

Southern Homelessness Services Network

2023 SHSN Networking Forum and Expo



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1. About the Southern Homelessness Services Network

The **Vision** of the Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) is an end to homelessness in Southern Region of Melbourne.

The **Mission** of the “Victorian Homelessness Networks is to facilitate, inform and support regional homelessness services and stakeholders to work together to co-ordinate services to people who are experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness.”

The Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) comprises all funded Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) in the Southern Region of Melbourne including services providing crisis, transitional, long term, family violence and youth support and accommodation. Our members include Launch Housing, the Salvation Army, NEAMI, Wayss and Sacred Heart Mission. The SHSN also supports allied service sectors working in homelessness. The SHSN is a resource for the homelessness sector in the South.

The key strategic SHSN objectives are:

1. Working together to end homelessness
2. Acting as a conduit between the DFFH and the regional services sector on issues and trends to inform policy
3. Strengthening the coordinated homelessness service system in the best interests of clients

2. About the SHSN Networking Forum and Expo 2023

On 1 November, the SHSN hosted a Networking Forum and Expo at No.1 Events at the Malvern Valley Golf Course. The purpose of this report is to document the activities of the Forum and the feedback received to inform SHSN advocacy and the planning for future forums.

The purpose of the SHSN Networking Forum and Expo was to

- To foster networking and information sharing among members –through speed networking, workshops and expo tables/displays.
- To gather feedback/input about the SHSN and issues of interest such as training, communication/newsletter feedback, ideas for future forums, etc.

The audience for the Forum was homelessness agencies and agencies working with the same target group (allied services) such as health, mental health, legal, youth, material aid and migrant services as well as local, State and Federal Governments. The Forum was promoted through the SHSN and associated networks including the SHSN newsletter and email list.

The program for the day was based on the successful interactive format used at previous events. The program highlighted key themes from the SHSN Strategic Plan 2023-24 as well as providing ample opportunities for networking and agency information sharing.

The Forum Program was organised into five parts –

1. **Introduction to the SHSN (Network Coordinator)**
2. **Keynote speaker – Jacqueline Gibson, Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner**
3. **Speed Networking**
4. **Workshops**
5. **Expo stalls (held before and after the main program)**

Forum registration was online using Humanitix.

2.1 Forum Attendance

180 forum registrations were received with 145 attendees on the day (including speakers and facilitators). A waitlist was also held and places offered to those on the waitlist as cancellations were received. Some people on the waitlist missed out on attending the forum (16 on the waitlist) due to the forum places being limited to 150. This is the largest forum that the SHSN has run.

80% of participants (116) were from the homelessness sector and SHSN member agencies. 11% of participants (16) were from allied services and 9% of participants (13) were from different levels of government. This

included ten local government participants, representing five out of the ten municipalities in the Southern Region. All except two SHSN member agencies participated in the 2023 Forum.

2.2 Expo Stalls

Participating agencies were invited to hold an expo stall to provide information to participants about their agency and programs. The following 14 agencies held an Expo stall:

- Wintringham
- South East Community Links
- Fusion Australia
- Thorne Harbour Health
- Launch Housing
- Melbourne City Mission
- Sacred Heart Mission
- Salvation Army Youth Services
- Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local
- The Salvation Army Homelessness Peninsula
- VincentCare - Olive's Place
- Wayss
- Windermere Child and Family Services
- Children's Resource Program (South)

2.3 Presentations

Jacqueline Gibson, Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner (Carers) presented on the new Mental Health Act and spoke of her lived experience of homelessness. She also answered a number of questions from participants and participated in the whole Forum which was appreciated. Ruth Gordon, Coordinator of the SHSN, presented on the work of the Network in 2023 and set the context for the Forum and Expo. Copies of the two presentations will be available on the SHSN website <https://www.shsnetwork.online/shsn-forums>

3. Forum Workshops

On registering online for the Forum through Humanitix, participants were asked to nominate their top three workshop preferences from a list of workshop topics and ten topics were selected. Each workshop was facilitated by someone with specific expertise in this area with a prepared set of workshop questions. The workshops could not have been run without the support and assistance of the facilitators and volunteer scribes.

The workshops with the highest participation were mental health and homelessness, rough sleeping/Functional Zero and young people and homelessness. Below is a summary of the workshop discussions. (See Attachment A for more detailed notes from the workshops).

3.1 Summary of Workshop Discussions

Family Violence and Homelessness

A number of key issues and challenges around family violence and homelessness were identified. These included people leaving family violence facing poverty, increasing numbers of young people using violence and as victims of violence coming to youth refuges, issues with who can refer to what kind of services (family violence/homelessness) and access to safe affordable housing for people leaving family violence.

Solutions identified included stronger collaboration between the family violence and homelessness sectors, working with real estate agents, working with perpetrators of family violence (including keeping families in the home when safe) and portable housing on family properties.

Mental Health and Homelessness

A key barrier to receiving mental health services is having no fixed address. Other issues included the lack of mental health practitioners, waitlists, people not engaging with services and clients being refused hospital services as they can't be exited into homelessness.

Suggestions to overcome these barriers included building more housing, more shelter options, more funding, earlier discharge planning from hospital and more in-reach staffing.

IAP/Entry Points Issues

A wide range of issues affecting entry point services were identified including the lack of housing options, the unsuitability of rooming houses, vicarious trauma experienced by staff, managing client expectations, budget constraints and accessibility of IAP offices.

Solutions included having more crisis accommodation facilities in the outer south, purpose built rooming houses/Common Ground models, more one bedroom social housing stock, wraparound support for vulnerable people placed into housing, involving local government, lived experience focus and building allies with community groups.

Chronic Homelessness

Key issues and barriers for people experiencing chronic homelessness include unaffordability of housing (rooming house, SRS and private rental), low rate of JobSeeker, time limited support, long waiting times for social housing and lack of transparency in social housing allocations.

The main solutions for people experiencing chronic homelessness are increased supported accommodation, service coordination, more housing, longer term wraparound support services and collaboration with other allied sectors eg mental health, hospitals and AOD.

Rough sleeping/Functional Zero

The main barriers for rough sleepers are the lack of housing, including different types of supportive accommodation, the lack of sufficient crisis accommodation in the South with no youth crisis, lack of housing for people with pets, insufficient assertive outreach workers across the region, support with no housing is not effective in ending homelessness and lack of income and ineligibility for VHR for asylum seekers.

