

Homelessness & Affordable Housing Community Meeting

26 August 2015

A big thank you to all those who attended, presented and help organise this community meeting.

Below are notes and feedback from the meeting:

Liz Yeo, CEO of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) began the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country followed by some background on why we decided hold the meeting.

SOME FIGURES

- Our average age is 32 – that’s pretty young compared to other communities.
- More than a third of us live alone – almost twice the NSW average.
- Newtown, where median rent has doubled in last 10 years to \$600.
- 57% of Newtowners rent (compared with state average of 30%).
- More than a third of those are in housing stress (which means you’re paying more than 30% of your income on rent).
- In Newtown housing costs twice as much as 10 years ago – a median of \$1 million dollars!
- On any given day, 1 in 200 people is homeless in Newtown.
- Did you know that on any given day, Newtown has about 520 unoccupied properties?

First speaker: Felicity Reynolds, CEO, The Mercy Foundation

Felicity talked about the importance of focusing on local figures and not becoming overwhelmed by large statistics around homelessness and housing first. You can see her full presentation on our website.

Second speaker: Maura Boland, Director, The Insight Partnership (Former Deputy Secretary, NSW Family & Community Services)

Maura spoke about the broader history and context in housing, including the former NRAS (National Rental Affordability Scheme), Common Ground housing model in Camperdown, being a role model in your community, how you can influence change and thinking globally acting locally.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & IDEAS

- There should be an Aboriginal representative in attendance.
- Where is Common Ground located? *31 Pyrmont Bridge Road, Camperdown*
- I see homeless people on the streets in Newtown, how do I respond to this and help?
- We don’t need more crisis services we need more housing and services to support people living in housing.
- ‘Hands Up Glebe’ are developing a model for housing.
- There seems to be a real obsession with owning a home
- Renters are seen as second class citizens
- There is not enough anger around this issue – people need to get angry and take action.
- How did ‘Common Ground’ happen, who was responsible?
- How do we get organised as a community who can and will take action?

- Where do we go from here?
- What about more Housing Co-Operatives?
- We need to stand up and march and take action, we are ready to do this?
- What action can I take now, today to respond to homelessness and the lack of affordable housing?
- Initiative in Cambridge UK where people who are homeless were trained or skilled up in areas that would create employment to assist them out of homelessness, creating a magazine.
- Suggestion that homelessness and affordable housing are topics that need to be discussed separately to gain real traction and interest in the community.
- Volunteer for an agency that assists the homeless.
- Benefits of co-operative housing and the need to grow this sector
- Provide information to rough sleepers on services that exist that can provide support.
- Suggested that people concerned with the welfare of rough sleepers ‘start a conversation with them’. Interact with rough sleepers and ask them what they need.
- Bring back NRAS (National Rental Affordability Scheme)
- Share information and ideas around how to take action
- Lobby state and local governments around inclusion zones and more development
- Bigger role for Community Housing Providers (CHPs)
- Get involved in regional planning and promotion of affordable housing.

	<p>Homelessness and Housing Affordability meeting</p> <p>Comments / Suggestions from attendees –</p> <p>transcribed from comment sheets</p>
	<p>Please NOTE: some details have been removed to protect privacy or where a comment may be considered offensive or discriminatory</p>
	<p>Comments/Suggestions:</p>
1.	<p>The main issue for a lot of people is the fact that if you are on a low income and are not eligible for an affordable housing program, you either have to live in a share house or a boarding house.</p>
2.	<p>Very good speakers. I would like to be involved in working groups around Cost Analysis – addressing rough sleepers & affordable housing options campaigns/demonstration for legislative change.</p>
3.	<p>Interesting speakers on a complex issue. Would love to attend further sessions. Was involved with a creative response to homelessness in Cambridge, UK, called ‘flack’. It would be an excellent initiative for Newtown. Please get in touch, thanks.</p>

4.	Excellent + necessary meeting, thank you. I am interested in having another – with view towards action group forming. Campaigns for changes as mentioned, forming a united voice. If such a group already exists I'd really like to know about it. I think another meeting inviting local council reps + maybe more coverage would be well attended.
5.	More cooperatives! They represent a radical disruption of the private rental market. + more focussed organising plans & groups on specific issues.
6.	The first speaker's point about breaking down big problems into solvable pieces was brilliant! (Felicity Reynolds) Moir's point about the role of capital gains as a potential source of income that is missed out on was Australia was eye opening. Thought-provoking speakers, thank you.
7.	I'm working in the area of affordable housing in Glebe & NSW generally.
8.	I'd be interested in a bigger push towards tenant rights: contracts that extend beyond 6-12 months and an inevitable huge rental increase when the lease is up/flat is sold off. It's tiring having to move every year.
9.	Would be great to have greater diversity of opinions and voices – more focus on different approaches – not just peak lobbying
10.	We need better legislation to protect renters. 59% of Newtown residents are renters. We have 6 months leases that ensure no consistency. No fault evictions – again no security. Rental prices that rise without any government constraints. We need rent caps.
11.	Can we have separate forums on homelessness Housing affordability Rental affordability How to rally & affect change More grassroots speakers
12.	It is impossible to get on the housing ladder on a moderate/average income without assistance. Where is the money for schemes to help these people, other than tax breaks for landlords who are already exploiting the high cost rental market.
13.	Thank you for organising the meeting. I am from Hands Off Glebe, and would appreciate getting any information you share.
14.	Speakers – all good – focus on big picture Outcomes – good summary of things residents can do to speak onto longer conversations government/partnerships etc Product of this info from this perspective

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of things suggested to do – i.e. send letter <p>Lobby inclusive policies please: here is pro forma of how to do this</p> <p>Get back Rudd policy:</p> <p>Social media – you can do's as individuals Facebook + local communities / council areas characters NGO's Specific individuals + group actions</p>
15.	Marrickville Council has done a lot of work on all of these issues, so has City of Sydney – it would be good to join forces/share resources & create a bigger voice
16.	<p>Government see homelessness as control as in unemployment.</p> <p>People need the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Somewhere nice to live b) Good food to eat c) Someone to care for <p>How to solve problem Aboriginal land/Private land?</p>
17.	Keen to be involved. Also contact Camdenville Public School, which has got bright kids from 6 schools together to address local homelessness.

ACTIONS TO CARRY FORWARD

- A number of attendees expressed an interest in being involved in some kind of working/action group. NNC to follow up these people and plan a future meeting.
- Look at a few options to tackle the issues raised and gain feedback on these from the community and those in attendance at the meeting.
- Release a list of 'Actions You Can Take Today' to the community.
- Release information about Common Ground and how it came about.
- Provide details and contacts of existing initiatives and meetings addressing the topics covered.

FURTHER INFO AND FEEDBACK

To provide further feedback, questions or comments please contact Emily Walpole via email: emily@newtowncentre.org or call (02) 9564 7310.

