



nsw Federation of
Housing Associations inc

Housing Associations Meeting

24th February 2006

Report

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Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Federation Report**
- 3. Sector Issues**
- 4. Reshaping Public Housing - sector discussion**
- 5. Registration roll out**
 - 5.1. Report back on registration review/evaluation
 - 5.2. Support following registration
- 6. Emerging structures**
- 7. Workforce Issues**
 - 7.1 Working conditions campaign report
 - 7.2 Workforce development needs
- 8. Affordable Housing**
- 9. Evaluation**
- 10. Attendance**
- 11. Next Meeting**

1. Introduction

The Federations' only housing associations' meeting for the year was held in Sydney at the Mercure Sydney on the 24th February.¹ The meeting, preceded by a meeting of the Housing Associations Directors Network, was attended by 39 representatives from 29 housing associations across the state.

There was a full agenda with key sessions on Reshaping Public Housing, the registration roll out, emerging structures within the community housing sector, workforce issues, and affordable housing. There was a focus on seeking feedback from the sector on these issues and communicating that to OCH and other relevant stakeholders.

There were also a number of issues raised in the Sector Operational Issues session, with considerable discussion around them. Input from members on these issues and the other agenda items informs the Federations' position, thinking and planning.

This report follows the agenda of the meeting, includes some discussion around the agenda items, and reports back on further developments, or intended actions arising from them.

2. Federation Report

It was re-iterated that it was most useful to just discuss key items, rather than read out the entire Federation Report. This report contains information on those key items. For more information, or to receive another full copy of the Federation Report, please contact Melanie Southwell: Phone - (02) 9281 7144 x 204 Email - melanie@communityhousing.org.au

Information Technology for Community Housing

The IT issue is developing its own momentum. Work on the new Department of Housing IT system seems to have been bogged down, but the Office of Community Housing is now working on a discussion paper of options for the sector.

ACTION: The Federation will follow up with OCH on a timeframe for a discussion paper etc.

Other initiatives are also taking place outside government, including meetings between a small group of housing associations, and Anite, a very large IT provider. Another IT provider from the UK, Reidmark, is also holding a series of meetings around the country. Reidmark held a meeting in Sydney on Tuesday the 14th of February.

One member indicated that they had met with Anite. They reported that unfortunately the fee structure/costs of the system are currently too high, but that the system appears to be quite good.

There was discussion on options to make this system affordable, including through economies of scale available if the bulk of housing associations use the system, and the option of asking OCH to subsidise/pay for the system.

¹ The normal August meeting will be replaced by the NSW Community Housing Conference

It was suggested that there is money within OCH's pool of money for IT, and that it is important that we work with DoH and OCH to free this up.

Members discussed what options the sector had if the issue was not progressed, particularly in view of the amount of data reporting they are required to do with inadequate IT systems. It was suggested that the first step may be to request a clear timeframe from OCH, and that other actions would be considered if that timeframe was passed without sufficient action being taken by OCH.

One member suggested that any action around this could be tied in with the overall funding agreement and informed that the funding agreement stipulates that the funding body must provide the means to operate.

Another member agreed stating that this pressure around the funding agreement has been successful in the past, with some housing providers sending back their funding agreements last year. This was the first time this had occurred, but resulted in OCH making some alterations. The member suggested that we could ask them to put in a target for supporting IT, and that we should look at this before the funding is available.

It was then proposed that the meeting make a formal resolution on this matter.

Motion:

- That the sector requests urgent discussions with OCH to progress the IT requirements for the sector. That the discussions make it clear that the sector expects OCH to develop a strategy to address the issue. This strategy would include, as a first step, discussions to negotiate a clause in the funding agreement with clear time frames for development, funding, and delivery of IT. The sector will identify further action as necessary.

All members voted for the motion.

No members voted against the motion.

Motion: Carried

ACTION: Federation to forward the motion to all members for approval. Once approved by members, it will then be given to OCH.

Sector Consultations

There will likely be consultations on a number of developments in the sector, between now and the end of the financial year, although no dates have been finalised at this point.

One of the most important consultations will focus on the five year Strategic Policy Framework for the sector. A special sub-committee of the CHAC is currently meeting each month to work on this. This sub-committee is being chaired by Vivian Milligan, with Bobbie Townsend (WHC), Brian Murnane (Argyle), and Adam Farrar (NSW FHA) also involved as representatives. Consultation papers drafted by the sub-committee are expected to be ready for the minister in the next month or so.

There will also be consultation around Community Housing Legislation.

The NSW FHA has finalised its submission to the Department of Housing in regard to the Community Housing Legislation, and has also met with Maura Boland to discuss the issues contained therein.

It is expected that OCH's Cabinet Minute on the legislation will be finalised shortly, and that there will be consultation with the sector around this issue in 3-6 months.

If you would like to read a copy of the NSW FHA submission on the Community Housing Legislation it is available to download from the NSW FHA website. Web Address: www.communityhousing.org.au

There is still no word on consultations in regard to extending 'Reshaping' to the community housing sector. Some of the NSW FHA discussions are making us hopeful that the proposal will not proceed, but there is no firm information.

