

# CLOSING GAPS AND OPENING DOORS: The function of an integrated homelessness service system

## PLACE BASED NETWORK ANALYSIS AND CASE STUDIES

FINAL REPORT — NOVEMBER 2008

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[...THE DESIRED OUTCOME, OF SUCH COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION, IS THAT "THE PERSON'S CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS IS BROKEN AND THEY ARE ACCOMMODATED WITH SUPPORT FROM OTHER IDENTIFIED GOVERNMENT AND NON GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO SUSTAIN THEIR TENANCY LONG TERM, REACH THEIR POTENTIAL AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY..."]

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## KEY TERMS

**Service Integration:** bringing together previously dispersed and independent services into a more comprehensive service delivery system. Two integration axes are available:

1. Vertical: top-down, formal structural, authority-driven
2. Horizontal: relationship-based approach;

**Integration continuum:** horizontal integration occurs on a continuum from cooperative, coordinative and collaborative relationships and actions;

**Bricolage:** to respond to problems and opportunities using existing resources and capabilities.

**Innovation:** the act of introducing something new (program, service or product) to a service system with the goal of increasing performance

**Integration:** combining or unifying into a whole

**Program logic:** a way of representing the theory behind a program's actions. It describes the assumptions or hypotheses about why the program will work, showing the presumed effects of activities or resources. It is a tool which identifies the links in a chain of reasoning about 'what causes what' and links resources, activities, outputs, impact and outcomes.

**Pathways:** refers to both the route of interventions that guide clients from homelessness into secure housing and also the path of an individual or group into homelessness. This second unintended route is a 'mirror' pathway and is regressive in that individuals or groups may spiral back to homelessness through either gaps in service programs or inability to sustain pro-social behaviours.

## KEY FINDINGS

This report presents the results of the Place-Based Network Analysis and Case Study evaluation undertaken as a component of the overall evaluation of the Responding to Homelessness Strategy initiated by the Queensland Government. This evaluation has been undertaken on behalf of the Department of Communities and has utilised Social Network Analysis and qualitative data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews to inform the findings.

Key findings of the Place-based Network Analysis and Case Studies are outlined in this section. Broadly, the findings are grouped under the themes of Integration, Pathways and Innovation. The key issues are highlighted under each theme. Following a discussion of R2H and the elements of integration, the section proceeds to describe the analysis of the Case Studies, outline the method and substance of the Network Metrics and summarise the main findings relating to early intervention, Public Intoxication, Pathways and Innovation. Finally, the section sets out Recommendations for Action.

These thematic treatments offer a summary of the critical elements of the R2H program. Three case study sites were selected for closer examination and analysis of the R2H strategy. These sites were spatially distributed and offered different social, economic and geographic contexts. The case studies were Townsville in North Queensland, the Gold Coast and the state capital, Brisbane. An additional case study focused on early intervention initiatives in each of the three case sites completes the set. The significant findings of these case studies are summarised below. Recommendations for action emanating from these findings are then proposed.

## R2H Integration

- Increased funding and attention has been directed to the issue of homelessness. There has been a shift from a fragmented response that competed for available accommodation and scarce shelter options to a response that applied varied solutions to aligning information, resources and expertise to establish shelter and resources in order for people to move along the pathway from homelessness to sustained tenancy;
- Integration does not have to be fully developed across the entire service system. Rather, consideration needs to be given to the level of integration required for each circumstance. Integration should be 'fit for purpose' accounting for the degree to which co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration are warranted;
- There is a need for requisite integration mechanisms; the role of an administrative core is an important role in this context;
- R2H has offered better funding for improvements to existing services and brought new service providers into the mix; together these service enhancements have had a positive effect in terms of both service quality and integration capacity;
- Integration does not solve the problem of an under-resourced service system;
- The study confirms the findings of Walsh (2000)<sup>1</sup> and Leutz (1999)<sup>2</sup> that integration of services costs before it delivers positive outcomes;

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government, 2000, *Human Services Integration: A Background Paper*, Government Service Delivery Project, Office of Public Service Commission, January.

<sup>2</sup> Leutz, W., 1999, *Five Laws for Integrating Medical and Social Services: Lessons from the United States and the United Kingdom*, *The Milbank Quarterly* 77 (1): 77-110.

