CAIRNS HOMELESSNESS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN: NEW WAYS HOME

L Golding: 10/21/13: #3640160v2

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Council:

a) notes the Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan 2010-2013: New Ways Home; and
b) approves the continued involvement of Council officers working with partner organisations to implement the actions contained in the Plan.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Cairns Homeless Community Action Plan and outline its expected impact on Council.

In 2008 the Australian Government released its White Paper, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness* which states that, “In a country as prosperous as Australia, no one should be homeless” and challenges us to end homelessness rather than just manage it. *The Road Home* points out that the plight of homeless people can be improved greatly if we build systems that better coordinate and integrate services to meet people’s immediate, medium and long-term needs for stable housing.

The Cairns Homeless Community Action Plan: *New Ways Home* is a local community response to this challenge; owned, developed and implemented by the local community: government, non-government and private sector. The plan is a practical way to bring the whole community together to map-out and find the best way forward for reducing homelessness. *New Ways Home* was produced by, and will be implemented by, local people and organisations.

The primary emphasis of the initiative is to create a cohesive and streamlined service system that will prevent people from becoming homeless and assist homeless people to find a home.
BACKGROUND:

Although, when we consider homelessness we generally think of people who are rough sleeping or living in improvised dwellings, rough sleepers make up only 6% of the homeless population in Cairns. According to the 2006 Counting the Homeless report there were 1,391 homeless people in Cairns, 79 of whom were rough sleepers. 47% (653 persons) were people who move frequently from one form of accommodation to another such as ‘couch-surfing’ with friends or relatives. The remainder were people living in accommodation without security of tenure or access to basic private facilities, i.e. boarding houses or caravan parks.

The rate of homelessness in Cairns was 113 per 10,000 of the population, which was significantly higher than the overall rate for Queensland.

At the 2006 Census, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprised 3.6% of the total population but accounted for 8% of the state’s homeless people. In Cairns, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise at least double the proportion of the homeless population compared to the Queensland average.

Many homeless people have complicating contributory factors such as suffering domestic violence, substance abuse or mental health issues which must also be addressed. Cairns has recognised gaps in services to assist such people: a shortage of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services or detox services which will accept homeless people, limited emergency, supported and short term accommodation options and no mental health residential rehabilitation service.

The Homelessness Community Action Plan (HCAP) is a three-year initiative (2010-2013) funded through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and delivered by the Department of Communities and the Queensland Council of Social Service in a partnership under the Queensland Compact (2008) which responds to the Australian Government White Paper, The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness. The Compact is an agreement between the not-for-profit community services sector and the Queensland Government aimed at promoting better government and non-government collaboration in Queensland. Under the Compact, HCAPs are being implemented in seven homelessness ‘hot spots’ throughout Queensland – Cairns; Brisbane; Caboolture, Deception Bay and Morayfield; the Gold Coast; Hervey Bay; Mount Isa; and Toowoomba.

The Cairns HCAP was designed through extensive collaboration between representatives from the Department of Communities, the Queensland Homelessness Intersectoral Forum, the Queensland Council of Social Service, Queensland Shelter, Cairns Regional Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and homelessness service providers. The Cairns coordinators engaged with the local community through community forums, targeted workshops and face-to-face meetings, and brought together the key players who collaborated to develop New Ways Home: a whole-of-community action plan to reduce homelessness, harnessing the efforts of all tiers of government, the community services sector, philanthropic entities and the private sector.
Cairns Regional Council has always taken a collaborative approach to dealing with issues of homelessness within the region. Council is a signatory to the Local Level Agreement on Rough Sleeping and Public Space Intoxication (LLA) which focuses on the coordination of services to people in public places who are homeless or displaced and intoxicated, and CRC officers sit on the Douglas Community Housing Group, the Cairns Homelessness Project Group and the Cairns Homelessness Outreach Network. Officers from CRC have been involved in the development of the plan through the Homelessness Implementation Plan Reference Group, the Homelessness Implementation Plan Leadership Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group as well as through the community forums and general consultation process.

**COMMENT:**

The actions identified in the plan engage government, community service providers and the broader community to support and build on the work of the Cairns homelessness services to develop a coordinated approach to delivering positive outcomes for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The HCAP is a practical and action-oriented tool to bring the local community, government and non-government sectors together to plan and track their progress in reducing homelessness and the risk of future homelessness in the Cairns region. *New Ways Home* is a 'living document'. It has targets and goals to be achieved, but it is also a flexible document which has the potential to be updated as initiatives are implemented. It is anticipated that *New Ways Home* will be the foundation over the next ten years to guide a cooperative local response to reducing homelessness in Cairns.