3. Sector Issues

The purpose of this session was to discuss (as a sector) operational issues that have been raised by members and where possible identify ways of addressing these issues. The session informs the Federation, particularly around advocacy but also in relation to policy, training and resourcing.

WorkCover

A representative from Upper Hunter Tenancy Scheme tabled a letter indicating that they had challenged their WorkCover classification and won. They have now been reclassified as a Residential Property Operator (0.86%). They were previously classified as a Non-Residential Care Service (4.02%).

The representative from Argyle Community Housing also indicated that they had achieved re-classification.

Registration

(see Item 5)

4. Reshaping Public Housing - sector discussion

The purpose of this session was to consider the impacts of the potential extension of Reshaping Public Housing to the community housing sector and develop a sector position and response.

Maura Boland previously briefed the sector at the August HAM and heard some of the responses from the sector. There was general agreement to the points presented by the Federation, which generally opposed the extension for both financial reasons and the impact on the objectives of community housing.

Since then the changes to the Act to enable public housing to adopt the reforms have gone through, with provision that would make it easy to extend to our sector.

To date, there has been no formal communication with the Federation about the extension or the consultation that is required before it could be finalised.

Key questions for consideration

1. What are the benefits or problems of each of the elements of the reform?

The elements are:

- Increased rents (for some tenants) & water charges for all
- Increased targeting – It is unclear how this will actually differ from the current priority allocations. However, it is assumed that it will be significant enough to justify new strategies to ensure that appropriate support is available
- Fixed term tenancies – these depend on an assessment of need and are reassessed at the end of each term. Apart from the increased intrusiveness and the greater risk of poor judgements, this will also create strong workforce disincentives and strong disincentives to build communities
- An Accord which provides guarantees of support for nominated tenants of other human service agencies

2. If our current tenancies were managed in this way, what impact would this have on the expansion of an affordable housing business for other tenants?

3. How would the changes and their increased tenancy management costs and lower income, impact on small and/or remote associations?

4. Are there other issues?

5. What form of campaign should the Federation or the sector be prepared to conduct if the changes were to be imposed?

Discussion

General issues

1. Public housing & community housing are different systems that require different solutions, both to achieve similar outcomes and to achieve specific non-government outcomes.

- Most small associations don't have the financial capacity to cover the higher risks of the reshaping target group.
- Impact on viability/income - any new stock will now come with support requirements, but costs are going to increase and income will decrease.

2. Tax implications for charitable status of organisations are significant.

- The requirement to strictly implement public housing policies greatly increases the risk of being seen as a government agent and hence not entitled to charitable tax treatment.

3. The housing system in NSW urgently needs a response between residualised social housing and full market products. This, so called affordable housing product is now a role for community housing.
 - It was suggested that the Minister wants only the absolute highest/complex needs clients to be paid for out of public purse.
 - It was noted that government believe that the funding for this 'affordable housing' role can be leveraged off tightly targeted public resources – providing two streams of business for community housing providers.
 - However, extension of changes would undercut affordable housing business and put at risk AH objective.
 - In a small housing association the new business will always be too small to significantly differentiate so why do it with NGO?
 - Lenders won't invest because of the impact of this high risk business.

Impact of particular changes

Specific issues:

- Targeting (waiting list/eligibility)
 - Targeting will have an impact on income streams, and therefore on organisational viability.
 - One size doesn't fit all. In the case of complex needs clients, funding would have to cover all the risk. Small associations, in particular, can't cover the extra risk. So the reshaping allocations can't be applied across the whole sector, even though we would maintain high levels of supported housing across the sector as a whole. This point was considered to be of particular importance. One member reported that they had been offered a stock transfer of sixteen bed-sits for mental health patients, but turned down the offer after realising that without even allowing for property damage they would lose a considerable amount of money per property if they were to accept the stock transfer. Other housing providers re-iterated this point from their own perspective also.
 - Similarly, there was concern about the likelihood that an increased amount of time will be spent in the Tribunal.
 - Tenant mix is one of the positives of the community housing model, and makes community housing more successful.
 - Where will ongoing support packages be sourced for tenants with long-term support needs? It was noted that solution proposed for public housing via the Accord is for support agencies to nominate tenants with existing support packages.
 - Nominations – there may be a clash between the policies of housing associations and support providers on who should be housed. Housing associations need clear policies on who they will not house.
 - There is a considerable difference between working in partnership with support agencies, and losing control of nominations to support agencies. If

this is to occur nominating agencies would need to carry some of the risk, particularly as it is the support agencies getting the extra funding.