The group felt that they know the solutions – Housing First models providing long term housing with support, including a variety of housing of different needs, including disability, women's only and LGBTQI+. Suggestions were made for more advocacy at the local council level, looking for philanthropic pilot funding and elevating lived experience and success stories.

Young People at risk of and experiencing homelessness

A range of issues and barriers for young people were identified such as complexity of presenting need – mental health, AOD, trauma and entrenched homelessness. Ageing out of youth services was also identified as an issue with limited options as people age.

Solutions identified in the workshop include increasing youth options in the South (including for 23+), reconsidering lead tenant models, using data to demonstrate the issues for young people, modernising the homelessness sector to meet current demands/issues and promoting youth positive experiences.

Children experiencing homelessness

The workshop identified a range of issues and challenges for children experiencing homelessness. These included that services do not view children as clients in their own right, motels being inappropriate accommodation for children, staff turnover and loss of skills, maintaining connection to education and the need to improve sector responses to children under the new Child Safe Standards.

Solutions for better responding to the needs of children include developing a different service model designed to work with children (not adapting the adult model), research and advocacy on the impact of homelessness on children, responding to the unique needs of children at every point in the service system.

Further action suggested by the workshop included advocating for a separate national youth and child homelessness strategy, reviewing service provision to better respond to children's needs and including children in lived experience opportunities.

Legal issues and homelessness

The main legal issues for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are fines, intervention orders, high rent increases, criminal records, child protection, visas and some councils moving on rough sleepers.

Solutions include promoting the Work and Development Permit scheme to address fines, advocacy to reduce/waive fines, free public transport for people experiencing homelessness, police and Protective Service Officers to be trained in working with people experiencing homelessness and education for workers around visa issues.

First Nations Homelessness

Key issues and barriers for First Nations people identified in the workshop included the importance of connection and continuity of support, cultural accessibility of housing and increased understanding of sorry business. Solutions for this cohort included increased housing allocation, inviting Aboriginal Community

Controlled Agencies (ACCO) into the housing space, designing Aboriginal specific model of care, the Aboriginal entry point and education around cultural safety.

NDIS/Disability and Homelessness

The workshop identified a range of issues and barrier for people with a disability including the limitation of NDIS support for clients, especially around housing, participant capacity to engage in the NDIS, poor experience with services, waitlists and people losing their tenancy due to disability. Barriers accessing the NDIS include gaps in medical history, the need for reports and evidence of disability expectations on what is available through the NDIS.

Solutions for people with disabilities experiencing homelessness included obtaining access to funding for people who can't afford medical reports, diagnosing first and then gathering evidence, having clear outcomes in mind and funding for support in the home for this cohort.

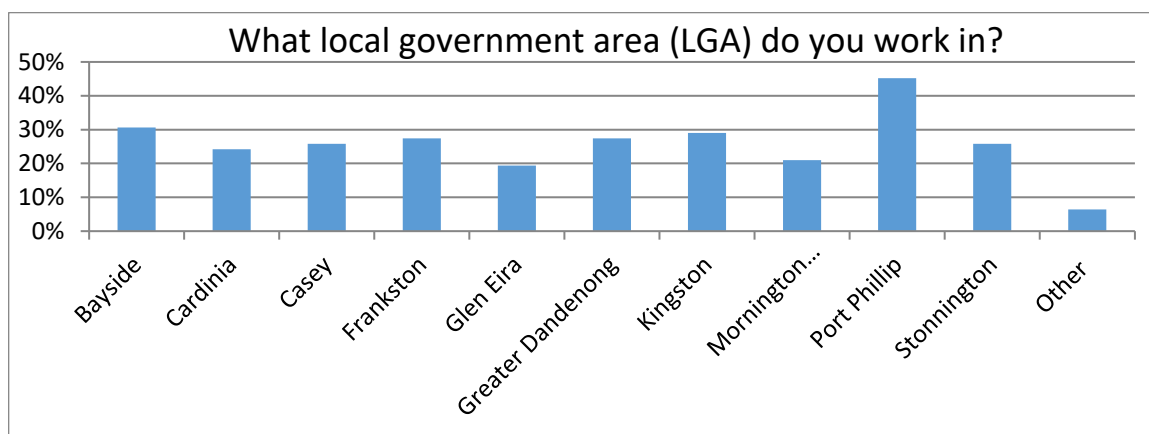
4. SHSN Forum Feedback

Forum participants were invited to complete an online forum feedback form using Survey Monkey. 62 forms were completed representing a response rate of 43% which is high. Quotes from the surveys are included in this section. The respondents were from:

- Homelessness agencies (76%)
- Allied agencies (16%)
- Government (8%)

Survey respondents worked across the whole Southern region with higher representation from the City of Port Phillip and lower participation from the Mornington Peninsula Shire (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 2024 SHSN Forum participants – areas worked in

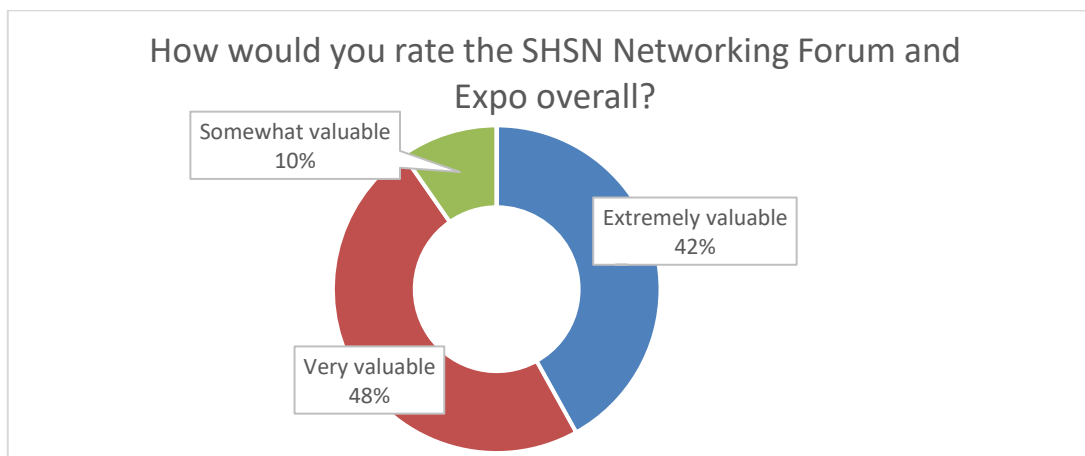


4.1 Overall Forum Feedback

The Forum length was generally agreed to be about right for most survey respondents, tending towards a request for slightly more time rather than less.