- There is still some way to go before achieving a satisfactory level of sustained tenancy. R2H funding and resource efforts are focussed mainly on emergency and crisis at the point of homelessness rather than finding ways to sustain vulnerable tenants or establish supported housing service options. Much of the continuing focus on crisis is driven by immediacy, complex needs, housing shortages and inability to secure private rental accommodation;
- The Service System Network maps and case studies evidence significant attempts by NGO service providers to engage with the private sector; however there remains a low level of involvement and interaction especially in the private rental market;
- The Service System for delivering housing options requires a new data management tool that will better assist for planning services and ultimately changing the service delivery model and system;
- Better relationships have been forged in order to undertake service delivery in integrated responses;
- The structures and responses have largely been as intended in terms of developing an integrated response to homelessness although some areas have been able to progress further than others due to capacity, level of sector development and specific locational and structural features of homeless populations;
- Equity emerges as an important and previously undetected facilitator of integration. Findings indicated a strong perception of inequity in three key areas. Firstly, the differential funding to new services created disconnect between established and newer services. Secondly, and linked to the previous point, are the differential arrangements and employment conditions for individuals undertaking similar roles. Thirdly, there is a perception that some government agencies 'did better' than the non government sector from the R2H funding regimes. These perceptions of inequity need be addressed if integration between government and non-government parties is to move forward productively;
- The Program Logic focuses on integrated responses to relieve homelessness. However, the findings point to the limitations of the current program logic as an aid to integration in that it fails to capture the complexity of integration and therefore the nuances of responses required;
- Resolving homelessness requires both a continuum of care with the highest level of care being complex needs and moving people along the pathway from homelessness to sustained tenancies. The intervention pathway should be better integrated across these two areas;
- Where institutional integration arrangements have deliberately and genuinely involved the community sector, stronger and more sustained commitment to addressing homelessness has transpired. The Gold Coast provides an excellent example of this high level connection and the positive impact on planning and service delivery;
- The findings highlighted that the various actors within the system hold different ideologies of homelessness which drive different intervention views. These diversely held understandings result in homelessness being approached from a political, legal, health or social perspectives, which can inhibit whole-of-community integration.

## Place-Based Case Studies

- The ways that the responses to homelessness have differed are according to geographical location, history of service delivery, client populations and structural disadvantage;
- The two existing hub models Brisbane and the Gold Coast have reflected the influence of these differences. The Gold Coast model is both a spatial and linear hub in that it follows the topography of the Gold Coast strip. Brisbane, on the other hand, exhibits two models. The strength of this diversity is a wider catchment of client groups and the ability for the hubs to compliment and aid each other;
- The Townsville Hub was not sufficiently developed to be included within the scope of the evaluation;
- Despite the variance in models and approach each of the Hubs have made significant contributions to improving homelessness service delivery in their area. The two Brisbane based Hubs have a more noticeable presence and contribute strongly to service integration as well as systems integration;
- The Gold Coast Hub, due to its integration within the Homelessness Network, acts as a linking instrument of the Network for information and referrals and plays a less forthright role in system integration;
- The Gold Coast presents as an example of a 'mature' model of integration which is largely located in the coordination and collaboration end of the Integration continuum;
- Key aspects of the Gold Coast program include a strong and embedded relational approach, ongoing dialogue, engagement and planning, and strong horizontal and vertical linkages to foster sustained commitment and action;
- Roma House provides much needed specialist accommodation options for complex, high need clients. Initial implementation problems and a 'staged' access arrangement limited the number of people that could be assisted. This had repercussions for other agencies in terms of resourcing and support. The layout of the facility and its utility as a crisis accommodation centre, coupled with ongoing concerns with regard to the referral process has also impacted on the service;
- HPIQ provides a state-wide, 24/7 telephone information service for people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. The program acts has a strong role as a 'first port of call' for newly homeless or housing vulnerable clients, but has a less evident role for existing clients. It has a stronger role in contributing to the overall integration of regional services through the facilitation of workshops and planning processes;
- Together this Brisbane service 'quartet' provides a solid foundation to integrated services in Brisbane. Additional work on building relationships and linkages between a wider array of agencies within and across sectors would strengthen the service system;
- Townsville — public intoxication and homelessness are treated in an undifferentiated manner by agencies. This was evidenced by the practice of pooling funds and integrating the few funds into existing work. Progress has been made in terms of better linking services, however there remains a strong reliance on informal connections and tacit knowledge of the system than a more formalised and shared process. In this context it has proven difficult for new services to enter the system;
- All case study sites were working in environments of increasing pressure for services.