- Large amount of time needed to monitor a service level agreement.
- .What will happen with mental health clients that refuse support after they get housed? When tenant refuses support there is no support funding. Need guaranteed continuity of support packages or tenancy cannot be sustained.
- It was noted that the sector will be impacted by changed eligibility for the Department. However, the actual criteria or procedures have not been finalised. The sector will need to know what these will be to deal with the conflicts between such policies and existing policies in each association.
- It is unclear whether current applicants will be eligible.
- If we didn't accept reshaping, it would create two sets of tenancies within social housing - equitability of this?
- Changes through Reshaping would have an impact on bed debt, which could then have an impact on registration.
- Rents
 - We need to discuss more models so we understand the positives and negatives.
 - Other models: social housing subsidy program, cost based, income based, percentage of market rent.
 - AHO is using costs based model.
 - Impacts of 'welfare to work' breaches – lower rates, less income, more arrears.
 - SAAP sector has no set formula.
 - Need to do financial modelling on what the impact of different models of rent setting will be on the sector.
 - The changes through Reshaping will cause workforce disincentives.
 - Massive disparity between market rent and Community Housing rent.
 - Concerns that increasing rents may lead to more stable tenants leaving their tenancies, and what impacts this could have. Having a less stable tenant base could cause problems for re-development projects (i.e. Bonyrigg PPP).
 - What will be the impacts on IT if new tenants are on a new rent formula? Any change to rent structure would at least need new IT.
 - Increasing rent may not have any impact on leaseholds.
- Fixed Term Tenancies
 - Impact on time spent in renewing tenancies – churning tenants through community housing and out again.
 - The vast majority of tenants will want to stay so fixed tenancies could become a pointless paper exercise (i.e. more admin required), and encourage tenants to be 'victims'.
 - Sector wants to encourage tenants to improve their situation - but if situation improves would have to kick tenant out.
 - Adds to uncertainty for tenants.
 - Administration of fixed tenancies is not possible on existing funding dollars.
 - There was a show of hands to identify the level of support for fixed term tenancies. No member present supported fixed tenancies for community housing.

- Water
 - Some benefits i.e. fixes the problem of having two different groups of tenants being charged differently - metered and non-metered.
 - Some housing associations are insisting on separate metering on all new properties.
 - Concern that if everyone is charged on a formula that they'll stop putting in meters.
 - Support for no change to current system, but need to fund metering.
 - Sydney Water has a two tier system to assist large families but only for home owners, this discriminates against some, particularly large refugee or Aboriginal families who have lower rates of home ownership.

- Resources
 - The DoH is capturing extra funding, but we do not know whether the current subsidy arrangements can cover the extra costs, and whether we would see any of these extra funds.
 - DoH will have the resources from Treasury to manage client base, but it is quite unclear whether any of this will be allocated to community housing.
 - If the changes were going to be extended to community housing we would need to work out the resources required to implement them which could inform a sector bargaining position.

5. Registration Roll Out

5.1. Report back on registration review/evaluation

The purpose of this session was to allow Unis Goh (PBMU, OCH) to report on the review of the registration roll out and discuss what has emerged from the process to date.

Providers Feedback - Performance Based Registration, 24 February 06

What have we learned in the start up phase – 2005

- Providers survey + phone interview
- 73% response rate
- 90% likely to use Final Registration Report for future development
- 70% stated Registration Report was accurate & easy to understand.
- High commitment from sector working with OCH for a best practice registration system.

Major concerns in round 1

5 key areas:

- (1) Communication and training
- (2) Time management & workload
- (3) Process and participation
- (4) Grading
- (5) Financial sustainability

Issues for the next 12-18 months

Communication

- Divided opinion on whether PBRS is meeting its objectives
- Regulatory tool
- Systematic approach to measuring performance
- Clear process for managing under-performance
- Performance info used for planning and decisions
- Viable and well governed sector

- Perception that PBRS is a tool to force small organisations to amalgamate
- 4 providers initiated voluntary amalgamation
- OCH tries to work closely with Boards of small organisations to support them to identify turnaround strategies
- Achieving successful outcome in Community Housing is our goal

Time management & workload

- Currency of registration period should be longer than 12 months
- A tailored approach to frequencies of re-assessment is under consideration and is based on registration grade and level of risk
- Intensity of assessment in Y1, Y2, Y3 tailored to size & complexity at H, M & L levels
- Further work

Process and Participation

- More guidance on how to demonstrate achievement of some outcomes
- Provide a Manual for HP include guidance on what indicates good, sound and poor performance

Overall Registration Grade

- Registration grade is criticised as a weakness based system
- The lowest grade determines the over-all registration grade
- Serious risk in any outcome is not acceptable for OCH
- Rectifying serious deficiencies and recognising best practice
- Procedure 1 - assessment methodology be expanded more clearly on grading

Financial sustainability

- Assessors did not always understand local context in which HP operate their business
- Financial analysis is always reviewed by professional accountants
- Review benchmarks and their use for planned and responsive maintenance
- Develop process for audit of properties and work done/ AMP
- Increase onsite visits by assessors

Issues for next 12-18 months:

- Conduct a second survey focusing on co-ops, churches based organisations in Round 2
- Sharpen PBRs for efficiency, consistency, accuracy
- Focus on property maintenance and tenants needs
- Provide Comparative Performance Report to HP
- An approach for SAAP and other small providers (300)
- Intensify communication with the SAAP providers & DOCS
- Strengthening staff's performance capability
- Collaborating with SDC, Asset, S & Planning in achieving best results for tenants and communities.
- Transition to legislative base to continue the vision

