

Shelter Tasmania Inc.
Workforce Development Strategy 2015-17

Evaluation Report #6

**Tasmanian Housing and Homelessness
Workforce Symposium**

23 June 2016





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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).

In order to ascertain the sector's main priorities for training, data was collected through surveys and interviews with Tasmanian SHS organisations. The results of these consultations and later feedback from the WDS Reference Group indicated developing effective engagement with people with a lived experience of homelessness and developing practical resources as a training priority. Shelter Tas held the Tasmanian Housing and Homelessness Workforce Symposium on 23rd June 2016, in Hobart.

As part of the Affordable Housing Strategy, the State Government has introduced Outcomes Framework Reporting for both housing and homelessness services, and one reporting requirement is to measure client satisfaction. As a result, the Tasmanian Homelessness and Housing Workforce Symposium focussed on how workers could develop knowledge and skills to meet reporting requirements under the Outcomes Framework as they work with clients, and 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. The Resources Advisory Sub-Group (of the WDS Reference Group), which was made up of Reference Group members and consumer representatives oversaw the development of the 'how-to' guides. A forum will be held in 2017 to follow-up and evaluate the guides and discuss services' progress in this area.

The Symposium was facilitated by Adrian Pisarski (of National Shelter), and included guest speakers from the Peer Education Support Program (PESP, through the Council to Homeless Persons in Victoria). A panel discussion addressing client experiences, potential service improvements and reflection on reporting requirements was held, and panellists included service providers, Housing Tasmania representatives, consumers and tenants. Consultant, Michelle Swallow led a 'Community Café' groupwork session, where participants addressed a series of questions to directly inform the content of the 'how-to' guides, as well as the day more broadly. The topics of the guides are:

- An overview – Consumer Engagement
- Effective Consumer Engagement
- Consumer Feedback
- Our Sector.

The development of how-to guides will provide a valuable and practical resource to the sector and offer assistance with the implementation of strategies from the symposium in future. It is hoped that they will also continue the momentum of the Symposium and consumer engagement practices generally.

Shelter Tas received support from Partners in Recovery through financial support of the ‘Flexible Funding’ program, this was to enable a range of consumers to attend the Symposium. Flourish Tas also assisted in filling places allocated to consumers through an Expressions of Interest from consumers.

Training Overview

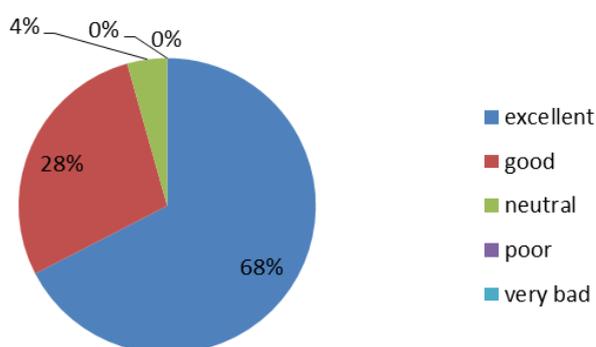
Of the total 66 participants, 46 evaluation forms were received. 44 respondents rated the Symposium as good – excellent, which is equivalent to 96%.

The symposium 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.**
Attendees reported improvement in knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting, and their ability to engage with consumers and deal with their feedback after attending the symposium.
2. **Increasing the accessibility of training and professional development to the whole of the sector.**

Places at the symposium were offered to the sector at a subsidised rate, thus increasing the accessibility to workers, particularly those people travelling from the North and North West of Tasmania to the Statewide event.

Overall rating of the Symposium



Informal and ongoing feedback has demonstrated that the Symposium was highly valuable and relevant to attendees and services have reported plans to incorporate what they have learned around consumer involvement.

Written comments were very positive also:

- praise for the PESP presentation (both the information provided and the personal stories from the presenters)
- High quality of information and professionalism of the Symposium
- Value in of bringing government, service providers and consumers together

- Importance of the ‘how-to’ guides, as services noted the need for practical information to help them implement consumer reporting, as this information will assist them with Outcomes Reporting.

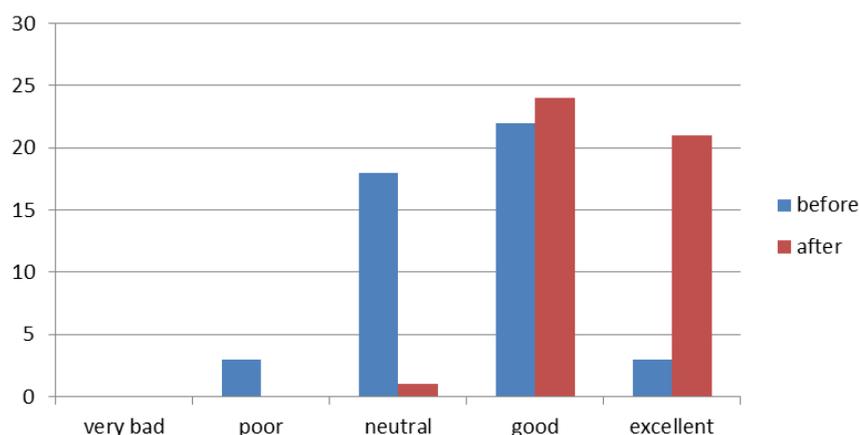
Some examples of these comments are listed under Question 6 in the following ‘Participant Evaluation’ section.

