

# The Low Cost Accommodation Support News

Community Connections Program | Older Persons High Rise | Housing Support for the Aged | SRS Service Coordination & Support

Spring 2006

**Welcome to the first edition of the *Low Cost Accommodation Support News*, a newsletter for program managers, workers, and regional staff involved in the four Low Cost Accommodation Support programs funded through the Aged Care Branch of DHS.**

**The purpose of this newsletter is to facilitate the exchange of information and to share ideas about good practice, resources, or new initiatives between everyone involved with the Low Cost Accommodation Support Programs.**

**This is your newsletter. In order to make it relevant and informative it is important for us to receive your feedback. We welcome contributions from service providers (managers and workers) and DHS regions. Contributions from service users are also welcome.**

**We hope you enjoy this first issue, and look forward to your input and involvement in the coming months!**

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## What are the LCA Support Programs?

### Community Connections Program

The Community Connection Program (CCP) recognizes that people with multiple or complex needs who are homeless or living in insecure or low cost accommodation are often very isolated and not well linked into health, housing or community support services.

The CCP aims to increase access to health, housing and community services for these people. A key element of the service model is the use of assertive outreach to find, engage and link clients to appropriate services. Services also have flexible care funds to address clients' needs quickly and flexibly.

CCP services also provide proactive and immediate outreach support to clients who become homeless as a result of closures to their accommodation.

### Older Persons Hi-Rise Support (OP Hi-Rise)

The OP Hi-Rise Support Program provides an on-site service to tenants of eleven older persons public housing high-rise estates located in the inner south and western suburbs of Melbourne.

Social isolation is a major problem for some public housing tenants. These tenants often lack support from family and friends and may have a history of homelessness and not being well linked into health and community services. People with mental illness, drug or alcohol dependence and acquired brain injury figure highly in this group.

The program aims to ensure isolated and vulnerable tenants have access to support and services; contribute to tenants' sense of safety, independence and security; and enhance the social and community involvement of all tenants.

#### CCP at a glance (July to December 2005)

- 938 registered clients
- 1,135 casual assist clients
- 16 agencies provide services
- \$490,834 provided in flexible care funding
- Most common disabilities/health issues were chronic physical health problems (44%), psychiatric disability (41%), chronic drug use (20%) and alcohol dependence (19%)
- Most common types of assistance provided were advocacy 72%; flexible care funding 67% and case management support 60%

#### Older Persons Hi-Rise Support Program at a glance (July to December 2005)

- 510 registered clients
- 487 casual assist clients
- 5 Agencies provide services
- \$108,235 provided in flexible care funding
- 96% of clients lived alone and 94% had no carer
- 51% were aged over 70yrs.
- 42% were born in a non-English speaking country
- 48% had a chronic physical health issue; 33% had age related frailty, and 20% had an alcohol dependence

## **SRS Service Coordination and Support Program**

This small program is implementing a targeted response to residents of six large pension-level Supported Residential Services (SRS) in the metropolitan area. The innovative on-site service model incorporates the principles of an assertive outreach approach within the SRS, with the aim of enhancing service coordination and access for vulnerable residents.

The program is funded through HACC as part of the State's commitment to improving access for HACC eligible people who are homeless or living in insecure housing.

### **SRS Service Coordination and Support Program at a glance (July to December 2005)**

- 138 registered clients
- 5 Supported Residential Services (SRS)
- Primary disability for a majority of clients was psychiatric disability (61%)
- Common types of assistance provided were social support (86%), care coordination (64%) and referral to services (64%)

\*There are 4 agencies that deliver this program however the data provided is from 3 services only.

## **Housing Support for the Aged**

The Housing Support for the Aged Program (HSAP) provides ongoing support and care coordination to older (50yrs and older) public housing tenants with complex care needs and a prior history of homelessness. Priority is given to those entering public housing or those in public housing whose tenancy has become at risk.

The aim of the program is to provide a sustainable pathway out of homelessness for older people with complex care needs.

### **Housing Support for the Aged Program at a glance (July to December 2005)**

- 313 registered clients
- 13 agencies provide services
- \$210,947 provided in flexible care funding
- 84% lived alone and 88% had no carer
- Common disabilities/issues were chronic physical health issues (59%), physical/sensory disability (37%), alcohol dependence (32%), psychiatric disability (28%), acquired brain injury (22%)

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## **The new Minimum Data Set (MDS) for LCA Support Programs**

As you know, DHS has introduced a new MDS for the LCA Support programs, known as HACC MDS version 2.01. Implementation commenced on the 1 July and agencies should now be recording their client level data using compatible HACC MDS version 2.01 software or if your agency does not have this in place, data items will need to be recorded on paper returns. Blank paper returns can be accessed from the HACC website at [www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc). A list of relevant software can also be accessed from the website.