Questions/Discussion between sector and OCH staff

- Q. Who undertook the financial checks for appeals?
 A. DoH Corporate Finance analysed the initial data for appeals. This was undertaken independently of the PMRU review team. (Maura, OCH).
- Q. Is it possible to have registration at the same month each year to make it easier to prepare for this?
 A. Could look at this (Maura, OCH).
- Q. If there is an increase in supported tenancies will the KPIs change?
 A. We would look at this, we see them as fluid. The committee will review benchmarks and document methodology for arriving at them this year (Maura, OCH).
- A. In response to a question about whether all organisations that had received 'A' grades would have to go through registration again next year, Maura reported that OCH is developing a policy to relate re-registration to grading received and will issue a communiqué. Some ideas at present include that very large organisations, even if they have achieved an 'A', may have to complete another assessment after twelve months, as the risk is greater, whereas smaller organisations who have achieved an 'A', may not have to complete the whole process again, maybe just part of it. Adam (NSWFHA) asked that this be finalised before organisations have to start the process again.
- Q. How will an organisation know whether/when/how you will be assessing us again?
 A. We haven't finalised this as yet, we'll communicate this when we know (Unis, OCH).
- Q. Provided there's clarity there shouldn't be a problem. Are we going to get a letter to say who will be being reassessed so that we can plan for this appropriately?
 A. (In response to responses from the meeting) OCH will provide our best guess ASAP on who will be reassessed so that you have enough lead time to plan (Maura, OCH)

5.2. Support Following Registration

The purpose of this session was to allow Maura Boland (OCH) to report on how OCH will support organisations following registration, including in the development of Performance Improvement Plans (PIP).

Presentation: Choice-Based Approach for C-Grade Providers

STEP 1

Housing provider receives C Grade from PBRS (may appeal and be confirmed).

Meeting with organisation, Sector Development Team and PMU to:

- clarify issues for the organisation,
- outline timeframes for improvement,
- detail consequences of failure to improve, and
- inform of restrictions while improvement process taking place.
- Outline steps required to achieve improvements;
- Analyse why outcomes not achieved;
- Identify options to address;
- Discuss options (no action by organisation, use of Office staff or Federation/ARCH or independent (approved) consultant for support to improve.

STEP 2

- The Office, the Federation/ARCH or the consultant undertakes analysis of what contributed to failure to achieve 'A's or 'B's by PBRS outcome area.
- Analysis to be a mix of desktop review and discussions with management of organisation.
- Workshop held with Board, senior staff, Federation/ARCH/consultant to agree on analysis, discuss options and agree preferred option. Sector Development Unit staff participates to provide expert advice/input.

Performance improvement plan developed based on above.

STEP 3

Second workshop held with Board, senior staff, Federation/ARCH/ consultant and Sector Development Unit staff:

- to agree on plan;
- to agree on reporting procedures;
- to determine Board sign-off stages.

STEP 4

- The Office reviews draft performance improvement plan where developed by Federation/ARCH or independent consultant.
- From then on
- Reports to the Office reviewed;
- Progress being achieved – no action; or
- Progress not achieved – meeting organised.

Once implementation of plan finalised, PMRU undertakes assessment against measures.

Why the changes

- Organisations are independent.
- Therefore are entitled to make choices.
- BUT – the Office is required to manage risks associated with organisations assessed as not performing on behalf of the government

Discussion

There has been much discussion around how to best develop and implements PIPs. There has now been approval from the Office of Community Housing to set aside some money to allow options for housing associations required to develop PIPs.

Although discussion is still occurring around this issue, and final decisions have not yet been made, an idea was floated that there could be a notional budget for housing associations, who could then spend this budget on employing appropriate individuals/organisations (from a prepared list) to develop their PIP. This list would include OCH staff, NSW FHA, ARCH, and a variety of specialist consultants. Housing associations could choose to use none, one or a mixture of those on the list to fulfil their perceived needs.

There was much discussion around who should be on this list, and how it would work. It was stated by OCH that critical factors in choosing consultants for the list would be cost and skills. Through discussion, the ideas on what kind of individuals / organisations where suitable for inclusion in this list was broadened considerably.

For example, it was brought to the meetings attention that sometimes housing associations don't need the 'big picture' type consultants but an operational specialist. It was also felt to be important that this list does not overlook the resources within the sector, including other housing associations. Issues around 'geographic area specialists' were also highlighted, with an understanding of the implications for rural associations.

It was also felt by some to be important that this process and resources are not just for development of the plan, but also for initial implementation.

OCH agreed to look at all of these suggestions (Maura, OCH).

Some members asked for clarity around the timeframe for developing and implementing a PIP. Maura noted that a number of organisations had been informed that they would

have two months to decide what form of support they would prefer and three months to develop a PIP. However, she reported that this procedure had not been signed off and shorter time frames would be required for these activities. Some members expressed extreme concern and disappointment that this conflicting advice undermined the confidence they had just established that they would be able to address the address their 'C' grade. This concern was addressed out of session.

6. Emerging structures

For this session Maura Boland (OCH) and Gary Moore (NCOSS) participated in a panel discussion of emerging organisational structures in social and community services.

Garry Moore

First up Gary Moore described structural changes occurring more broadly in the 'third sector' (not for profit sector).

