

The Outer Region Rough Sleepers Program

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Organisations-involved: Launch Housing Dandenong; Monash Health, Neami, Bolton Clarke, Melbourne City Mission and Ngwala Aboriginal Service.

Main Component: The Outer Region Rough Sleepers Program is being delivered through a unique multi-disciplinary Housing and Health Team, led by Launch Housing Dandenong. The team consists of Launch Housing workers, Bolton Clarke Nurse, MCM Youth Worker, Ngwala Aboriginal worker, Neami Mental Health Worker and Monash Health Mental Health Program (MHP) Senior Social Worker (SSW). The team works intensively with people referred through the Outer Region Rough Sleeper Assertive Outreach Team to get and keep their housing.

Who is this for? Rough Sleepers in the Dandenong catchment, aged 18 and above

Outcomes: The aim of the program is to target chronic homelessness mainly primary and secondary homelessness and support the most vulnerable people to access long term sustainable housing while addressing their bio-psychosocial needs.

One of the major benefits of this project is the collaboration and strong partnership that has been established between Monash Health MHP and Launch Housing being one of the main health and housing services in Dandenong. With the SSW role co-locating between Launch Housing and Dandenong Hospital, it has enabled streamlined communication between the two services.

Consumers benefit from being screened and assessed whilst in the mental health unit and being linked with Launch Housing during their admission and developing a collaborative accommodation and treatment plan. They also benefit from being able to access crisis accommodation after discharge at Launch Housing which otherwise would not have been possible. Rough Sleepers in the community benefit from getting holistic care from the RSI team- case managers, outreach workers, youth workers, nurses and mental health clinicians. They also benefit from longitudinal case management to address complex barriers like applying for a photo ID and submitting priority application to Ministry of Housing.

The staff, in particular the inpatient treating team have benefited from the additional input from RSI in addressing complex issues of rough sleepers and in facilitating safer and more supported discharge planning. They have benefited from the knowledge and awareness of the reality of the housing sector.

The staff at Launch housing have also benefited from collaborating with the Monash MHP team in navigating the mental health system and accessing support for their clients who need mental health specific support. Having a mental health practitioner from Monash MHP in the team has been beneficial for the workers to identify and intervene for consumers when they need urgent mental health assessment.

One of the outcomes that we have noticed is that readmission to psychiatric unit has reduced for clients that are engaging well in the program, since this program commenced in February 2019. We are still gathering data on the longitudinal impact of the project. A broader long-term goal of the project from the mental health perspective is to enhance capacity building and improve response to homelessness on a systemic level and work collaboratively with key community stakeholders to access and availability of housing options within the region.

Launch Housing link: <https://www.launchhousing.org.au/service/rough-sleepers-initiative/>