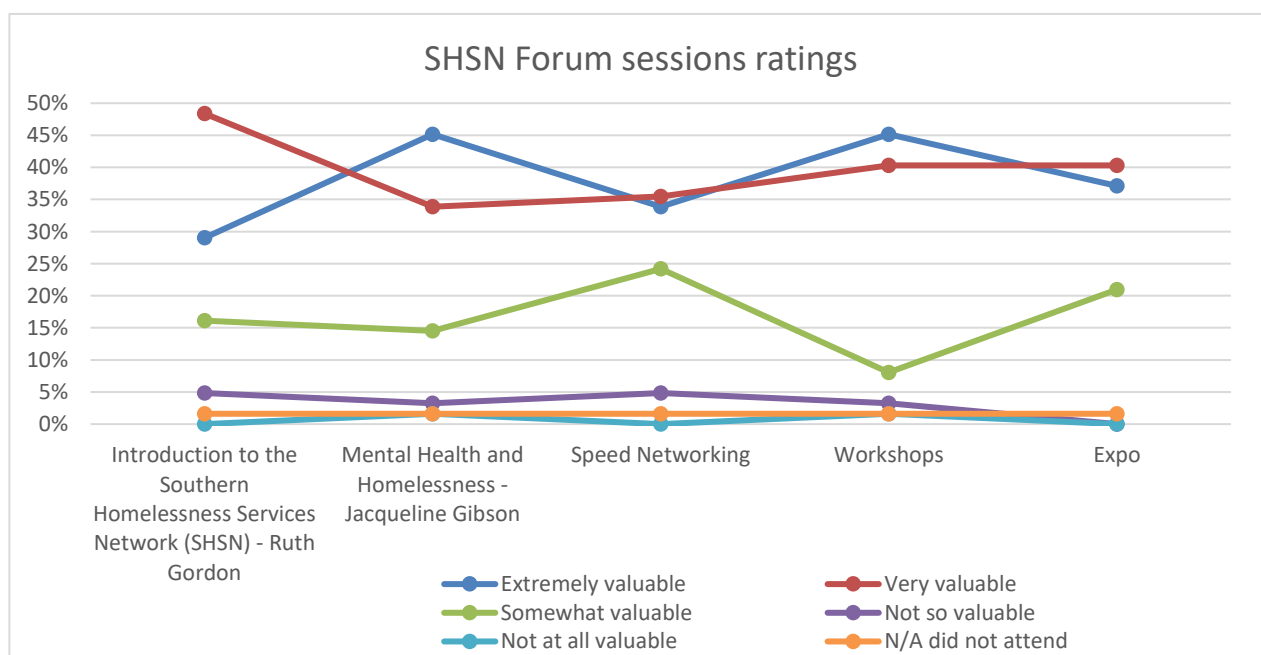
The majority of respondents rated the SHSN Networking Forum and expo very or extremely valuable (90%) with no respondents finding the event not valuable (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Overall rating for 2024 SHSN Forum and Expo



The majority of respondents found all of the forum sessions extremely valuable or very valuable (see Figure 3). Only one respondent found two sessions not valuable. 94% of respondents found the presentation on the Mental Health and Homelessness session valuable or higher and 93% found the Introduction to the SHSN presentation valuable or higher. 93% of respondents found the workshops and the speed networking valuable or higher. 98% of respondents found the expo valuable or higher.

Figure 3 2024 SHSN Forum ratings



4.2 Most useful aspects of the Forum

Nearly half of the respondents mentioned that networking was the most useful aspect of the Forum. Information sharing, speakers, workshops, expo, updates and learning about other agencies and services were also important aspects of the Forum for respondents. Respondents enjoyed the variety of activities offered and found it well-organised and smoothly run.

Opportunity to re-connect with services. Finding out new information. New programmes. Discussing similar challenges. Reminders about other services and what they can offer

Very eye opening. Listening to other agencies about strategies in our local area - "we are in the same boat". Interesting to discuss the shared struggle of trying to find housing for people who are on jobseeker...

Speed networking and the new mental health act

Informally connecting with people and building relationships with other people. This was great as some people I hadn't met face to face before.

Speaking discussing their lived experiences

Finding a service for my client

Networking in different ways

The speed networking was useful & the various discussion groups

Speaker Jacqui Gibson and the great information around lived experience workforce and how to better work with mental health

Networking opps and reviewing service/supports other organizations provide to assist in creating referral pathways moving forward.

Connecting with other people working in the sector and the area. It feels increasingly important that we work together as a sector to advocate for the people we support. It was also great to see new faces who may have started during COVID.

Meeting people within programs that I refer to. Learning about more available support and lines of advocacy for clients.

Being able to put a face to a name was extremely helpful.

The opportunity to link in with other services, and learn from service providers in the areas they work in. Really valuable.

The opportunity to talk and listen about issues of homelessness with others concerned about it as I feel. To talk and listen to a diversity of people, diversity of backgrounds, organisations, skills, insights..

The conversation around power of the 'lived experience' voice was great; Jacqueline's story, the posters around the wall. "

Networking at expo tables

All of it!

I really liked how the breakout groups centered on the experience in the room rather than have an expert giving a talk

The networking session on First Nations

Meeting like minded people and local Government representatives.

Hearing from other orgs about how they are working with family violence/homelessness and discussing the gaps they are experiencing/witnessing.

Meeting new people within the sector, hearing about all the programs and gaining a better understanding of each organizations role and impact.

4.3 Least useful aspects of the Forum

The majority of respondents did not report anything that was “not useful” at the Forum. The main feedback was the noise levels in the room during the breakout sessions (workshops and speed networking) made it difficult to hear. (Note that it is challenging finding an appropriate venue that is within budget, without charging participants which has been the SHSN approach to holding forums).

Two respondents mentioned the lack of a break during the program made it difficult to concentrate. One respondent mentioned problems with public transport access to the venue. Two respondents would have liked to attend more than one workshop.

Everything was informative

Loved the workshops, needed more time to go around the circle. Those who were outspoken dominated the discussion. Hard to hear, too noisy.

Trying to talk to and listen in a room that was too small. Too much noise it was actually very distracting. Needed a bigger space, dedicated rooms for each discussion

Some confusion around networking - would be good to have volunteers assisting to run the groups

The speed networking seemed quite rushed and clunky.