- Integrated service delivery: government is encouraging more integrated services, and it is thought this might get a better result for the consumer.
- Market based funding practices: Government reforms are being progressed through funding and increase use of regulatory frameworks. In terms of funding governments have increasingly taken on the role of identifying needs and purchasing specific services as part of this reform. This is in contrast to the past role of government simply purchasing service types and allowing providers autonomy in delivering the best service mix.
- Governments are recognising the potential for leveraging other finance sources through the third sector. At the same time as government is increasing outsourcing in this way it is trying to manage the risk it transfers to the NGO sector. Part of this is increasing the level of accountability, and more recently have tried to limit the risks and maximise leverage by seeking to work with larger organisations or group structures. If you are running a market based approach you will seek the best value for money spent so you aggregate service delivery, but this places pressure to upscale. For example, the Commonwealth decided to limit who they funded to a small number of organisations. This is a logical extension of what's been going on for some time.

How do we address this?

To address this trend and to be competitive, we will have to obtain scale and have integrated service types. Networked arrangements are the name of the game in tendering for funding/programs

Example - Job futures Model:

70 organisations spent a year working out how they could work together to be competitive through increased scale. They became a network but are independent legal entities operating in their own communities.

Other Examples:

- NSW state government level doesn't have examples of existing funding programs being contracted out but some new programs are, such as the early intervention program.
- DoCS models for the bidding process - all 67 bidders are networked. Generally a lead agency with a formal/informal arrangement with other organisations. There is a draft MOU.

There are currently two views on the situation. One view is that government wants to deal with fewer organisations. Another view is that government is finding it difficult to know what to do at present.

What does this mean for our sector?

If we have wins in the area of affordable housing, the community housing sector is likely to be a principal deliverer. The sector needs to perfect how we co-operate with each other. There are many issues to tackle in order to do this including the place, relationships, different issues and experiences of small organisations and large organisations.

Maura Boland

Maura Boland (OCH) continued the discussion focussing on emerging changes to structures within community housing.

- We are starting to see some of this variety of changes happening in community housing. This will continue.
- Specifically, we can see that the upcoming strategic policy for community housing is an indication of this emerging focus.
- This is about providing flexible, tailored responses. Understanding how it makes sense for the client. In particular, integrated solutions seem to make sense for clients.
- Market based funding: viability theme (but links to regulation). Housing staff for managing small businesses - we need cost of service delivery at right level. This must be coupled with success of local delivery mechanisms, something that community housing excels at. But, with enough scale to have the specialised skills that will ultimately be required in this policy environment.
- Franchise model in business world: Do some aspects of this make sense for our sector in the future?
- EOI and the funding process: OCH needs to start treating this as procurement. So, satisfaction requirements are going to increase.
- OCH are looking at risk transference, but also how much the sector itself can fund.

- Looking at the turnover of board members, and changes in the way organisations will look and operate.
- Amalgamations aren't the only answer to increase scale. Forced amalgamations are definitely not the answer.
- What about when housing associations do their own development work? Do housing associations use a consortium of organisations to do this?
- How do we maintain our locally based responses and the things that bring high satisfaction levels from our tenants, and increase scale?

Discussion with Sector

Problems with partnerships:

One member reported that her organisation has a strong relationship with a support service that would like to give additional support for them to house youth, but don't have the funds available for this. DOCS do have funds, but there doesn't seem to be a way to negotiate use of those funds for housing and support in this way.

Suggestion: talk to regional director of housing and DOCS, express as an issue of sensible realignment of funds (Gary, NCOSS).

Setting up a partnership arrangement between a number of organisations:

How would you go about setting up a networked arrangement? Suggestion: You work out what you want to get out of a partnership that gets you where you want to go. You then make a decision about the legal partnership arrangements (Gary, NCOSS).

Tendering under DOCS funding:

Another member said that they have lost services in their community to large organisations based in other areas that only operate outreach services, due to the tendering process. This has impacted on the level and quality of service.

- What should we put back to government about the rules of government? DOCS didn't think through what they wanted to do.
- We need to aggregate demand for what we need in areas. Perhaps what we need is a Code of Conduct to spell out appropriate behaviour in the sector.
- We also need to do something towards aggregation and mergers. The government did agree that a not for profit organisation can be the lead agency in this process (Gary, NCOSS).
- The cost of service delivery is important but we also need to give the best service.
- One members first hand experience showed that the job futures model is community-minded, and has a strong commitment to small providers.
- It is important to make yourself look more attractive to new stock. Partnerships can be a way to make this happen (Maura, OCH).

- Value for money - What do you mean by value beyond specific outputs and outcomes for consumers? What do you do in terms of value? What value do you add and how could you quantify that? How do you address avoidable costs? (Avoidable costs – if you don't fix something now, how much extra will it cost you in the future?) (Gary, NCOSS)

7. Workforce Issues

7.1. Working conditions campaign report

In this session Kate Lee (ASU), Adam Farrar (NSWFHA) and Jenny Stewart (The Housing Trust, Illawarra) reported back on the recent meeting with OCH about working conditions and sought advice from those present on the next steps in the campaign.

Report Back from Meeting

At the meeting the survey findings around OH&S were recapped, as they went into the meeting wanting to find out what the OCH thought about the survey results. They had planned as a starting point advocating for CPI indexation of funding.

Kate reported that it appeared that not much had happened at DoH/OCH and suggested that it was unlikely that much would unless they were pressed.

