

Working with Co-occurring Homelessness and Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

Nicole Thompson, Manger of Health and Treatment Services and Acting Inner Melbourne Community Hub Manager



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Engage. Enable. Empower.

VincentCare is committed to the principles of social justice and aims to ensure that each individual is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their ability, cultural background, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or religion.



VincentCare is a homelessness focused organization committed to supporting those in our community who are most disadvantaged.

Our Purpose is:

To create opportunities and lasting change for the most marginalised

- Support individuals and their families so that their basic needs are met in terms of food, shelter, safety and security;
- Provide access to programs and pathways that strengthen an individual's resilience and support them in accessing opportunities within their communities; and
- Advocate and build capacity in order to redress the structural inequalities in the community that create disadvantage



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Prior to the Sector Reform in 2014

- Homelessness Drug Dependency Program provided flexible long term case management (up to 2 years) and housing to people experiencing Homelessness and Alcohol and Other Drug Issues.
 - Alcohol and Other Drug Counselling, utilising assertive engagement and brief intervention provided at Ozanam Community Centre.
 - Quin House, 11 bed Residential Rehabilitation for Males experiencing homelessness located in Fitzroy.
- RLAD 6 month post Rehab Outreach Case Management program , offering case management, counselling and groups.



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We identified one of the challenges of the sector reform was extra barriers to accessing AOD services for people experiencing homelessness.

VincentCare and the Salvation Army formed a consortia with the purpose of ensuring that people experiencing homelessness continued to have access to AOD Services –
STAR Program

- Inner North Catchment – based at Ozanam Community Centre (open access drop in centre)
- North West Catchment – based in Glenroy at a housing access point.



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After the sector reform we recognised the need for co-location and increased collaboration.

- ReGen based an Assessor at Ozanam Community Centre one day per week. This increased access to Comprehensive Assessments and referrals for treatment



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Due to the complexities faced by people experiencing homelessness or residing in crisis accommodation, and the lack of access to technology such as Mobile Phones or power points to charge phones there was still significant barriers to accessing treatment.

Current funded treatment types and targets do not allow for flexibility in assertive engagement.



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Identifying the importance of providing access to AOD services for people experiencing homelessness the 3 Crisis Accommodation providers –

VincentCare, The Salvation Army and Launch advocated to the department regarding the need for flexible AOD services working alongside homelessness services providing assertive engagement, brief interventions and referrals.



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After the Sector Reform

- STAR program offering AOD Counselling, CRC, Assessment, Bridging Support and Brief Intervention at Ozanam Community Centre and Glenroy's Housing Access point.
 - Brief Intervention Program offering Screens, Assertive Engagement, Brief Intervention, Groups, Outings and referrals to people residing in Ozanam House Crisis Accommodation and accessing Ozanam Community Centre.
- Quin House, 11 bed 3 Month Residential Rehabilitation for Males experiencing homelessness located in Fitzroy.
- RLAD 6 month post Rehab Outreach Case Management program , offering case management, counselling and groups.



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One of the biggest barriers to people experiencing homelessness in accessing and maintaining housing is substance use issues.

Reducing or ceasing substance use is incredibly difficult for people currently experiencing homelessness

Housing without support is not sustainable for most of the people we work with.

Working holistically with the whole person means providing a number of supports concurrently.



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The AOD Sector may not have flexibility in it's funded treatment types, but we can be flexible in how we work with other services/sectors.

- Co-location in homelessness services
- Providing Regular Screening/Assessment times at housing services
 - Being flexible with appointments/allowing for non-attendance
 - Collaborative Case Planning
 - Case Conferencing with Housing Case Managers
- Thinking outside the box eg: linking clients living in crisis accommodation with Non-Resi Withdrawal.



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Thank you!

Any Questions?

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