The Mental health presentation- although it was very interesting I would have preferred a presentation that is more specific into housing- maybe info re new initiatives, sector updates

SHSN presentation but only because I am aware of what SHSN does and where to access info. It was helpful to people new to homelessness

The Expo as, everyone packed up after lunch, maybe having an extra 90 minutes after lunch to keep networking in the expo area would make this more useful.

I don't have anything I found least useful, only thing I would have liked to see what potentially the opportunity to split the workshops, so I was able to experience more than one.

Workshop was disappointing, While I understand we are working in a complex and frustrating sector - All I heard was complaints.

Too short

4.4 Use of information from Forum

Participants were asked how they plan to use the information from the forum in their work. The responses in the feedback survey were varied from using the information to make referrals and collaborating for better client outcomes to sharing information and learnings with their colleagues and more networking. Some respondents said they would follow up with contacts made at the Forum and share resources with their colleagues in their agencies.

Understanding the homelessness sector and how they interact with family violence good to hear it from the other perspective

Re-connect with other services.

Explore other housing pathways.

Linking people into other agencies at the forum

Not a lot of solutions, just a shared understanding of how hard it is to house people at the moment. State government needs to increase rent assistance.

general input for my work. Confirmation of the issues experienced are across the region.

Will continue to connect with some of the new contacts made from other services. This is very valuable opportunity thanks for this.

Share information and newsletters with colleagues.

Have made several connections and have plans for collaboration with some of those people

Made some connections, visit other services, improve awareness of others I work with

To share and collaborate with what is being planned within the sector to break down barriers

Relay all the referral information to our office and various teams. Further research on certain topics discussed in the program.

Access more services and organization for referral purposes

Utilize networks and continue to build on these to create strong referral pathways.

We are in the process of developing a Consumer Participation group that will eventually be embedded across all areas of [our agency] up to the Board, meeting with Jacqueline was especially helpful and we have approached her to get her thoughts on best practice.

Invite some of the other organisations for presentations

I will feed back the information to my team and incorporate it into my work.

Know who I can contact from different organisations when the time arises.

I will reach out to those I met during the day to continue those relationships and hopefully, continue to share service resources.

Following up more info re Mental Health Act & Homelessness

Hearing about how to increase lived experience participation

Able to make direct calls due to networking opportunities. hopefully in future I will not need to go through the normal entry for call for housing entry point

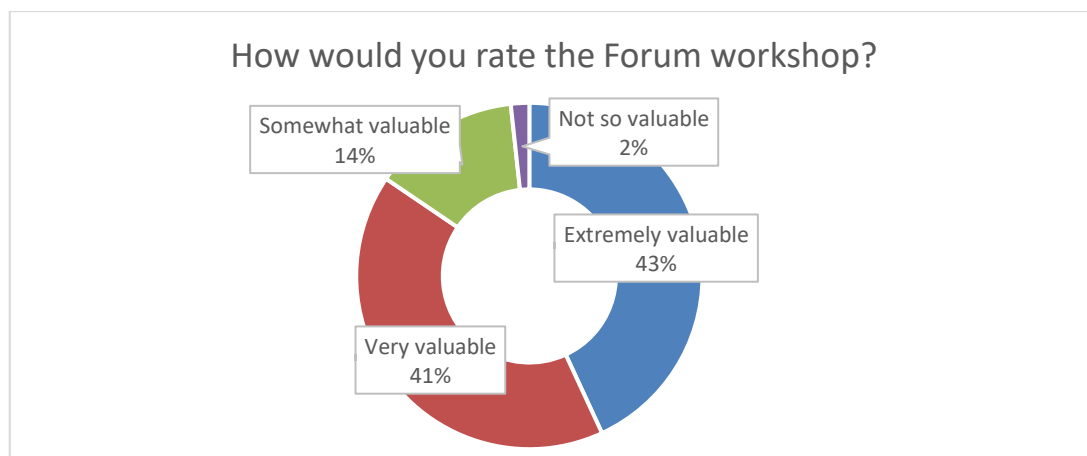
Pass on information to staff who couldn't attend

More advocacy for youth housing in the Inner and middle south region. Working closely with other local services to advocate and stand for change.

4.5 Workshops Feedback

58 respondents rated the workshops with 98% of respondents finding the workshops valuable. 84% of respondents rated the workshops extremely or very valuable and only one respondent rated the workshop not so valuable (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Forum Workshop Rating



The majority of feedback on the workshops was very positive with participants finding the opportunity for discussion and connection energising and stimulating. Again the noisiness in the room was raised as an issue. Some workshops had large numbers and some had small numbers and this affected the information exchange and group dynamics. Some suggested having the opportunity to participate in more than one workshop.

Encouraging to hear of some (albeit limited) housing developments which are happening.

Good to be reminded of some housing referral pathways which we may not use as often as we should.

Some people did not participate much. No real outcomes to the questions asked. It was very noisy in the room from other groups and hard to hear.

Good discussion and very interesting. I wish I could hear half of what was being said due to the noise in the room

They were very prepared but relaxed, open to questions, provided details for further contact

The guest speakers in the Mental Health and Homelessness workshop were very knowledgeable and offered great insight.

Loved the fact that there was a criminal lawyer and civil lawyer present for this

Good discussions. Need to try and get input from all in the group, don't want to only hear from one vocal participant.

Not a large number of participants

The flow of the workshop was good, and it was nice to hear about the potential solutions/avenues that other people/organizations are looking into. I think that more time could have been spent on the solution part of the activity, as it appeared that most people seemed to have a good grasp on what issues the sector faces, but won't we don't get much time to do is to link in and work together on how we can each incorporate new ideas into our practices.

Are the notes captured going to be collated and distributed?

I was hoping for more info instead of discussion re current issues

George H had excellent knowledge, very passionate and was able to draw out ideas from participants

Just that it was smaller, tight and loud but everything else was of very high standard thank you!

Great conversation, good information and ideas

It was great hearing ideas from the participants.

There seemed to be a general expectation of providing some kind of context about the topic."

There were many interesting contributions; maybe we needed 30 more minutes to discuss the themes further.

The group was fantastic and passionate. It felt like we all share some of the same struggles so it was great to talk things through with a focus on solutions

The workshop was fantastic, Ngwala is so insightful in what they have to offer and given they are extremely under resourced its warming to see how incredibly hard they work.