The union was able to procure from the OCH a commitment that the CHLP review would occur by the end of this financial year. It was also agreed that another meeting should occur in the near future.

At the next meeting the ASU will be looking for more movement from government on the issue. There are presently no timeframes about when action might occur.

Discussion

Jenny indicated that at the meeting the OCH mentioned that the sector needs to think about internal efficiency. This might be an issue for the sector to campaign on. That is, the sector is presently unable to take a step back and look at internal efficiencies, as they are too busy trying to meet deadlines for core work. This is a good argument for improved IT for the sector.

There was a view expressed by one member that the ever-increasing work-loads and decreasing funding is causing massive strain to workers, resulting in increased stress leave and other issues for housing associations.

Kate re-iterated that in the ASU's view unless we have an effective campaign on the ground by all people in the sector, there is only so much that the union will be able to do through meetings with the DoH/OCH. We need a well thought out campaign with 'consequences' for not meeting a timeline, and a range of strategies from letter writing to speaking to local ministers.

The ASU expressed the need to know if this is a priority campaign for union members so that they know what to do and what is a priority. If there are other priorities then we can

focus on them. If this is a priority issue then we need to put our heads together (have a commitment from a number of people in the sector to work together on this).

What do we see as the key issue?

Getting the CHLP funding formula right, to index wages and to reflect what work needs to be done and what amount should be paid.

Is there precedent for indexing the funding formula? Yes – SAAP.

A straw poll was held to determine whether campaigning to fix the funding formula is a priority for all participants. All participants agreed.

One member argued that the issue should not be the wage rate, but about the increased work-load. They noted that the workload has increased dramatically as a result of the increased level of reporting/administration since then. Kate agreed that we should continue to focus on the actual amount of time it took to do the job.

How do we proceed from here?

Union members can contact Kate Lee to organise further action and express their position. Non-union members are free to join the union (any gains through this campaign will be shared by all employees regardless of whether they are/aren't union members).

Kate Lee, ASU Phone: 02 9310 4000

Email: kate@asu.org.au

ACTION: Federation to re-convene and resource a sector working group around this issue.

Finally, Kate reported that the union expects to be able to quarantine our sector from the Commonwealth industrial relations changes for a few years (until 2009). She also reported that the union is optimistic that there will be an increase in the SACS Award soon (3.5% per year for three years). UPDATE: This increase has now been awarded by the NSW IRC.

7.2. Workforce Development Needs

This session focussed on developing a human resources profile of our sector to determine the key issues emerging in workforce development. It then went on to explore one key issue – the ageing of our workforce. This was an opportunity to inform planning in relation to training and resourcing. This incredibly well-received session was facilitated by Laurel Draffen (NSWFHA).

Presentation: Workforce Issues

Community Housing

- What's the workforce profile?
- Activity - straw poll
- Does the sector reflect emerging trends?

Emerging workforce trends

- aging population
- serious labour shortages by 2010
- community services industry workers aging more rapidly
- shortages in community services workers
- continued shift to more casual contract work
- employment growth greatest in professional jobs

Community housing workforce issues

- more women in the community housing workforce
- aging workforce
- need for qualified and experienced workers?
- IR changes?
- inequities in working conditions between government and non-government

Community housing workforce issues

- growth organisations - greater job opportunities but possibly less job satisfaction?
- increase in aged and disabled (mental & physical) clients - lack of carers
- increased administration requirements at expense of client service - what skills are really needed?
- regional and metro variation in workforce

An aging workforce

- In less than ten years 14 per cent of Australia's population will be aged over 65.
- By 2021 the number of people aged over 65 is likely to total 4 million representing 18 per cent of Australia's total population
- Impact of aging population
- Job shortages -need to encourage older workers to stay in the workforce
- Shift in attitudes to older workers
- Job redesign
- Access to job opportunities
- OHS issues
- Encourage and support training

OHS Factors

- Overload
- Under-load
- Greater personal control enables workers to adapt work demands to fit their individual needs.

OHS Strategies

- improve physical work environment - minimise glare, ensure good lighting, minimise noise levels, eliminate trip hazards
- reduce postural demands
- avoid excessive work rates, production targets, workloads
- allow flexibility in rest breaks
- allow time to adapt
- support flexible employment conditions
- job rotation
- phased retirement opportunities - more flexible working arrangements

- access to training opportunities
- access to promotion opportunities

EOs - are you prepared for the future?

- How old is your workforce?
- Where will your workers come from in the future?
- Will you be able to attract and retain workers in the future?
- Who will your clients be in the next ten years?

Managers - are you prepared for the future?

- What are the intentions of your workforce?
- Do your strategies discriminate against the older employee?
- How will you maintain skills and experience over time?
- What will be needed to support an aging workforce?

Individuals - are you ready for the future?

- When do you intend to retire?
- What are your financial requirements likely to be in old age?
- Will your superannuation savings be enough to support the lifestyle you expect?
- Are your skills relevant to ongoing employment?
- What training might you need to maintain your employability?

Strategies for the future?

