

Shelter Tasmania Inc.
Workforce Development Strategy 2015-17

Evaluation Report #11

Consumer Engagement Forum

11 July 2017





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Supported by the Crown through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Background

Shelter Tas has received funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for the development and implementation of a Workforce Development Strategy (WDS) for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), the purpose of the WDS being 'to support SHS's in developing their workforce to meet the current and future service delivery demands in a changing environment.' (Workforce Development Strategy, page 9).

As a result of consultations with the homelessness sector at the start of the WDS Project, feedback indicated that developing effective engagement with people with a lived experience of homelessness and developing practical resources was a priority. In response to this need, Shelter Tas held the 'Tasmanian Housing and Homelessness Workforce Symposium' on 23rd June 2016, in Hobart. In response to Outcomes Framework Reporting requirements to measure client satisfaction, the Symposium focussed on how workers could develop knowledge and skills to meet reporting requirements in their work with clients, and how to seek feedback from consumers of homelessness services.

Workshops at the Symposium informed a set of best-practice guides on how to deliver and measure engagement for consumers of homelessness services. A sub-committee of the WDS Reference Group made up of Reference Group members and consumer representatives oversaw the development of the 'how-to' guides. It was raised at the Symposium that another training event should be held to review the 'how-to' guides and find out any improvements or changes needed, and to update if required.

The Consumer Engagement Forum, held on the 11th July 2017 at Salamanca Inn in Hobart, was designed to provide that opportunity for review, as well as further training in consumer participation for attendees. The forum was facilitated by Michelle Swallow of Leadership and Change Consultants, and guest speakers from the Peer Education Support Program (PESP, through the Council to Homeless Persons in Victoria) returned by popular demand from those who attended the Symposium. Their presentation was a follow-up on their previous one at the Symposium, and discussed next steps for consumers into housing, and how to make that progression a successful one. Michelle led a 'Community Café' groupwork session, to address the review process of the 'how-to' guides and gathered feedback from attendees.

Training Overview

Of the total 44 participants, 34 evaluation forms were received. 100% of respondents rated the Forum as good – excellent.

The Forum was evaluated by participants as being highly beneficial, and achieved priorities 1 and 2 of the Workforce Development Strategy recommendations.

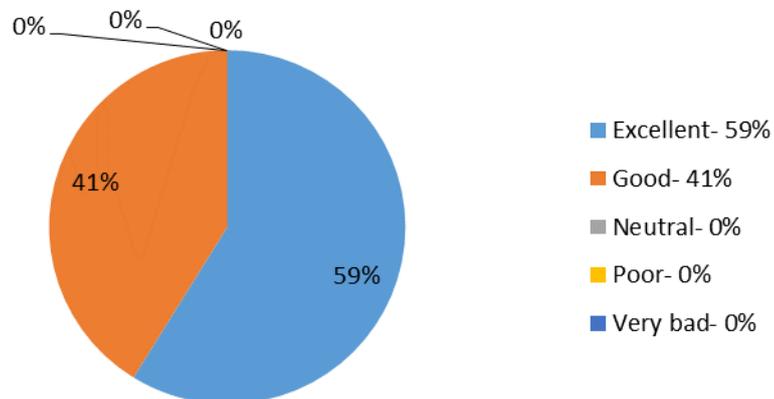
1. **Increasing the skills and competencies of the SHS workforce.**

The vast majority of attendees reported improvement in knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting, as well as their ability to engage with consumers and deal with their feedback after attending the Forum.

2. **Increasing the accessibility of training and professional development to the whole of the sector.**

Places at the Forum were offered to the sector at a subsidised rate, with no charge for consumers/tenants to attend. This more affordable rate meant an increase in accessibility to workers, particularly those people travelling from the North and North West of Tasmania to the State-wide event. Running a shorter session from 11.00 – 3.00 also meant that some attendees from outside of Hobart could travel in one day, avoiding the financial and time cost of an overnight stay in Hobart. This feedback was reported on Evaluations forms, as well as verbal feedback on the day.