My personal opinion of the Functional Zero method is the crisis accommodation options are too few for the FZ crew to have effective referrals, but the workshop went wide in discussion, long way past FZ ideas and lots of good talk and ideas shared. Well facilitated.

Great to have a small group to ask real questions and connect.

It was great to discuss this issue with like minded worker and try to come up with solutions

George was very knowledgeable and all organisations that participated had a lot of great input into some solutions and what works well for them when working with people who are homeless

Loved it but too short

We didn't necessarily develop any tangible solutions to the issues but it was heartening (and sad) to hear that all entry points are experiencing the same issues.

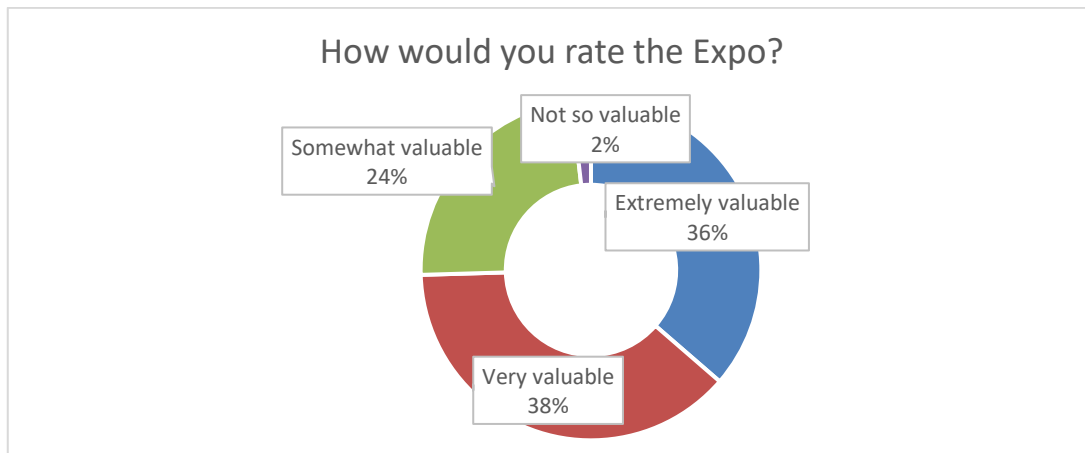
Great facilitation and allowance for all group members to contribute. Some great ideas were flowing and group members were bouncing off each other.

Discussing chronic homelessness, is very in-depth and covers off on a wide range of supports required for the chronic homeless. There was a lot of input for each question which the discussions kept going and going. Had to bring it back so that we could complete all the questions!!!! Very informative.

4.6 Expo Feedback

86% of respondents reported visiting the Expo stalls. 98% of these respondents found the expo valuable. 74% of respondents rated the expo extremely or very valuable and only one respondent rated the expo not so valuable (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Expo Rating



Feedback on the Expo was positive with most respondents finding it useful and good for networking. Potential improvements offered were more stalls/agency participation and a larger room to reduce crowding. Expo stall holders found it useful to hold the stall and reported few issues with the organisation of the stalls apart from the limited space and more time for the Expo.

Needed more time to connect with people

Well organized, lots of energy in the room.

Already aware of most of the services, or they were not from my LGA area

I found the venue small and noisy

Useful info and opportunity to speak to workers to get more info to see if clients are able to be referred

Would have liked a larger expo or even separate event that is expo with rooms people can enter at certain times to join workshops etc

At times it was hard to see the stalls as there was not much room to move around

Needed stall holders to stay longer after the lunch break

The room the stalls were in was very cramped and sensory overload on arrival, I found it very difficult to move around. The information on hand was great otherwise.

It was great as a networking tool.

The space was a bit odd but the expo was my favourite bit. We had a stall and it was great to have a chance to talk to people about our program.

It was a good representation of services

Great opportunity to match faces to "voices on the phone" and learn about programs & services

Was able to connect and learn about other services.

I was too busy on my stall, but I could see so many other interesting stalls, and great buzz of full room of conversations in the expo space of

It was great to have open discussions at the stalls.

A good number of well resourced stalls

Very valuable! We held a stall and it was great to see many people coming by to learn about what we do and we could also gain information from them at the same time. We already have 2 referrals submitted from today ... which is awesome as it is a resource that may not be utilised as much as it could be (despite being advertised on SHIP vacancies when we do have vacancies.....).

We need more of this type of Expo where all agencies/providers can attend and discuss issues and problem solving - or at least the first steps to working together to fill in the gaps.

People did not know much about our services. It was significant to share what we do at Wayss.

Lots of interest and great starting point for conversations and networking

It was great to meet people and discuss our programs, but I'm not sure there was much benefit beyond that.

Extremely well attended

The space was a bit tight. I had to stand in front of the table. It made it hard for people to get past me and I blocked the banners. But this was really a minor issue obviously because the energy at the expo was great and I made lots of connections.

Meet many members from other organisations that have heard about Wintringham but didn't know all of what we do.

Absolutely, was a great conversation starter.

Was great to have so many tables, was easy to find a space and get started. Coffee and food handy there meant people found it easy and inviting to stay there and use the opportunity of connecting

Our stall was popular and I met a lot of contacts there. took more phone numbers/ emails of contacts that I can use at the stall than during the formal networking

Given the Frankston office is due to open imminently it was a good way to get that message out.

I thought the expo was to have public people attending and seeking information from the stalls. Obviously this was not the case. I wonder if we could extend the expo over 2 days - one day for industry and then the other for public to attend.

4.7 Future Forums

98% of respondents said they would attend another SHSN Forum in the future with only one respondent saying they would not attend.

