Neighbourhood Disputes Management Network

Minutes of Meeting 13 August 2007

Thursday 13 August 2007

Time: 12-2 pm

Venue: Level 3 Griffin Centre Genge St Civic Canberra

- **Agenda:**
  - Welcome
  - Introductions
  - Guest Speaker
  - Agency sharing

**Present:**

Fiona McIlroy  
HN Officer CRS

Doug Smith  
ADACAS

Emma Walter  
WCS Community Linkages

Janice Mallard  
Centrelink Home Program

Terri Stiller  
Havelock Housing Assoc/Ainslie Village

Brian Heath  
Ainslie Village, Property Manager

Emma Spicer  
NCS Linkages

Michelle Sanford  
Community Housing Canberra  
michelle@communityhousingcanberra.com.au

Amy Millard  
WCS Sustaining Tenancies

Shane Spencer  
CANFACS

Tricia Hoad  
Communities at Work

Jen Hutson  
Citizens Advice Bureau

Barry Petrovski  
Mental Health Community Coalition

**Apologies:** MarieNoelle VOCAL, Wendy Rollins DHCS, Eve Burnes YWCA, Leanne Craze Mental Health Community Coalition
Guest Speaker: Barry Petrovski Executive Officer Mental Health Community Coalition

On strengthening sector capability and links across the community sector in relation to supporting people with mental health issues, and building healthy neighbourhoods.

Barry Petrovski introduced the Mental Health Community Coalition as the peak body of all ACT mental health community sector providers since 2004. This includes consumer, carer and member agencies. Recent statistics suggest 20% of unmet need in mental health provision.

MHCC aims to raise awareness about mental health issues, build partnerships and get government to think differently about service delivery. This will include developing innovative programmes to help people stay well in the community. Only 10% of the mental health budget is currently spent in the community. One example of a new service planned is a step-up step-down facility, providing that crucial support before and after hospital. Carers ACT is aiming to provide better respite care services for carers of people with a mental illness.

Other States and jurisdictions have successfully funded models- eg Project 300 in Queensland, which funds post-hospital support packages. They also developed grievance-mediation process in this context. Federal government is investigating housing and support needs for people with mental health illness.

New FACSIA (Family & Community Services) initiatives include home-based outreach workers, for people not necessarily engaged with clinical services. Queensland Housing has introduced a more flexible delivery in conjunction with Richmond Fellowship. Carers ACT is aiming to provide better respite care services for carers of people with a mental illness.

Barry invited input from other agencies, and distributed copies of the newly released report “Strengthening capability in the Mental Health sector’.

Agency Information Sharing

This NDMN network promotes ways to improve service provision and delivery between agencies and CRS. We hope to enhance the understanding of alternate ways to resolve client disputes and broaden the scope of our programs.

The forum provides an opportunity for agencies to announce new initiatives and meet any shortfalls. Participants can ask questions and clarify how agencies work and how they relate to each other. Any gaps or improvements in services can be identified and creative ways introduced to address them. We look to
work together to streamline matters where early intervention has produced positive results.

**ADACAS** has launched a promising new program called PHAMS (Personal Helpers and Mentor Scheme), funded by FACSIA. This program aims to fill a gap for those living in the community but needing extra support to deal with life. To be eligible for assistance, people do not need to have a clinical diagnosis of a mental illness, but be experiencing some ‘functional limitation’ in their life from anxiety or depression. This program is up and running on Southside, but expecting to start up in Belconnen region soon. Referrals can include self-referral, agency referral, and medical referral. Any enquiries, please ask for Doug Smith.

**Communities @ Work Weston Creek & Tuggeranong**

Tricia Hoad reminded us that Super Grands programme also offers outreach with practical and mentoring assistance, with a view to helping families with home management skills, eg budgeting, cooking etc. Referrals are welcome.

**Citizens Advice Bureau**

Jen Hutzon requested community agencies to keep them up to date on their programmes and events. She also informed us that their statistics show an increase in drop-ins needing a listening ear, and who seem to be dealing with difficult situations that have not been resolved by an agency. Although Citizens Advice is not funded to offer counselling or a drop-in service, there is clearly a need. Sometimes mental health is a factor, and referral is often refused. People from diverse cultural backgrounds may not be accustomed to acknowledging mental illness, nor accepting expert help.

**Ainslie Village**

Property Manager Brian Heath gave us an example of a problem that might occur. A resident with a bedroom next to someone whose room is harbouring cockroaches and rats due to untreated mental illness complains. Given that the Property Manager is legally only permitted to inspect the premises twice a year, this situation is difficult to manage. Brian is keen to know avenues of action open to AV. Some services eg Handyhelp, will not do bedrooms, only flats or houses. Can residents be employed as caretakers?

Terri Stiller has recently become Manager of Ainslie Village. Tenants need assistance but may not fit into criteria, eg disability, age. Assistance needs to be flexible.

**Community Linkages Belconnen**

Patricia Eldridge commented how slow residents of Illawarra Ct have been in taking up the offer to come to the community room for a cuppa and free bread. Trust has been eroded over the years between residents, and between Housing
and tenants. Community programmes take time to build or re-build social connectedness where there has been significant social dysfunction or criminal behaviour. Young mothers are being housed in Illawarra Ct, and they are often isolated for a number of reasons.

**Centrelink Home Program**

Giving a brochure to tenants is not necessarily enough for tenants in difficult circumstances or in distress. As a social worker in the Homecare program, Janice Mallard refers people to other community services, but needs to know more about the nature and availability of these NGOs.

**General discussion**

Care co-ordination is known to be very effective in complex cases, and ACT has a high proportion of community services. Sadly, though, no funding is available to coordinate care. How can service-providers manage this process better? Developing MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) is one way to improve protocols. ACTCOSS is actively attempting to identify areas to strengthen partnerships across the community sector.

**Woden Community Services ‘The Hub’**

A monthly event at the Woden Community Centre called ‘The Hub’ is open to residents from the Woden/Philip area, from 1-3 pm with afternoon tea. Representatives of agencies such as Housing ACT, Linkages, Sustaining Tenancies, Conflict Resolution Services, Family Relationship Centre usually attend. This allows people to have assistance, referral, help with filling out forms in a congenial place. The idea is excellent, and could be a model for other areas. In fact, BCS is exploring the same idea at present. The uptake from residents has yet to gain momentum, so it is important to let everyone know. This is close to the ‘Drop-in centre’ we have been discussing for Civic.

All present are enthusiastic about collaborating to ensure gaps in services are filled, and that consumers with mental illness do not continue to fall between the cracks. The Healthy Neighbourhood Officer also emphasised that there is an urgent need to build healthy neighbourhoods and communities, where mutual respect is fostered, and timely support available.

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**Meeting Closed 2 pm**

**NDMN Meeting dates for 2007**

**Monday 15 October 12-2pm**

**Monday 17 December 12-2pm**