OVERALL RATING OF 'CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT FORUM'



Attendee comments on the day indicated that the Forum was a very valuable experience, with particular emphasis on the PESP presentation. Written feedback highlighted this also, with attendees commenting that the Forum was very informative and how much they enjoyed the PESP presentation (both those people who attended the Symposium and new attendees in 2017). The continuation of the PESP presentation from a strictly homelessness response, to training about when people are first housed and awareness of potential trauma and key adjustment factors was noted as particularly interesting and relevant. In addition, the groupwork was reported as valuable networking opportunity for both consumers and workers.

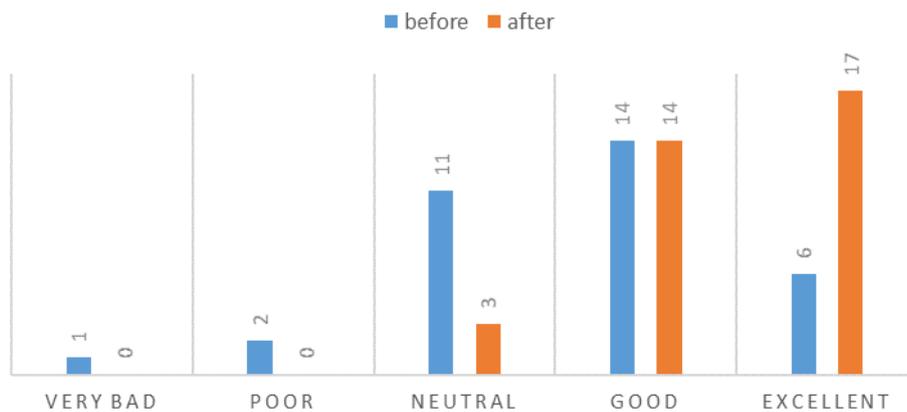
Participant Evaluation

Evaluation questions were rated on a scale of 1 – 5.

1. Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting before the Forum
2. Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting after the Forum

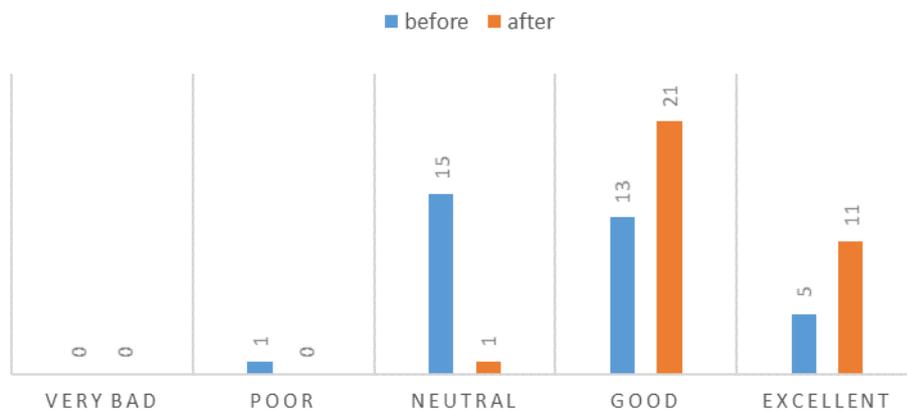
3. Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback before the Forum
4. Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback after the Forum
5. Overall, how do you rate today's Forum?
6. Do you have any comments about this session?
7. Please note any suggestions you may have for future training topics.

KNOWLEDGE BEFORE AND AFTER FORUM



Question 1 & 2: Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting before and after the Forum. This graph shows that all ratings of very bad and poor improved to a rating of neutral and above. Participants who rated their knowledge as neutral before the Forum decreased from 11 to 3 afterwards, and ratings of excellent went from 6 before the Forum to 17 afterwards, indicating a significant increase in knowledge after the session.

ABILITY TO ENGAGE CONSUMERS AND ADDRESS FEEDBACK



Question 3 & 4: Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback before and after the Forum. The results show an increase in participants' skill level after attending the Forum. Ratings of neutral dramatically decreased from 15 before to 1 after training. Ratings of

good and excellent roughly doubled (good went from 13 to 21, excellent from 5 to 11) after the Symposium.