The new MDS has a number of benefits for agencies and central management of program data:

- It reduces the existing 4 unique MDS to one common MDS.
- It is fully electronic and there are many existing software packages tailored to HACC MDS reporting.
- Once software is in place, data entry will be less labour intensive and time consuming.
- There will be built-in validation checks.
- It is consistent with the common client set being developed across the Department as well as with the HACC MDS.
- Importantly, it will be automatically embedded in other major software developments and upgrades sponsored by DHS, such as Health Smart, Switch, and CRISSP.

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## **LCA Support Programs – End of Year Statewide Forum, November 2nd & 3rd**

At each of the Low Cost Accommodation Support program meetings this year, the idea of a two-day forum has been put forward for discussion. The original idea for this sprang out of a planning meeting made up of CCP & HSAP providers who felt a larger meeting with a conference theme would be a better way to disseminate ideas and information rather than the constraints of a half or one day meeting held every 4 or 6 months.

Planning for this event is well underway. A working group has been established with representatives from each of the LCA Support Programs. The members of the working group are: Paulo Reid, Peter McGrath (CCP), Gary Steadman (OP Hi-Rise Support Program/HSAP), Marque Whitlock (SRS Service Coordination and Support), and Shane Mc Donald representing DHS.

There will be a mix of invited speakers as well as presentations from staff of each of the LCA Support Programs.

Program managers and staff will have received a flyer and call for abstracts to be submitted by September 8.

DHS fully supports the statewide forum, however for it to be successful, participation from each of the LCA Support Programs is essential, so if you would like to share an example of an innovative work practice or program please submit an abstract for consideration. This is your opportunity to showcase your work amongst colleagues from across Victoria.

In mid September, the planning committee will review all submitted abstracts and advise agencies and staff that have been chosen to present at the two-day statewide forum. The working group will also require a number of volunteers to assist during the forum to act as facilitators and chairs for the concurrent sessions that will be held over the two days. Please let me know if staff from your agency can assist on either day of the 2nd or 3rd of November.

Please contact Shane McDonald at the SRS & Accommodation Support Unit on 9096 7227 or a member of the working group.

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## Contacts:

**If you have a story, event or a program you would like to share with colleagues from other Low Cost Accommodation Support Programs please let us know and it can be included in the next edition of this newsletter.**

**All correspondence to Shane McDonald at Department of Human Services, SRS & Accommodation Support Unit, Level 12, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000.**

**Ph: 9096 7227**

**Or email [shane.mcdonald@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:shane.mcdonald@dhs.vic.gov.au)**

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## A story from the Community

(Written by a resident at Western Lodge SRS)

### The Garden at Western Lodge – Eddie’s story

It was started by Ben the Social Worker; he wanted a place for the people to go so they could relax. It must have taken time to make it up and a lot of money as well. – He is a very busy man and has a lot to do, so it shows he has a lot of feeling for the people here.

When I first saw it, it had lots of plants in it and some were fully-grown and ready to pick things to eat.

We had a cooking class and we took a lot of things from the garden with us: all things we had growing there were good to eat and there were some plants that flowered as well.

We often have meat and things cooked out in the garden and all the people come there when we have that but it is a strange thing any other time we are not to be seen. We had one of those days the other day and all the people turned up but just for the food. After we put some new plants in and took the old dead ones out it looks a lot better and the new ones are growing well after the rain we have had.

You get used to going there now and it feels good to get away on your own sometimes. If you sit quietly you can hear the birds calling out that is if you do not drive them away with a lot of noise.

There are a few of us who do help in the garden; we water it and help with the garden when we have to weed it, and that needs doing very often. When look after the garden it gives us something to do. In fact, there are three gardens at Western Lodge. The one out the back has things we can eat and some plants in it that flower as well.

Of the three gardens, it is the one out the back that is the one I like. Then there is one where the people can go to that has a lawn and a garden that goes around it, and you can go up a cement ramp to get into the building. There are plants that go around the edge of another lawn and a footpath that leads from the front gate to the main door of the building.

I hope it will be around for a long time as it is a place to be treasured by everyone. Sadly, they do not think the same way but I hope in time they do think of it as good to have and work in.