Shelter Tas Inc.
Workforce Development Strategy 2015-18

Evaluation Report #13
Final Evaluation, July 2015 – June 2018
1. Executive Summary and Overview


In 2013, Shelter Tas, the Peak Body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania was commissioned to produce the Workforce Development Strategy. The Strategy is based on systematic Statewide consultation with the sector, and on a review of existing research. The homelessness sector was consulted in the development of the Strategy, with a special focus on crisis accommodation (Type 3) services. The Workforce Development Strategy was provided to DHHS in 2014. The project objective was to raise the skill level of the homelessness sector workforce across Tasmania.

In 2015, Shelter Tas was funded to deliver the outcomes of the Strategy, that is, to facilitate and deliver workforce development for the homelessness sector in Tasmania. The implementation was originally funded as a two-year Project from June 2015 - June 2017, with an application to extend the Project for an additional year to June 2018 approved in July 2017. This allowed the remaining funds to be expended appropriately, and training rolled out over a period of time with most benefit to the sector. This final evaluation report covers the duration of the Project from June 2015 – June 2018.

Shelter Tas is uniquely positioned to deliver workforce development initiatives for the homelessness sector workforce. As Tasmania’s Peak Body for housing and homelessness services, Shelter Tas has 30 years’ experience working with members and stakeholders across the State. Shelter Tas is able to draw on the expertise of members, sector stakeholders and community partners to deliver a series of training opportunities tailored to sector needs. In addition, Shelter Tas has an established network that allows us to draw on the good will of community sector stakeholders to leverage partnerships and resources that improve value for money, and allows us to share beneficial outcomes with related services, promoting a ‘joined up’ approach to service delivery.

Shelter Tas has delivered on the 4 priorities of the Strategy:

- **Priority 1 – Increasing the Skills and Competencies of the SHS Workforce:** indicated by highly positive feedback from training participants,
- **Priority 2 – Increasing the Accessibility of Training and Professional Development to the Whole of the Sector:** indicated by an inclusive, equity-based Statewide approach,
- **Priority 3 – Developing an Information Sharing Network:** indicated by a dedicated ‘Training’ page on the Shelter Tas website, Reference Group and networking opportunities, and
• *Priority 4 – Building a Future Training and Professional Development Funding Model:* indicated by accountability to government and community stakeholders, delivering value for money and maintaining effective quality assurance mechanisms.

**Outcomes achieved to-date include:**

• Increased expertise in areas affecting the homelessness workforce, including:
  - Dealing with crystal methamphetamine-affected clients
  - Anti-Discrimination and gender awareness, including transgender clients
  - Culturally responsive work within the community
  - Clients with complex needs and self-care for SHS workers
  - Reforms in the Residential Tenancy Act
  - Symposium and follow-up forum – Tas homelessness workforce and consumer participation
  - Trauma Informed Practice
  - Consumer engagement
  - Interviewing techniques and case note writing skills for the workforce
  - Mental health, suicide prevention and co-morbidity
  - Improving client outcomes.

• Reference Group was established; including representatives of Specialist Homelessness Services (Type 1, 2 and 3), community housing providers, tenancy services, Housing Tas representatives, and a sub-group which included consumers.

• Capacity building for Shelter Tas and partners in facilitating training sessions, project management, inter-agency and interstate collaborations:
  - Expanded cross-sector partnerships with organisations such as Council to Homeless Persons – Peer Education and Support Program, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council (ATDC), Red Cross, National Shelter, Flourish, Hobart City Council, Tenants’ Union of Tasmania, Partners in Recovery, Leadership and Change Consultants, Equal Opportunity Tas, Working it Out
  - National training organisations such as Amovita, The Lighthouse Institute and LeeJenn Health Consultants.

• Development and maintenance of a custom-designed training page on the Shelter Tas website and IT platform for efficient enrolment in training and accessing information about training opportunities.

The success of the Workforce Development Project is grounded in continuous consultation with the homelessness and community housing workforce in Tasmania. This ongoing engagement draws on Shelter Tas’ long-standing relationships with member organisations, and facilitation of regular meetings with Specialist Homelessness Services, Community Housing providers, and the Shelter Tas Policy Committee. Throughout the Project, Shelter Tas has established and maintained partnerships with recommended RTO’s and trainers. Together with evaluations from participants, this has enabled Shelter Tas to deliver a flexible and appropriate training program that matches the needs of the sector.
In addition, the Project Reference Group was designed specifically to secure quality assurance and governance, and to provide ongoing focussed feedback from the sector into the Project.