The HCAP recognises that while the most common perception of homelessness is of people living rough on the streets, much larger numbers of homeless people in our community can be found couch surfing, in temporary shelters, in caravan parks or motel rooms. The HCAP aims to improve service provision to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at each stage of this spectrum:

- Taking into account the risk factors which make people vulnerable to homelessness (e.g. domestic violence, unemployment, ill health (physical or mental); drug and alcohol addiction, financial crisis) and working with these service providers to prevent homelessness
- Improving services to support people struggling to maintain tenancies
- Breaking the cycle of inter-generational risk of homelessness
- Assisting people to secure and maintain long-term residences

The priorities in the HCAP also recognise that responding to homelessness will require a coordinated approach not just from specialist homelessness and housing services but from a broad range of support services. There is also recognition that Cairns has some significant gaps in the availability of support services and a lack of affordable housing options.

The priorities also reflect that some people who have experienced homelessness will have complex needs and will require longer term support to stabilise their lives, become actively involved in their community or to obtain employment.
The 38 actions in *New Ways Home* are aligned with the three strategic priority areas of *Opening Doors: Queensland Strategy for Reducing Homelessness 2011-2014*.

- **Helping people avoid becoming homeless** – by improving housing outcomes for people exiting health facilities, child safety arrangements, prisons and youth detention facilities.
- **Helping people get ahead** – by ensuring people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have access to safe, affordable, well located and appropriate housing together with support and increased opportunities to get ahead through participation in education, training and employment.
- **Working together for stronger services** – by better coordinating and integrating policies, programs and services, using and sharing data, and improving local case coordination.

**Actions requiring Council officer involvement:**

**Action 13**
- Raise awareness of homelessness at community events promoting social issues
  - Community Development Unit in partnership with the CHON and Cairns homelessness service providers
  - Through usual business e.g. by continuing Council’s support for the Homeless Connect Day in the Park

**Action 20**
- Identify opportunities and advocate for increased availability of affordable housing options
  - Development and Assessment Branch in partnership with Department of Communities
  - Through usual business

**Action 24**
- Improve the health and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are rough sleeping and intoxicated through the provision of culturally and spiritually sustainable accommodation and support services.
  - Lead partner is the Cairns Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group on which CRC holds representation
  - Supported by CRC City Safe program
    - Through core business

**Action 25**
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Cairns are able to access housing and homelessness support services.
  - Department of Communities are the lead agency for this action
  - Supported by CRC Local Area Multicultural Partnerships Officer
  - Through usual business
Action 28
- Improve the coordination of services to people who are homeless or displaced and intoxicated and living in public spaces
  - Lead agency is Department of Communities
  - CRC support through officer representation on the Homelessness Project Group and Cairns Homelessness Outreach Network
  - Supported by City Safe Program through City Safe Liaison Officer core business

Action 30
- Support homeless people who wish to return home to reconnect with their home community.
  - Lead agency is Anglicare, supported by Queensland Police
- CRC support through City Safe Program core business and representation on homelessness networks

CONSIDERATIONS:

Corporate and Operational Plans:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
Caring for the Social Environment
1.3 Work collaboratively with government and non-government agencies to promote the Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan and progress the Homelessness Local level Agreement.
1.6 Develop partnerships with communities, neighbourhoods, government and non-government organisations that build collaborative projects which improve community safety and injury prevention.
1.7 Work collaboratively with government and non-government agencies to promote initiatives that increase the opportunity for social inclusion and increase wellbeing.

Creating a Socially Prosperous and Socially Sustainable Region
5.4 Increase Council capacity to work proactively and strategically at early intervention and prevention strategies that mitigate the impact of future social disadvantage.
5.6 Establish strategic partnerships that increase access to education and training for groups such as young people, families in need.
5.7 Establish strategic partnerships that increase economic participation for groups such as young people, families in need and/or multicultural background and Indigenous people.
5.8 Improve mechanisms for planning, resource allocation and service coordination between Council and the community sector.