Participant Evaluation

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

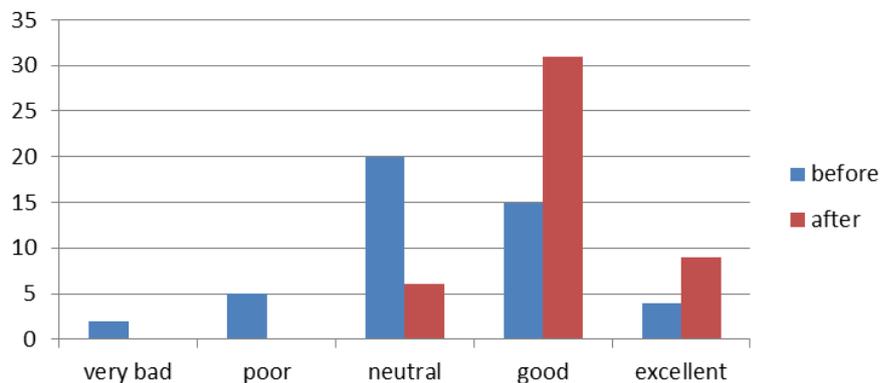
1. Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting before the Symposium
2. Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting after the Symposium
3. Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback before the Symposium
4. Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback after the Symposium
5. Overall, how do you rate today’s Symposium?
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 Symposium



Question 1 & 2: Rate your knowledge of consumer engagement and reporting before and after the Symposium. This graph shows that all ratings of poor moved up to a rating of neutral and above. Participants who rated their knowledge as neutral before the Symposium decreased from 18 to only 1 neutral rating afterwards, and rating of excellent went from 3 before the Symposium to 21 afterwards.

Ability to engage, deal with feedback before and after Symposium



Question 3 & 4: Rate your ability to engage consumers and deal with their feedback before and after the Symposium. Once again, the results show a marked increase in participants' skill level before and after the Symposium. All ratings of very bad or poor improved to neutral or above after training. Neutral ratings decreased from 20 before the Symposium to 6 afterwards and ratings of good and excellent increased to more than double (good went from 15 to 31, excellent from 4 to 9) after the Symposium.

Question 6: Comments from evaluation forms included:

- 'It was fantastic, thank you!! Looking forward to the papers that are to come. Consumer input was valuable, poignant and brilliant!!'
- 'I thought it was very professional and informative'
- 'I found this symposium to be invaluable and made me recognise the importance of co-design and bringing government, service providers and consumers together'
- 'Fantastic! Hearing from PESP and Tasmanian consumers was excellent. I'm excited about the change to the service system which will follow this day'
- 'This session has been great because of listening to many different voices and perspectives. It has given me ideas on how to engage consumers in our service'
- 'Fantastic symposium. I like the way it began with a model, discussed a range of issues with the panel, and then developed actions through groupwork'.

Attendees represented at the Symposium.	
Homelessness Services	Other
7 Anglicare 2 Bethlehem House 5 CatholicCare 4 Colony 47 1 Hobart City Mission 1 Hobart Women's Shelter 1 Jireh House 3 Karinya 2 Launceston City Mission	1 Clarence Council 1 Common Ground 10 Consumers/tenants 2 Facilitator/consultant 1 Flourish 1 Hobart City Council 1 Housing Choices 1 Housing Tas 2 Mission Australia

1 Launceston Women's Shelter 1 Pathways 9 Salvation Army 2 Youth, Family and Community Connections	3 PESP 4 Shelter Tas
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Recommendations for Future Training

Actions for implementation by Shelter Tas:

1. The quality of speakers at the Symposium once again reinforced the importance of finding the appropriate people to deliver training. Shelter Tas will continue to source trainers on recommendations from its members, and will investigate bringing speakers from the first Symposium back for the forum in 2017, which will evaluate the how-to guides.
2. Evaluations showed that participants found the groupwork and networking opportunities at the Symposium very valuable. Hearing from a range of experienced presenters, services and consumers was highly productive and valued. Including these opportunities in training sessions will be considered by Shelter Tas when scheduling further training.
3. The vast majority of comments found that the Community Café questions were appropriate to the session and produce information relevant to the development of the guides. Shelter Tas staff developed the set questions with Michelle Swallow and consulted with both the Reference Group and consumer participants; the questions were structured specifically to meet the skill level of all participants and allow answers to be appropriately complex to those attending.
4. Shelter Tas received some feedback that the time of year that events are held is significant to organisations. Organisations with small budgets for training may not have the resources to attend more expensive training close to the end of the financial year. Even though the Symposium was subsidised by 80%, registrations were set at \$99.00 and not an insignificant cost. This will be taken into account for future training.

Broader Considerations:

5. By partnering with Council to Homeless Persons (Victoria), Flourish and Partners in Recovery, Shelter Tas built strong relationships across sectors and received valuable practical support, both financially and in managing the consumers who attended.
6. Places at the Symposium were offered primarily to the homelessness sector (as per WDS specifications) and some places also went to the community housing providers, consumers and other services which deal with homelessness, to allow diversity and information-sharing. This meant that the experience and knowledge in the room was broadened and a more meaningful experience was provided to those who attended.
7. Preparation for the symposium and subsequent formation of the Resources Advisory Sub-Group was particularly administratively and time-intensive, and this needs to be taken into account when planning and budgeting for events in future (i.e. in allowing lead-up time and when scheduling other training around such events).