By establishing a Reference Group with wide sector representation, Shelter Tas has:

- ensured a responsive and agile approach to consultation
- built capacity and information sharing throughout the network of services and providers
- leveraged a Statewide, cost effective program by accessing resources such as meeting rooms from our members and partners
- negotiated with trainers to deliver tailored and appropriate training to SHS services
- educated trainers regarding the specific needs of the sector in Tasmania
- secured high quality trainers with relevant and specialised skills who come recommended by Shelter Tas members, and
- ensured that workforce development training complements Certificate IV, Diploma and other types of accredited training undertaken by sector workers. This provides appropriate, continued professional development for workers already holding relevant qualifications, as well as preparing workers who are ready to undertake those qualifications.

2. The Training Sessions

Training has been delivered on 12 topics, held over 23 individual sessions (2 of these sessions were held over 2 days), in areas identified in the Strategy which emerged from the Reference Group and ongoing sector consultation. All training meets the priorities of the Strategy: **Priority 1 – Increasing the Skills and Competencies of the SHS Workforce**, and **Priority 2 – Increasing the Accessibility of Training and Professional Development to the Whole of the Sector**. Three topics were delivered as single Statewide sessions, these were Anti-Discrimination and Gender Awareness in Launceston, and the Tasmanian Homelessness and Housing Workforce Symposium and its follow-up forum in Hobart.

Statewide training sessions deliver on **Priority 3 – Developing an Information Sharing Network**, by building peer relationships across agencies and regions. The other sessions were repeated in the South and North or North West, to facilitate Statewide access in line with **Priority 2**. Shelter Tas’ own capacity has increased through the experience of facilitating training sessions, establishing systems to manage enrolments, building partnerships with training providers and establishing a training page on the Shelter Tas website. Lessons learned and recommendations were captured in the evaluations for each training session. Evaluations of each session were then presented to and discussed with the Reference Group and Shelter Policy Committee to inform and continue to improve the Project (**Priority 4 – Building a Future Training and Professional Development Funding Model**).
Topics, locations and overall participant evaluation:

1. **Crystal Methamphetamine (Ice) training (partnership with ATDC) - July 2015**
   - **Location:** Hobart and Devonport
   - **Provider:** LeeJenn Health Consultants
   - Workers from the areas of homelessness, alcohol and drugs, health, welfare, mental health, justice and education participated in the training
   - 125 participants (50 from H&H sector) – 23 evaluation forms returned
   - **91.5% rated the training as good – excellent.**

2. **Anti-Discrimination and Gender Awareness - December 2015**
   - **Location:** Launceston (Statewide session)
   - **Provider:** Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Working it Out
   - 32 Participants – 23 evaluation forms returned
   - **87% rated the training as good – excellent.**

3. **Culturally Responsive Community Work – December 2015**
   - **Location:** Launceston and Hobart
   - **Provider:** Red Cross (Al Hines)
   - 37 participants - 32 evaluations received
   - **96% rated training as good – excellent.**

4. **Complex Clients and Self Care: best practice for workers - February 2016**
   - **Location:** Latrobe and Hobart
   - **Provider:** Amovita Consulting
   - 52 participants - 50 evaluations received
   - **96% rated training as good – excellent.**

5. **Know Your Residential Tenancy Act and Amendments - April 2016**
   - **Location:** Hobart and Launceston
   - **Provider:** Tenants’ Union Tasmania (Meredith Barton, Principal Solicitor)
   - 35 participants - all evaluation forms received
   - **100% rated the training as good – excellent.**

6. **Tasmanian Homelessness and Housing Workforce Symposium – June 2016**
   - **Location:** Hobart (Statewide)
   - **Providers:** Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education and Support Program (PESP), a panel discussion (involving consumers, service providers and Housing Tas representative), Community Café groupwork which informed the ‘how-to’ guides for Consumer Engagement as a product of the Symposium. Other topics included working with the Outcomes Framework, reporting, and engaging with consumer feedback.
   - The Resources Advisory Sub-group (RASG) was formed after the Symposium to review and approve the ‘how-to’ guides. The RASG was made up of Reference Group representatives, consumers who attended the Symposium and a representative from Housing Tasmania.
66 participants - 46 evaluations received

96% rated training as good – excellent.

7. **Trauma Informed Practice** – August 2016
   
   **Location:** Hobart and Latrobe  
   **Provider:** The Lighthouse Institute  
   49 participants – 48 evaluation forms received

100% rated the training as good – excellent.

8. **Motivational Interviewing** – October 2016
   
   **Location:** Hobart and Launceston  
   **Provider:** Amovita Consulting  
   56 participants – all evaluation forms returned

93% rated training as good – excellent.