CRC CORPORATE PLAN
Goal 2: Building Vibrant Communities
2.1 Implement a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to community health and safety
2.2 Improve the quality and opportunities for use of public space across the region
2.6 Improve the capacity and wellbeing of valued areas of the community that traditionally have difficulty being heard
Goal 3: Delivering Integrated Planning
3.2 Deliver integrated provision of physical and social infrastructure in existing and future parts of the region

Goal 6: Striving for Organisational Excellence
6.4 Operate effectively and efficiently with engaged and committed people who are capable and motivated to work together to identify and implement ways of doing things better
6.6 Be innovative and work in collaboration with key stakeholders, suppliers, partners and in collaboration with Council Boards and Advisory Committees.

CRC COMMUNITY PLAN
7.1 Community
7.1.2 Health
- Maximising health outcomes by integrating and coordinating health services and programs between not-for-profit, commercial and government providers

7.1.3 Social Equity
- Ensuring disadvantaged communities are given particular attention to avoid being further marginalised.
- Improving and integrating coordination and provision of services between government agencies and non-government organisations.

7.1.4 Safety and Security
- Focusing on community well-being as well as providing facilities and services that support social services
- Agencies responsible for crime prevention, policy and justice working together and with the community

7.1.5 Community Places
- Ensuring all sectors of the community have equal access to community places and services

7.6 Governance
7.6.1 Governance and Civic Engagement
- Engaging all sectors in the community including vulnerable people and people where English is their second language
- Encouraging communities across the region to share responsibility for their place

7.6.2 Connected Community
- Maximising the effective use of human resources within and between program areas
- People and groups working collaboratively, rather than in a siloed approach
- Excellent networks between key stakeholders and community leaders
- Integrated approaches to the delivery of government services

Statutory:
Not applicable.
Policy:


National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

Queensland Compact between State Government and Non-Government Organisations 2008

*Opening Doors: Queensland Strategy for Reducing Homelessness 2011-2014*

Financial and Risk:

This activity is being delivered within existing funded programs and does not have a defined budget.

Sustainability:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources: 50%</th>
<th>Environment: 50%</th>
<th>Community: 100%</th>
<th>Governance: 64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enhancing Community Health and Wellbeing

- The activity aims to improve the amenity of existing open space
- The activity involves the delivery of an improved community program
- The activity includes actions that will improve access to services

Delivering Sound Governance and Economic Management

- This activity is being delivered within existing funded programs and does not have a defined budget
CONSULTATION:

- Queensland Homelessness Intersectoral Forum
  - HCAP working groups report to Intersectoral Forum quarterly
- The HCAP is governed by two local groups responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the plan:
  - Cairns Homelessness Planning Leadership Group
    - Members are drawn from representatives of government, non-government community services and business and philanthropic organisations and comprises senior executives with the capacity to approve or facilitate approval on actions
  - Cairns Homelessness Implementation Plan Reference Group
    - Brings together key stakeholders representatives of both nongovernment community services, the three tiers of government and other service sectors to identify key priorities, negotiate appropriate strategies and implement practical actions
- Government agencies represented on working groups include:
  - Department of Communities, Queensland Police, Child Safety and Disability Services, Department of Health; Queensland Corrective Services; Department of Human Services; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; Cairns Regional Council and Tablelands Regional Council

Non-government agencies represented on working groups include, but not limited to: James Cook University, Anglicare, Mission Australia, Wuchopperen, Ozcare, YETI (Youth Empowered Towards Independence), Cairns Women’s Centre Cairns, Shelter Housing Action Cairns, Ruth’s Women’s Shelter, Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service, Centacare Migrant Services, Australian Red Cross, Youth Link, Tenants’ Union of Queensland, Salvation Army and other Health, Housing and Homelessness service providers in Cairns.

OPTIONS:

That Council notes the Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan 2010-2013: New Ways Home

That Council approves the continued involvement of Council officers working with partner organisations to implement the actions contained in the Plan.

That Council does not note the Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan 2010 – 2013: New Ways Home

That Council does not approve the continued involvement of Council officers working with partner organisations to implement the actions contained in the Plan.
CONCLUSION:

The Cairns Homeless Community Action Plan: New Ways Home will complement the work of Cairns Regional Council officers in attempting to reduce the impact of homelessness upon the population of the Cairns local government area. The HCAP will add value to Council’s work addressing the increasing numbers of public space dwellers in the region through the Local Level Agreement (LLA) by increasing the focus on service provision towards the prevention as well as treatment of homelessness. The LLA has been incorporated into the actions within the HCAP which deal with rough sleepers. Improved coordination of services will mean better outcomes for not only for homeless people but also for those at risk of homelessness.