A broad range of topics were suggested for future forums including:

- Supporting teams who work with homeless clients, the challenges that this has and the impact that this has on workers who are often unable to provide what is needed due to lack of housing and budget constraints.
- I like the topics we've had, they're ever changing so it's nice to hear about changes over the year
- Trauma and poverty
- Agencies working collaboratively more and how this will be implemented - building an integrated service network
- More focus on transience and couch surfing. These people are not prioritised for EA , not included in the zero projects, yet often living in precarious unsafe situations, if they move across region, they will be excluded from local housing services because "not from the area".
- Presentation from DFFH - progress on VHR processing, waitlist issues, (no segmented waitlist means every application is a priority!) Regional strategies updates on housing development and progress - What is the Government doing to assist and what are their priorities?
- Legal advice for renters, including more information regarding VCAT/legal
- Lived experience and consumer participation, LGBTIWA+ homelessness
- What work is being conducted to break down barriers, address gaps and increase affordable housing options or connections to organizations to discuss a person's access?
- Creative housing solutions in challenging environment and housing providers in the South.
- 23-24 years old are not being prioritised by youth organisations because close to adulthood and not being prioritised by adult organisations because still in the youth space.
- Collective impact and how we can work together to advocate for funding, policy, etc.
- More around children
- structure of emergency accommodation options
- Future political advocacy events

- Local government and homelessness - showcasing effective local actions on housing and homelessness
- Groups on how to support clients – medical, mental health , dental, trauma, first nations, refugee, LGBTQIA+
- Material aid services
- Housing and wrap around support
- Focus on a specific cohort in different parts of the day and what is available to them
- PTSD/BPD/mental illness
- Client centred /strengths based practice
- Adversity /self improvement
- The sector needs more practical resources to rely on. We need information we can actually use. I have been listening to 'policy' and 'industry' changes for the last 4 years and the work has only become more challenging.

4.8 Final Comments

A number of respondents made further comment about the Forum, Expo or SHSN overall which were generally reiterating their positive feedback about the Forum including many positive comments about the venue and catering and more feedback about the noise levels in the main room during the breakout sessions. Specific comments included:

Well organised and engaging morning

Loved the venue and the catering was very good. May be good to have an identified "quiet area" that people could deal with sensory overload if too noisy

It was a great day and very well run!

Thank you for organizing, I know how much work goes into planning these events. You did a fantastic job.

Thanks for arranging this, I found the day very useful, especially for networking. I would like to attend again and appreciate the efforts to arrange such a big day.

Venue easy to access, catering was good, room just a little noisy when we were doing workshops

Venue was great but more space for the expo would have been good. The room where the workshops were held was a bit loud with everyone talking

Would have liked more speakers.

A number of members of the golf club were clearly unhappy about our attendance and were quite ... rude in the car park area so perhaps they were unaware a large event was taking place.

Jacqui was amazing. Really inspiring, practical and creative. I had a chat with her at the expo and she really approached things with so much creativity.

Catering was fantastic, not enough parking, next time consider Southern Golf Club

Valuable day. I enjoyed hearing how passionate everyone is to make a change to homelessness and hearing directly from Jaqueline Gibson. What a great advocate...

Overall a very valuable event and hope to see/attend many more SHSN events. My personal preference would be a full day with morning & afternoon breaks.

Good dietary options

Absolutely fantastic day, really appreciate the level of work that goes into this day and hope to see more in the future.

You are brilliant! Keep this important work up.

Great venue, food was amazing, staff were very polite. It was great to catch up with former colleges and meet new workers in the field and share experience and knowledge.

Overall the Expo and Forum was a great way to update resources, network with other services and learn from each other.

Starts too early when people are travelling long distances.

Please have more expos and longer!

Perhaps the venue was a bit small for the fantastic turnout. It was also hard to hear in the workshops due to the noise as a result of the smaller venue. But other than that it was a fantastic day and I really enjoyed participating! Can't wait for the next one.

Would love to see some more presentations on particular topics or allied service areas outside of SHS.

All good, great work, great contribution by SHSN

Thank you for the best day:)

Attachment A Forum Workshop Notes

Family Violence and Homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Private rental – won't disclose FV in case of jeopardising ability to rent with real estate agents
- Access to safe affordable housing
- Families – issues re children's schools
- People leave FV face poverty
- Not assessing priority – urgency for FV - assess what is the risk how to prioritise if requiring a refuge
- Gap in understanding and working with perpetrators and what to do with information and disclosures
- Keeping families in their homes
- Ending leases sooner if they need to leave when debts are left with victims/survivors when person using violence leaves.
- Tenants Victoria Toolkits is good
- Increasing numbers of young people using violence and victims of violence in youth refuges
- Services can't refer to specialised family violence services
- Homelessness services can't refer to crisis – it needs to be IAP

Solutions and Advocacy

- Stronger collaborative practices between family violence and homelessness services to stop people being bounced around
- Portable housing on family property
- Listen to voices of lived experience
- Gated car parks
- Educational pathways programs and childcare
- Housing stock is sitting vacant – bureaucracy gets in the way
- Understanding the housing provider system beyond THM better. There are a lot of organisations – lack of understanding about community housing
- Eg Sacred Heart have partnerships with community housing providers
- Info re upcoming initiatives – continue the newsletters
- Networking with real estate agencies-property managers

Mental Health and Homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- No permanent address
- Don't engage in services
- Supply problem – struggle to get practitioners
- Waitlists
- Less to offer in Southern Metro
- Cutting MHCP sessions
- CATT can't help people with NFA
- Older people too proud to call and ask for help
- Real estate agents

Solutions and Advocacy

- Build more houses
- Locked car parks, community shelters (eg Winter Shelter)

- Start planning early before discharge
- ED clients can get refused as can't be exited into homelessness
- Worksafe
- More funding
- More staff
- In-reach staffing

IAP/Entry Points Issues

Key issues/barriers

- Lack of housing and limited housing
- Affordability of available housing
- Rooming houses not suitable, especially for women
- Clients presenting with severe mental health
- Feels like we are working in a disaster zone
- Client expectations vs reality of available resources
- Vicarious trauma experienced by staff
- Education needed re capacity of entry points and expectations
- Lack of HEF
- Unscrupulous rooming house operators/accommodation providers
- Size of family units presenting at IAP
- Discrimination due to blacklisting
- Rental market extremely competitive
- Budget constraints effecting IAP workers in regard to the inability to assist certain families
- The public housing towers being redeveloped (where are the existing tenants going and what happens to future allocations?)
- Accessibility – needs to be in disability/age friendly/pram friendly offices. Would be amazing to have proximity to public toilets and extended hours of office time but need to invest and support/pay IAP workforce much more.

