector development opportunities Support activities of N&W Youth Consultative Committee	09 - 12 09 - 12 09 - 12
	3.5 Assist the sector to participate in strategies that strengthen relationships between family violence and non family violence services in the HSS	Inform membership of developments Engage with integrated service system partners and networks Assist agencies to implement strategies for closer collaboration	09 - 12 09 - 12 09 - 12
	3.6 Liaise with existing and emergent sector based networks	Steering Group to identify key networks Map and review engagement with networks annually	09 - 12 09 - 12

Appendix One – NWHN Governance Model

The North and West Homelessness Network (NWHN) was created in 2005 by merging the Northern and Western Networks. It is funded through the Homelessness Assistance Program by the NW DHS Community Programs Unit

1. Vision and Aim:

Vision

An end to homelessness

Aim

We aim to achieve this vision by creating opportunities for all N & W Homelessness Assistance Services to come together to:

- Develop an informed regional voice on homelessness
- Address the causes of homelessness
- Advocate for improved responses to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Build the capacity of the regional service system

2. Summary of Governance Model:

There are four organisational elements of the NWHN:

- Membership
- Steering Group
- Auspice
- Networkers

The core *Membership* is limited to Homelessness Assistance funded services in the NW metropolitan region.

The *Steering Group* is nominated by the membership and authorised to develop and monitor a Strategic Plan which is endorsed by the membership and determines the NWHN priorities and activities.

The *Auspice* - Wombat Housing & Support Services receives funding from OoH to support the NWHN, including the employment and management of 2 Networkers.

The *Networkers* are employed to implement the Strategic Plan through their Work Plans and maintain the infrastructure required for the NWHN to achieve its aims.

3. Specific Roles and Relationships

3.1. Network Membership

Who – The core membership is all Homelessness Assistance Funded Support and Housing providers in the North West Metropolitan Region.

Expectations – Active participation in NWHN activities and the provision of feedback as to NWHN effectiveness and priority setting.

3.2 Steering Group

Authority – SG authority comes from being elected from and accountable to the membership. It is recognised that SG members bring their agency interests and knowledge to the SG but they are not to pursue individual agency interests at the expense of regional imperatives.

Role – Be responsible for the Strategic Direction of the NWHN by:

- Developing a Strategic Plan
- Determining the operational priorities and key tasks
- Monitoring the Strategic Plan against the environment and sector feedback

- Receiving and responding to Networker Progress Reports on progress achieved against the Work Plans & Strategic Plan
- Developing policy responses as required
- Representing the NWHN as required
- Being accountable to the NWHN membership, by assisting in the facilitation of forums, providing a contact for members and reporting against the Strategic Plan annually
- Being available to assist Networkers as required on specific issues

Membership – The aim is to achieve network representation that reflects regional geography, service types and target groups. SG members are nominated from the membership bi – annually. Agencies are limited to one nomination only, though an agency with multiple service types may have two representatives. The SG has the authority to co – opt members where appropriate (including from non HSS sectors). The minimum number of SG members is 12 with the aim to have representation from:

- Support Agencies – 3
- Access/Entry Point Services – 3
- Family Violence Services
- ATSI services
- North & West Regional Children’s Resource Program (NWCRP) – 1
- Auspice
- NW DHS Community Programs Unit
- Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP)

Chairperson & Deputy – The SG will elect a Chairperson & Deputy who will:

- Convene SG meetings
- Be responsible for the SG operation
- Be the principal liaison with the Auspice
- Represent the NWHN where appropriate

The Deputy will assume the role of Chair when required. Administrative support will be provided by the Networkers.

Operation – The SG will meet every six weeks as per a fixed annual schedule. If the SG membership has had at least two weeks notice of a meeting, the meeting will be deemed to be fully constituted and the attending members will have the capacity to make decisions. To uphold the independence of the NWHN, members shall attend with a focus on the NWHN and its activities rather than solely as representatives of their agency. The DHS representative will not have voting rights and may be requested to leave a meeting if SG members determine a need for sector only discussion of a specific issue. SG members may nominate a proxy from their agency or another member agency. SG members may take responsibility for specific portfolio areas. The SG must first approve the formation of any specific issue NWHN Working Groups. The SG has the capacity to create short term SG Task Groups.

Attendance – If a SG member is unable to attend three meetings in any year, they will relinquish their position. The Chair will be responsible for monitoring attendance.

Relationship to LASN – The SG recognises the significance of the LASN as a consultative body and will actively work to maintain a positive and interactive relationship with the LASN
The LASN is currently the only forum where all NWHN member agencies are represented. Consequently formal NWHN consultation, reporting and communication activities will occur through the LASN at a minimum.