Question 6: Comments from evaluation forms included:

- ‘It was fantastic to hear from PESP on their experience. So much productive conversation and a lot to take away to work on re better consumer engagement with staff - great session!’
- ‘Good to have different organisations talking together to involve people without a home in their future’
- ‘Clear, concise and informative. Well presented’
- ‘Well done for inviting consumers and workers. Excellent guides, great Café workshop. Excellent facilitation’
- ‘Excellent, great platform to connect between services’
- ‘It was great to see all who participated in the forum actively participate in the brainstorming/activity’
- ‘Better than last year’.

Attendees represented at the Forum.	
Homelessness Services	Other
7 Anglicare	1 Common Ground
1 Bethlehem House	8 Consumers/tenants
4 Colony 47	1 Facilitator/consultant
1 Jireh House	1 Housing Tas
2 Karinya	2 Mission Australia
1 Launceston City Mission	3 PESP
1 Launceston Women’s Shelter	1 Salvation Army – aged care
5 Salvation Army	3 Shelter Tas
1 Youth, Family and Community Connections	1 Women’s Health Tas

Recommendations for Future Training

Actions for implementation by Shelter Tas:

1. Attendees noted that the shorter session of 4 hours was an ideal length of time for a training session. It allowed people from outside Hobart to return home with only one day out of the office (as opposed to an overnight stay) and attendees from Hobart to return to work in the afternoon. This was an optimal training time for both workers and consumers who may struggle with longer training sessions. Of course, it is necessary for some sessions to make full use of the day, but there have been a number of recommendations for training that could be run as a shorter day. When taking into account training needs, the time factor will be assessed for the best fit.
2. For this training, additional reminder notices needed to be sent. Shelter Tas has noted that there has been a lot of training in the first part of 2017 (both WDS and compulsory SHIP training for Outcomes Based Reporting) and training needs to be paced with the sector’s capacity to attend. This, along with the fact that some smaller organisations

have reported difficulty attending training due to limited training budgets at the end of the financial year, are likely contributors to the slow response to registrations. The need to space out training is important in future planning, and this supports the decision to suspend the training while the Project Officer is on leave.

Broader Considerations:

3. Shelter Tas utilised presenters who were highly regarded by attendees at the Symposium, so invited them back to the Forum, taking advantage of their excellent reputation and sector awareness. Shelter Tas offered WDS Reference Group members the option of inviting PESP back to present again at the Forum or an alternative organisation which had been recommended to Shelter Tas. Members overwhelmingly nominated PESP to return, and the feedback was once again very positive. PESP were able to provide alternative presenters for this session, who contributed different perspectives and experiences, as well as additional elements to the original presentation on supporting consumers into housing how to make this a successful transition. The principle of using trainers who are known to (and know of) the Tasmanian homelessness sector reinforced successful outcomes, and Shelter Tas will continue to do this in future.
4. Shelter Tas achieved its commitment to consumers and services by following up on the 2016 Symposium and reviewing the 'how-to' guides at the Consumer Engagement Forum. Recommendations for changes to the 'how-to' guides or broader consumer engagement activities will need to be assessed and acted upon, once they have been discussed and approved by the WDS Reference Group. Any follow-up from the Forum will need to take into account extended Project dates to June 2018, reduced budget and Project Officer leave in the second half of 2017 when deciding on the scale and timeline of additional work. This will be discussed by the Reference Group and a decision made about action to be taken to follow-up on the recommendations from the Forum.
5. Presenters experienced an issue which put at risk their availability on the day. It was only through continued communication and support from Shelter Tas Staff that the presenters solved this issue. This reinforces the Project's Risk Management plan, which states to 'maintain a good relationship with RTOs' as a mitigation action and reinforces that communication prior to the event is essential. Ensuring that presenters allow adequate time to arrive from interstate or at the venue and book appropriate flights to allow for any error will be raised prior to future training. Ensuring that responsibility for these measures and attendance on the day lies with the trainers will also be raised by Shelter Tas.