Solutions

- A crisis facility in the region
- An investment in public and social housing
- Councils funding rooming house programs
- Purpose built rooming houses/Common Ground models
- One bedroom housing stock
- Wrap around support for vulnerable people placed into housing
- The Big Housing Build
- Less meetings – more action
- Local government need to be involved and ongoing partners
- St Kilda CommonGround model will be a precursor for other regions

Advocacy

- Individual organisations and the SHSN should be involved
- Stories to educate communities
- Campaigns – “Would you live here?”
- Lived experience advocacy
- Story-telling and the use of Playback Theatre style to share experiences of IAP work/client experiences/arrival at rooming houses etc with broader powerbrokers/decision-makers/councillors/MPs/community more broadly – need to shift attitudes away from blame and shame

- Story telling/lived experience – like “My Name is...”
- Across community groups like the YES campaign – build allies

Chronic Homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Managing rentals – housing affordability
- People are priced out of SRS and rooming houses
- JobSeeker – unable to afford housing
- Supporting people to navigate the system
- Services don’t provide support for long enough – eg three months
- People move into new housing with no housing support – out of area
- Real estate agents have no welfare experience how to help people
- Lack of compassion/sector and community
- Waiting for approvals (housing) too long
- Lack of transparency and why some people get social housing offers over others. How does the VHR allocation system work?
- Privatisation of housing is problematic
- Neighbours targeting tenants in public/social housing

Solutions and Advocacy

- Supported accommodation
- Lack of outreach support services
- More houses
- Early intervention – education
- Lack of public awareness of what services do
- Services working together – coordination
- Long term support services
- Services need to assess their accessibility
- Solid mix of housing options
- Wrap around services – service coordinators
- Support/promote the solutions
- Lobbying MPs/governments
- Service systems need to evolve
- Community education
- Housing and homelessness is everybody’s business – collaboration
- Collect data/information – discuss outcomes
- Sector to advocate and have it embedded in service agreements – be realistic
- Managing expectations – reality
- Constant changing – funding new services – open new services and close other programs
- National Response to all barriers
- Holistic approach
- Service collaboration -working together – all sectors working together eg hospitals, AOD and mental health
- Community consultation

Rough sleeping/Functional Zero

Key issues/barriers

- Lack of housing – supportive accommodation but all different types

- No crisis accommodation in South East apart from Bob's Place and no youth crisis accommodation
- Housing affordability 40% of people in the Ranch Motel are exiting back into homelessness
- No accommodation for people with pets
- Support resources – not enough assertive outreach workers or CM places to refer into
- No exit points in Dandenong – very low housing stock – public housing
- Lack of resources in related sectors – AOD, MH, etc
- Asylum seekers not eligible for income/VHR – no pathway out of homelessness
- NIMBYs shutting down new initiatives
- Never resolving the crisis, connecting people to support without housing just creates a cycle

Solutions and Advocacy

- We know what works – housing with support – Housing First
- A variety of housing to suit individual needs – disability, women only, LGTQIA+, etc
- Improving feedback mechanisms with VHR systems/centralised emails so worker change doesn't impact client follow up
- Staff turnover sometimes – lost knowledge, need to put more effort into upskilling workers and sharing resources
- Towards Home project – worked but funding was pulled
- Philanthropic funding
- More info sharing and networking at LGA level
- Rooming houses in Frankston – advocacy for not-for profits to take over management and take out of private hands
- Using philanthropy for pilot funding then take success to government to fund
- Advocacy on LGA level
- Hiring out Queens Hall at Victorian Parliament to catch politicians for discussions with answers ready to go.
- Connecting to those who have had success in past
- More public visibility via direct action
- Knowing the costs and benefits upfront to be able to pitch to politicians
- Elevate voices and stories of lived experience to humanise issue and combat stigma
- Highlight success stories
- Strong advocacy at Commonwealth level for adequate funding and strategy "Where is the vision?" connect to the dollars at national level.

Young People at risk of and experiencing homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Complex mental health issues. No funding for psychiatrists for diagnosis. FRMP no longer funding testing for diagnosis
- AOD, trauma, ageing out of youth services, entrenched homelessness
- Childhood family violence experiences becoming perpetrators
- Level of complexity – lots of chaos
- Limited options for 24 year olds
- Unable to move young people through the systems
- Having to access rooming houses/Flagstaff/adult based services
- Medium/high needs clients vs keeping THM tenancies – not matching up to hold onto resources

- High turnover of staff @THM managers – losing momentum when change starts to happen, then staff leave
- DFFH taking properties back/private owners taking properties back
- Young people not wanting to live with anyone else
- Family reconciliation not always being explored
- Very limited options in Frankston area – having to look at refuges away from their supports and stabilisation
- Young women experiencing family violence – some staying in relationships/wanting to remain. Some not behaving like a victim
- Current systems and frameworks not working for the young person
- Services stopping being so barrier focussed

Solutions and Advocacy

- Increasing youth options in listed areas eg Frankston
- Foyer to accommodate 16 year olds
- Lead tenant options – back to the old way of doing things
- IR – update IAP identify strategies – working on things planning prior to refuge
- Youth refuges being used as a stepping stone
- 23+ accommodation options (only refuges are Upton Rd and Iramoo)
- Income – youth allowance is not enough and neither are youth wages
- More medium term options
- Start from crisis and move through. Young people not moving with government timelines
- Tenancy providers working to timelines
- Cohort with no/limited funding (17 year olds)
- Tiering up the rent – to make it more in line with market rent towards the end of tenancy
- Come together as a bigger voice as a sector rather than as individual voices
- Designate workers within regions to write submissions, policies, advocacy. On the ground workers and managers struggle to find the time
- Capturing concrete data on time spent/resources, etc
- Unique/diverse and largest region/network
- Young people's needs are very unique and diverse and this needs to be captured and advocated for.
- Needing data to demonstrate age/complexity/resources/access, etc
- Working on out-dated targets. New support period vs duration of stay
- DFFH need to be realistic – homelessness system is sitting stagnant and can't meet out-dated requirements

Next steps

- Moira – trying head leasing – no uptake on this, no matter how much support/ money is given
- Wayss – develop independent skills/capabilities. Separate their identity into assets. Upskill them – show them how to stand out from the crowd. Transformative work instead of focusing on lack of resources. Empower young people to be part of a journey.
- Promote youth positive experiences – consistency of practice across all services and all services having a common goal
- Only VHR applications if the barriers being faced by young people will be life long
- Sector wide resource – peer-to-peer support, mentoring programs – particularly male to male
- Becoming more aspirational for the young people – working together using the same language and same approach