3.3 Auspice – Wombat Housing & Support Services

Role – The WOMBAT Executive Officer (EO) will:

- Be responsible for the Funding and Services Agreement
- Manage the DHS funded resources of the NWHN
- Advise the SG on the parameters of the Funding and Service Agreement and the NWHN Budget
- Ensure supervision and support is provided to the Networkers
- Develop and monitor the Networker's Work Plans in conjunction with the Networkers

3.4 Network Coordinators

Role –

- Implement the Strategic Plan

- Support NWHN member's ownership and participation in planning and activities
- Support the operation of the SG
- Convene Working Groups as required
- Represent the NWHN to government and the broader community

Networker Work Plans –

- Drawn from the NWHN Strategic Plan
- Developed by the NCs in conjunction with the Auspice and with input from the Steering Group
- Day to day monitoring of the Work Plans is by the Auspice
- NCs will provide six weekly Progress reports to the Steering Group

4. Network Operational Guidelines

Communication –

- Concise, timely and relevant information provision to the SG and NWHN members is fundamental to the effective operation of the NWHN
- The purpose of information provision is to raise awareness and understanding of current and impending initiatives and issues relevant to the sector or NWHN development
- The NWHN is the key communication tool and the LASN a key forum for communication.

Strategic Planning –

- The focus and activities of the NWHN will be directed by the Strategic Plan
- The SG is responsible for the development of an annual Strategic Plan
- The draft Strategic Plan will be presented annually to the LASN for discussion and endorsement by the membership
- The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually by the SG to ensure relevance and effectiveness

- The SG will monitor progress of the Work Plans at SG meetings via discussion with Networkers and via the Progress Reports
- The SG will report on a six monthly basis to the LASN on the progress of NWHN deliverables and priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan
- Activities identified in the NWHN's Strategic Plan may be undertaken with other partners or driven by a Working Group

Consultation –

- SG members and NCs will attend regional and sub regional networks and groups in order to inform, be informed and encourage co operative relationships, consistent with the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan and Work Plans
- NWHN quarterly forums will act as consultation mechanisms to identify views about specific actions, activities or developments. Forums are also considered a mechanism for encouraging debate and discussion. Forums will focus on the provision of information to and consultation with HSS practitioners at every level
- Proposals made at Forums will also be referred to LASN for consideration and progression
- Formal agency representation in relation to NWHN consultations will occur through LASN – the NWHN will also seek the views of frontline practitioner's and agencies who may not be actively engaged in the LASN through surveys, emails, meetings and through the website.
- Networkers will meet bi monthly with NWMR DHS Community Programs Unit to discuss planning and developmental activities
- The SG will meet twice yearly with the NW DHS Regional Housing Manager and annually with the Regional Director to discuss issues identified in the Strategic Plan as well as any emerging issues which may influence future NWHN activities
- Networker participation in Working Groups and Regional/Subregional Networks shall be reviewed by the SG on a six monthly basis to clarify their purpose and relevance to NWHN objectives
- A component of each LASN meeting will be dedicated to NWHN issues, communication and consultation

Appendix Two – NWHN Core Documents



This Flow Chart illustrates how the three core NWHN documents work together to determine, guide and monitor the effective operation of the NWHN. They are: the Strategic Plan, the Work Plans and the Progress Reports.

1. **Strategic Plan** – The overarching document that sets out the NWHN's:

- Purpose and Role
- Vision and Aim
- Network Operation – governance, resources and key deliverables
- Goals, Objectives and Actions

The Strategic Plan is the document that outlines the NWHN's directions and goals. It is reviewed and refined as required on an annual basis.

2. **Work Plan**

The Work Plan is a document that spans a calendar year. It sets out the tasks that need to be achieved each month for the NWHN to meet its deliverables as outlined in the Strategic Plan. In 2011 there are 12 identified activity areas all of which relate back to the Strategic Plan. They are:

- Website
- Strategic Plan
- NWHN Quarterly Regional Forums
- Consultations
- Submissions & Position Papers
- Parity Articles
- Working Groups
- Liaison with DHS
- Family Violence
- Lodjbra Network
- Counting the Homeless ABS Census
- Meetings & Forums

The Work Plan guides the Networkers by assisting in planning and managing the combined NWHN work load. It provides a transparent and accountable way of ensuring that the activities of the NWHN accurately reflect the directions in the Strategic Plan and that outcomes are achieved in an efficient and timely manner.

3. Progress Reports

Progress Reports are developed by the Networkers and presented to the Steering Group at each SG meeting. These reports detail the achievements and outcomes made against the Work Plan. Their aim is to clearly demonstrate what has been done in the NWHN between SG meetings. They also provide an opportunity to outline, discuss and plan future activities and goal setting. Thus the Progress Reports has both monitoring, reflective and forward planning functions. They are an important accountability tool for the Networkers, a way of measuring the effectiveness of activities and outcomes and ensuring that these activities and outcomes align back to the directions in the overarching Strategic Plan.