9. **Case Note Writing** – February and March 2017
   
   **Location:** Hobart and Devonport (2 sessions in each region)  
   **Provider:** Amovita Consulting  
   102 participants – 98 evaluation forms received

96% rated training as good – excellent.

10. **De-stigmatising Borderline Personality Disorder** – April 2017

   **Location:** Hobart and Devonport  
   **Provider:** The Lighthouse Institute  
   44 participants – 42 evaluation forms received

100% rated training as good – excellent.

11. **Consumer Engagement Forum** – July 2017

   **Location:** Hobart (Statewide)  
   **Providers:** Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education and Support Program (PESP) updated initial presentation at the 2016 Symposium, Michelle Swallow of Leadership and Change Consultants facilitated the day and lead a ‘Community Café’ groupwork session to review the progress of the consumer engagement ‘how-to’ guides.  
   44 participants - 34 evaluations received

100% rated training as good – excellent.

12. **Trauma Informed Practice for Managers and Leaders** – April 2018

   **Location:** Hobart and Latrobe (2-day course)  
   **Provider:** The Lighthouse Institute  
   36 participants – 34 evaluation forms received

97% rated training as good – excellent.
The overall ratings were sourced from question five on evaluation forms – ‘Overall, how do you rate today’s training?’. This rating was collected at every training session held throughout the Project and the chart shows the collated results from this question.

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Professional development opportunities offered throughout the Workforce Development Project have delivered valuable outcomes for participants, and provided increased knowledge and access to relevant training for SHS workers across Tasmania.

The success of the Project is demonstrated in evaluations received by participants at training events, with 96% of the total 678 registrants across the Project rating their experience as good-excellent.

The sector’s response to capacity building opportunities reflects the significant demand for specific, targeted training, designed to meet the needs of sector employees working with vulnerable people and those experiencing homelessness. The Housing Connect Collaborating Partners Steering Group has provided a statement of in-principle support for the continuation of the Project. Feedback from the SHS sector shows services facing increasing demand due to the deepening housing crisis. SHS services are facing the need to train new staff, deal with increasing caseloads, manage more clients with complex needs and respond to changing client profiles (such as increasing cohorts of older women, people with disabilities, families and young children).

Shelter Tas recognises the need for further sector training and proposes that the Project continues. This will support consistency in practice, provide updated skills and knowledge, and enable shared learning and problem solving. Shelter Tas will further develop and maintain a consistent and professional approach to training for the homelessness sector workforce and
utilise infrastructure and knowledge gained over the last 3 years of delivering highly successful and well regarded training. The demonstrated value of the Project and increasing pressure on sector workers due to the deepening housing crisis in Tasmania points to the importance of continuing to deliver capacity building and self-care opportunities which will translate to improved consistency across the Tasmanian SHS workforce. Specialist workforce development supports government investment in housing and homelessness services and adds value to the Affordable Housing Strategy which has already provided much needed additional housing for the community.

**Recommendation 1: Continue to provide specialised training that responds to sector needs**

Specific training is required to address the skills and needs of the housing and homelessness sector, which generic training does not provide. Shelter Tas would respond to this need by providing further professional development opportunities to the sector, delivered in a variety of formats and locations in order to fulfil Workforce Development Strategy Priority 2 (*Increasing the Accessibility of Training and Professional Development to the Whole of the Sector*). Content for the Project has been co-designed with the sector, addressing the areas of highest need for training and dealing with issues as they arise.

**Recommendation 2: Utilise existing infrastructure and experience to continue offering training opportunities**

Shelter Tas has developed the infrastructure and knowledge to provide a valuable resource which delivers high quality training opportunities to the sector. These opportunities have provided improved worker skills and outcomes for clients, self-care strategies to workers and consistency across organisations. Shelter Tas developed the Strategy with a consultative approach and co-designed it with the providers utilising its services. A review of current infrastructure will be undertaken in consultation with the sector, should the Project be continued – ensuring it remains relevant and valuable to its users.

**Recommendation 3: Address worker impacts of the current housing crisis through self-care and peer-care for workers**

Service providers have asked for this specialised training to be continued by Shelter Tas (specifically through the letter of support provided by the Housing Connect Collaborating Partners Steering Group). They consider this to be essential, given Tasmania’s escalated housing situation and increased pressure on the workforce. Workforce Development Project training opportunities are responsive to increasing hardship in Tasmania and recognise that homelessness workers (and their clients) are under increased stress. The need to manage work related stress and worker self-care underwrite workplace health and safety and workforce stability issues.

Shelter Tas will be submitting a comprehensive business plan to Housing Tasmania, proposing a continuation of the Workforce Development Project.
4. Budget

The outcomes of the Project were achieved and finalised within budget and a full AGFAR will be provided in accordance with the WDS funding agreement.