- changing the attitudes of individuals regarding their ability to continue to contribute and participate
- increase awareness of the skills and training that will enable ongoing participation
- understanding the benefits of ongoing participation for individual and community

Discussion

- How do you get employers to understand that older workers have something to offer too? We also need to be able to empathise with older workers.
- We have a multi-skilled workforce that is able to multi-task. We have a huge range of skills within our workforce and need to map these in order to be able to identify strengths and weaknesses, so we are ready to take on future changes/challenges.

8. Affordable Housing

In this session Andrew Larkin from the Centre for Affordable Housing (Department of Housing) provided an update on the Centres' initiatives, the Metropolitan Strategy initiatives to improve housing affordability, and their commitment to developing an affordable housing strategy for NSW.

Presentation: Centre for Affordable Housing

Opportunities - the NSW strategy

- Focus on improving housing affordability for households who:

- Have incomes up to 120% of the median (\$72,000 in GMR and \$60,000 in the rest of NSW) and
- Are in housing stress (i.e. paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs)

➤ 265,000 households in total

Households in stress – who are they?

- 175,000 private renters – mostly single people, single parents and older people
- 90,000 purchasers – mostly couples with children
- Spread across income ranges and broadly distributed geographically
- Mostly in employment – 148,000 employed, 87,000 not in labour force, 30,000 unemployed
- Tend to be younger

NSW Affordable Housing Strategy: Improve Affordability of Housing

- Establish Affordable Housing Interdepartmental Committee
- Prepare initial NSW Affordable Housing Strategy by mid-2006

NSW Affordable Housing Strategy:

- Improve the affordability of housing in general
- Build the capacity of not-for-profit affordable housing providers
- Policy responses for older people and people with disabilities
- Deliver and supply of land and dwelling to affordable housing providers
- Improve access to affordable housing for moderate and lower income groups
- Ensure Sydney remains an accessible place for young people and young families
- Redevelop and regenerate Department of Housing estates, creating affordable housing opportunities
- Working with local government, private, community and industry partners
- Housing affordability objectives in urban renewal planning
- Making better use of planning laws and regulation for affordable housing

Opportunities – the Metropolitan Strategy

Announces three key sets of initiatives for affordable housing, those that:

- identify the extent of need
- raise the profile of affordable housing
- improve affordability

Identifying need

- Local government housing kit:
 - step by step methodology for housing market and housing needs analyses
 - guidance for analysis of the fit between current stock, forecast supply and projected need
 - web based data set for each LGA
 - guidance on preparing a local housing plan to respond to identified needs

Raising the profile

- Including affordable housing provisions in the standard LEP
- Incorporating housing affordability objectives in urban renewal planning e.g. City West and Redfern Waterloo, Centres and Corridors

Improving affordability

- Increasing land supply to moderate affordability pressures
- Using planning mechanisms:
 - advice on planning agreements and density bonus schemes
 - allow inclusionary zoning in urban renewal centres, corridors and major sites (where rezoning occurs and value increment is sufficient)

Centre for Affordable Housing Initiatives

- ADI site at St Mary's
- Framework for National Action on Affordable Housing
- Local Government Housing Kit
- Community Housing / Local Government Presentation
- Marketing Strategy
- Local Government Affordable Housing Strategy
- Development agreements for affordable housing
 - Rouse Hill

- Sydney Olympic Park
- Honeysuckle Development Corporation
- Redfern / Waterloo
- Affordable housing as part of Estates Strategy

Discussion

- Affordable Housing Strategy - improving land supply, streamlined planning processes; building capacity of affordable housing sector through use of planning powers; greater capacity for borrowings; look at organisational needs of not for profit organisations; CSHA is likely to remain highly targeted; making it easier for low to moderate income earners to remain in, and access private rental sector - 30% of CRA funds are going to people that aren't in housing stress.
- Regional strategies: Hunter Strategy is now complete, but does not have affordable housing; Illawarra Strategy is complete, and has much stronger focus on affordable housing.
- The Centre for Affordable Housing is looking at the option of an affordable housing trust to hold funds/assets to maximise borrowing capacity, and so pick up other affordable housing lots and include these within the trust.
- Development Opportunities for housing associations: The Centre for Affordable Housing will put out an EOI to ask for interested large metropolitan associations to partner up to tender for NGO development. The Centre will be stipulating within this what they will be expecting from associations in terms of capacity. EOI details will be available within a month. The Centre expects to seek advice from the NSW FHA on this.
- Redfern/Waterloo Authority - looking at affordable housing strategy for this. Seeking advice on what percentage should be affordable housing, may be up to 6%. Also, looking at whether this should be provided only as housing, or whether to have a mix of cash and housing.
- What progress has occurred with debt equity products? It is under review. The Minister wants to see where this initiative fits into the larger picture. UPDATE: The debt equity pilots have just been approved by the Minister.
- What about affordable housing for outside of the Sydney metropolitan area? Sydney metropolitan area is the focus as majority of those in housing stress are in this area.

9. Evaluation

Member feedback helps the Federation plan future meetings so that they are able to best meet identified need. Evaluation sheets are normally distributed at the meeting. However, evaluation sheets for this meeting were distributed by email to all members. Seven evaluation sheets were completed and returned. The following rankings are on a scale of one to five, with one being the lowest possible score and five being the highest.