Children experiencing homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- That we don't view children as clients in their own right, see them as lumped in with caregivers
- A lack of acknowledgement of the experience of children in homelessness
- Motels are not appropriate for children – we need other creative solutions to support families who are in crisis
- Language barriers and easy access to interpreters
- Challenges around changes in program funding and differing interests of elected governments
- Staff turnover and loss of skills when staff leave
- Connection to education – and the impact that this has on people's lives – how disastrous this is when they don't have contact
- Just providing funding – multidisciplinary supports and referral pathways
- Practitioner hesitancy
- Because something is a legal requirement doesn't mean that it's a practical reality, organisations may get a shock during the auditing of the child safe standard
- Services that work with children are siloed

Solutions and Advocacy

- We need more research
- A different model of service for working with children – not adapting the adult service - reshaping the model.
- Changes to the way tendering works, so that competition between services doesn't get in the way of service delivery
- Picking up on the unique needs of children on every level
- A change in perception and attitude about child clients across all levels
- We need advocacy around the specific impact of homelessness on children
- Getting individuals to understand that there is opportunity for early intervention, and to heal from that experience before it becomes more embedded
- Advocacy around the financial impact of the cyclical nature
- Solutions that recognise the unique needs e.g. the first nations entry point

Next steps

- Separate national youth and child focused homelessness strategy – which would allow for improved youth and child homelessness services and clear value statements
- Priority and streamlined access to services for children
- A review of all service provision and design to determine if it is effective for children
- Specific workers to work with children and family workers embedded into services
- Children focused practice lead for the Southern region
- Clear next steps to embed university degrees, diplomas, workplace induction, sector induction, senior leadership to attend training.
- A cultural shift around organisations view of children
- Greater level of lived experience involvement

Legal issues and homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Possession of illegal substances – criminal referral to LACW
- IVOs, property settlement, family law
- Issues of family violence victim/survivors having "assets" but being unable to access due to safety bit then unable to access services due to assets

- Fines – speeding, public transport, parking
- Breaches from body corporate buildings
- Rent increases that aren't valid but not challenges – homelessness caused by not paying rent
- Lack of understanding of VCAT processes
- Certain LGAs moving rough sleepers on suddenly – eg Mordialloc
- Previous convictions carry over and acting as a barrier to employment
- Visas
- Family court/child protection including housing look around bedroom eligibility
- Community housing vs public housing policy discrepancies – eg temporary absence policies

Solutions and Advocacy

- WDP (Working Development Permit) to address fines
- Writing support letters addressing public transport fines
- More education from legal services for homelessness services
- More community legal services (eg clients are struggling to access services in a prompt manner)
- Increase geographic access to legal services in the outer region area
- More flexibility in THMs (eg discretion in policy making)
- Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC) tenants program – expansion of similar programs
- Increase in funding to meet demands of increasing rent crisis/issues
- More flexibility in service delivery (eg outreach/phones)
- More sharing of services (especially with mutual clients)
- Increasing access to receiving services
- Police officers and PTV officers to be trained in working with people at risk or experiencing homelessness
- Single policy across Office of Housing and community housing providers
- Common sense
- Education for workers surrounding visa issues for clients

Next steps

- Agency –
 - Thinking about the relevant decision maker to approach
 - Gathering evidence to demonstrate the need for services (eg both qualitative and quantitative evidence including good news stories)
- Network -
 - Helpful information gathered from newsletter that can be circulated to clients (eg fact sheets to be shared with clients)
 - Agreeing on common/key points to focus on as a network to work on
- State
 - Increase housing stock and funding
 - Free public transport for individuals who are at risk of/experiencing homelessness

First Nations Homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Someone asked what's stopping completing a VHR ie contactable, unaware, approval time?
- Noted aged gaps -45/55 for housing
- Connection, importance of getting them supported by services in the interim ie exit date of housing but no-one will support until end date has come and gone – creates a barrier
- Cultural accessibility re housing – limited access option

- What is culturally safe – eg Viv's Place
- Potential burden of engagement
- Some participants asked to visit Ngwala
- Sorry business – men's and women's business and importance of learning.

Solutions and Advocacy

- Increase funds and allocations in housing
- Begin inviting ACCOs into housing space so we don't have to break our way in
- Knowledge of culture and barriers with intersectionality
- Getting Aboriginal specific models of care started first
- Getting mainstream organisations on board to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Aboriginal Entry Points
- Aboriginal models of care
- Self-education around cultural safety

NDIS/Disability and Homelessness

Key issues/barriers

- Being on the NDIS = housing support
- NDIS – support in the home, allied supported such as Occupational Therapy with routines, maintaining tenancy
- NDIS is a support not a solution
- Emergency accommodation needed
- Short term accommodation needs approval first
- Case management/support coordination – e.g. Melbourne City mission – secondary consults, refer to advocacy service
- Barriers/difficulty getting onto NDIS – gaps in medical history, reports and evidence of disability, high expectation on what they can get, quality of report, meeting access criteria,
- Overlap with disability housing
- Government reports not mentioning housing
- Royal Commission Inquiry into Disability
- Housing inclusive of disability
- Working with LAC (Local Area Coordinator) cracking down on funding plans
- Deficit model
- Some housing is not suitable
- package changes but on same NDIS package
- MCM can support NDIS participant to go back to NDIS for plan changes
- Young people turning 18 and getting control of their plan
- Participant capacity to engage in NDIS
- Services not getting things right
- NDIS plan – underfunding
- Limitations in roles
- Bad experiences with services
- Lack of funding for evidence
- Cost of services
- Face to face support coordination
- Waitlists
- Risk of losing tenancy due to disabilities/ or other issues
- Services providing housing support when not a crisis service

- NDIS not funding things when not relating to their disability
- Participants leaving hospital with no access to housing and NDIS do not fund
- Skipping around from service to service
- Barriers accessing housing – private rental with a disability

Solutions and Advocacy

- Coordination of services
- Making complaints against services – can be done without participants
- Strong, broad goals
- Better access to funding for people who cannot afford paying for medical services/reports
- Utilising medical/hospital services around reports, eg Anglicare – reports done through medical services
- Length of time being approved for needs
- Diagnoses first then gathering evidence
- History of tenancy – outlining what occurred during tenancy to support applying NDIS
- LAC not providing answers when they are not the decision makers
- More access to advocacy supports
- LAC supports
- Government agencies being more clear on needs
- Clear outcomes in mind
- Housing hub
- Better phone support/consistent advice when calling NDIA
- Better access to online services – provider register online
- Coaching/pre-planning
- Get advocate involved at the beginning to support participant
- Support for funding support in the home (SDA)