It is recommended that Council notes the Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan 2010 – 2013: New Ways Home and that Council approves the continued involvement of Council officers working with partner organisations to implement the actions contained in the Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Homelessness Governance in Far North Queensland October 2011
Attachment 2: Cairns Homeless Community Action Plan: New Ways Home DM3527061

Lisa Golding
A/Team Leader Community Development

Kerrie Still
Manager Libraries and Community Development

Ian Lowth
General Manager, Community Sport & Cultural Services
## Homelessness Governance in Far North Queensland

### Agenda

- **Community Services Committee:**
  - **11 July 2012**
  - **#3635586**

### Groups and Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. QLD Homelessness Intersectoral Forum</strong></td>
<td>Provide sector input into Queensland homelessness reforms</td>
<td>Co-chaired:</td>
<td>Department of Communities, Queensland Health, Family &amp; Women’s Services, QLD Shelter, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, Mission Australia, SAAP Coordination Network, Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Services, Mission Projects, Cairns Homelessness Services Hub, Banana Shire Emergency Accommodation and Support Centre, Charterville Neighbourhood Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Homelessness Project Group (taskforce)</strong></td>
<td>Supports the co-ordination of services to people in public places who are homeless or displaced and intoxicated in Cairns</td>
<td>Co-chaired:</td>
<td>Dept of Communities, QLD Health, QLD Police Service, Dept of Community Safety, Dept of Employment, Economic Development &amp; Innovation, Centrelink, Cairns Regional Council, Indigenous Coordination Centre, Regional Organisation of Councils of Cape York and Torres Shire, Dept of Justice &amp; Attorney General, QLD Drug &amp; Alcohol Council, Mission Australia, QLD Council of Social Services, Wuchopperen Health Service, Ozcare, Anglicare, Australian Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Cairns Homelessness Outreach Network (CHON)</strong></td>
<td>Operational co-ordination of service delivery responses to people who are homeless, displaced or intoxicated and living in public spaces in Cairns</td>
<td>Chair rotated on quarterly basis</td>
<td>Dept of Communities, QLD Health, QLD Police Service, Ozcare, Anglicare, CentralLink, Cairns Regional Council, Wuchopperen Health Service, QLD Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program, YETI, Youth Link, Mission Australia, Dept of Community Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Cairns Case Co-ordination Working Group (CCWG)</strong></td>
<td>Co-ordination and integration of service responses to rough sleeping clients</td>
<td>Anglicare</td>
<td>Dept of Communities, QLD Health, Ozcare, Anglicare, Wuchopperen Health Service, Mission Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Co-ordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People Working Group</strong></td>
<td>Guide and strengthen the service sector to better respond to the needs of young people</td>
<td>Saraiwane Sinclair (Homelessness Project Group representative)</td>
<td>ACT for Kids, Queensland Police Service, Dept of Education and Training, QLD Health, Department of Communities, Youth Empowered Towards Independence, Wuchopperen Health Service, Anglicare, Centacare, Youth Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Homelessness Implementation Plan Reference Group</strong></td>
<td>Development and implementation of Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan</td>
<td>Co-chaired:</td>
<td>Cross section of service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Cairns Homelessness Planning Leadership Group</strong></td>
<td>Oversight development, implementation and monitoring of Cairns Homelessness Community Action Plan</td>
<td>Pro'Huntley Babacan, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University</td>
<td>Local key decision-maker stakeholders representative of stakeholders of government, community services sector and broader community including private business and philanthropic organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Regional Governance

- **Regional Managers Co-ordination Network**
- **7. Cairns Homelessness Planning Leadership Group**
- **6. Homelessness Implementation Plan Reference Group**
- **3. Cairns Homelessness Outreach Network (CHON)**
- **4. Cairns Case Co-ordination Working Group (CCWG)**
- **5. Co-ordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People Working Group**
- **Other Networks**

### Queensland Governance

- **1. Queensland Homelessness Intersectoral Forum**
- **Regional Governance**
- **2. Homelessness Project Group (taskforce)**
- **4. Cairns Case Co-ordination Working Group (CCWG)**
- **5. Co-ordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People Working Group**
- **Other Networks**

### Diagram

- [Diagram of Queensland Governance and Regional Governance](image-url)