Overall satisfaction with the meeting - one respondent thought it was excellent (a score of five), four respondents thought it was good (a score of four), one respondent thought it was OK (a score of three), and one respondent thought it was less than OK (a score of two).

Overall usefulness of the presentations - one respondent thought they were very useful (a score of five), five respondents thought they were useful (a score of four), and one respondent thought they were OK (a score of three).

Usefulness of discussions and feedback - six respondents thought they were useful (a score of four), and one respondent thought they were OK (a score of three).

Favourite sessions - respondents singled out Registration Evaluation feedback (in particular the session on choice for those who received 'C' grades), Emerging Structures, and Workforce Development as favourite sessions.

Future topics - Suggested topics for the future included a discussion on funding (particularly what should be available for unit complexes); an update on CHLP; discussion of workloads, particularly for small association; information on the OCH process to allocate new properties (EOIs) and the winners and losers from this process; and a session discussing focussing on 'trends and challenges', this could include IT, legislation, public housing reform, affordable housing opportunities, an update from OCH etc.

Other suggestions included: how co-ops are managing tendering and structural issues, and inviting the new Director General or the new Housing Minister to the next Housing Associations Meeting.

Other comments - one respondent expressed concern that the meeting has come to be used as a forum to vent individual organisations issues with the funding body. They argued that the meeting is designed as a forum to address 'big picture' and sector wide issues.

One respondent also noted that a substantial proportion of the meeting addressed small association issues. It was suggested that, as small associations are now well organised (meeting the day prior to the HAM), a small associations' representative could be appointed to report back on concerns felt, support required, and the current position of, small associations in the sector. This would formalise the input of small associations and ensure their voice was heard, while more effectively using the short amount of time available in the meetings.

This respondent suggested that it may also be time for large associations to recommence having meetings prior to the HAM, to discuss issues relevant only to larger organisations. If this occurred, a representative from this meeting could also report back at the HAM, as suggested above for small associations.

Venue – Respondents also indicated an above average level of satisfaction with the venue of, and catering for, the meeting. One respondent also indicated that an earlier finish would be appreciated by some who travel long distance to attend the meeting.

10. Attendance

Name	Organisation
Brian Murnane	Argyle Community Housing
Lesley Oatley	Argyle Community Housing
Charles Deligianis	Burwood Area Community Housing
Karen Andrew	Central Tablelands Housing Association
Lesley Bennet	Coastal Community Tenancy Scheme
Anne Grice	Coastal Community Tenancy Scheme
John Grice	Coastal Community Tenancy Scheme
Michael Bacon	Community Housing Lower North Shore
Mohamed Ibrahim	Cumberland Housing Co-op
John Lockyer	Garrigal Housing Association
Sylvia Chou	Garrigal Housing Association
Sonja Kegar	Garrigal Housing Association
Judith Beveridge	Hume Community Housing Association
Beverly Wiggins	Lithgow Community Housing
Julie Harrison	Marrickville Area Community Housing
Robin Eisman	Monaro Tenancy Scheme
Tim Curran	Newmacq Community Housing
Peter Perriss	Newmacq Community Housing Company
David Matthews	North Coast Community Housing
Renee Facer	Pacific Link Community Housing Association
Margaret Robinson	Parkes Forbes Community Housing
Shelagh Keith	Queanbeyan Community Housing
Rachel Louttit	Resamen Men's Housing
Jon Atkins	Ryde Hunters Hill Community Housing Co-op
Catherine Sinclair	Ryde Hunters Hill Community Housing Co-op
Sue Ogier	Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme
V. Husted	Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme
Rhod McGhee	Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme
John Nicolades	South West Inner Sydney Housing Co-op
Patrick Yeung	St George Community Housing Co-op
John Musumeci	Upper Hunter Tenancy Scheme
Maria Musumeci	Upper Hunter Tenancy Scheme
Jenny Stewart	The Housing Trust Ltd (Illawarra)
Chris Robinson	Wellington Community Tenancy Scheme
Nick Sabel	Wentworth Area Community Housing
Barbara Brown	Western Plains Housing Scheme
Peter Malone	Western Suburbs Housing Co-operative
Bobbie Townsend	Women's Housing Company
Ellen Adele	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Sheryl De Vries	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Laurel Draffen	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Adam Farrar	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Lyndall Katz (am)	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Andrew Meehan	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Jacqui Moreno-Ovidi	NSW Federation of Housing Associations
Melanie Southwell	NSW Federation of Housing Associations

Maura Boland	Office of Community Housing
Robert Curtis	Office of Community Housing
Louise Douglas Major	Office of Community Housing
David Firth	Office of Community Housing
Unis Goh	Office of Community Housing
Jeffery Maunder	Office of Community Housing
Roisin Smith	Office of Community Housing
Amanda Standish	Office of Community Housing

Apologies

Kirston Pike	Inverell Community Tenancy Scheme
Frances Vartuli	Broken Hill Community Tenancy Scheme
Darlene Bromage	Narrabri Community Tenancy Scheme
Richard Perkins	City West Housing
Pat Martin	Hume Community Housing Association

11. Next Meeting

As the biennial *NSW Community Housing Conference* is to be held in August 2006, only one Housing Associations Meeting will be held in the 2006 calendar year.

The next Housing Associations Meeting will be held in February 2007.