## Network Metrics

- Network analysis gives a snapshot of the connections within a system through identifying the interactions of parties within a bounded area at a particular point in time. It is critical to the successful utilisation of network maps to understand that while the resultant network representations provide a snapshot of connections, relations and action, they do not represent one correct profile of a system. These representations are aids to interpreting the shape of a bounded system and the internal dynamics at a particular point in time. Systems and the web of relations and interactions can then be adjusted through informed dialogue and negotiation to achieve strategic objectives.
- Results of the network analysis suggests that overall the three place- based analyses are largely responding according to the principles set out under the R2H, although the Townsville Hub has yet to be developed to any extent.
- In terms of their structural patterns, all cases are quite different. Each system developed its own model of working and these should not be compared to each other as they are context specific. Overall it can be said that, when aligned against the Integration Continuum, mostly they are cooperating and some close to coordination with Gold Coast going closest to collaboration. There were some core agencies involved and that these were providing the bulk of coordination. While this situation is expected, future action may be to expand the array of services and/or agencies involved to take some pressure off these core agencies.
- With the exception of the Gold Coast, which has remained fairly constant in its level of connection, the findings for Townsville and Brisbane show that as the service systems move from information sharing through to more intense relations there is a drop off in intensity, action and commitment. This result is not surprising since information sharing represents the most basic of the integration tasks and therefore it is expected that there would be substantial interaction in this context. The results can be further explained in that the shift from information sharing to more intensive and higher commitment tasks requires more time, resources and effort.
- The service systems also display relatively high levels of centralisation across all variables. This suggests that there are a number of core agencies in each site that take on these coordinating roles — either because of resources, function or tradition. The exception to this is Referrals In/Out for Townsville which at an average centralisation score, of 4.6% presents as highly decentralised area.
- The data for all case sites shows that referrals are a large component of the work being undertaken. Overall there is an average of 2.3 steps to achieve a complete referral. While this figure is reasonable, when coupled with the extensity of action occurring within the sectors, it can be a signal of systems under strain and an inability to connect at the one point. A long chain of implementation of referrals and this will incur cost in relation to both services and the clients.
- Overall the network analysis has revealed a moderate level of integration, with the Gold Coast site closest to a collaborative model.

## Homelessness Early Intervention

Homelessness early intervention as a result of R2H attention was seen as positive and a successful contribution to the homelessness service sectors in each of the study locations. Service providers all considered that early intervention was important. Early intervention services added to the structural composition of the homelessness pathway in that it acted as both an initial barrier to entering the

pathway as well as providing important responses at critical junctures along the pathway continuum. However, the evaluation of early intervention proved to be problematic due in the main to a failure to systematically define early intervention, what it means, what the program involves and who should be involved. As a result:

- Because of a lack of definitional clarity many services in the sector understood that they were doing early intervention anyway and the “special program” status of Homelessness early intervention was not recognised. Indeed, for some the establishment of an early intervention program was seen as a lack of acknowledgement for their contribution in this area.
- Early intervention workers were often not anchored in their employing agency location. This led, in some cases, to an isolation of these workers and a conceptual dissonance in that they were often drawn into the work of the host agency rather than remaining focused on early intervention. Crisis at the point of service delivery further exacerbated these outcomes for early intervention workers.
- A number of structural barriers, service criteria, artificial service boundaries and policy disconnects, impact negatively on early intervention work;
- Too much crisis at the homeless end of the pathway has meant that early intervention was not able to garner sufficient attention as a legitimate and separate intervention approach.

## Public Intoxication

- Public intoxication is found to be viewed from four perspectives — political, legal, health and social. This difference of views means that interventions to address the joint issues of public intoxication and homelessness are often fragmented and are lacking a cohesive strategy across the service system. This is also a function of community groups not having sufficient mechanisms, resources or capability to effectively feed into strategic level planning.
- Agencies directly funded under R2H to address public intoxication do not view public intoxication as distinctly different from homelessness generally — rather, it is a further complication in seeking assistance for clients. This is despite a separate program dedicated to the issue.
- Agencies not directly funded under R2H were addressing public intoxication issues as a natural course of their service provision.
- Most approaches to public intoxication continue to address the priority of removing the intoxicated person from a public location. However, successful, innovative client level approaches adopted a more holistic client approach that sought to build self-esteem. Such schemes included the roofing screws project and Indigenous Arts events and workshops all of which required client sobriety.
- Community patrols were considered a positive as they shifted public intoxication from being dealt with on the ground as a legal issue to one that was more grounded in a health or social welfare framework.
- For Townsville, the appointment of a government employee as the public space coordinator was considered a positive. It provided agencies with a means to better communicate with government in addressing public intoxication as well as providing greater legitimacy to agency interventions.

## Pathways

- Under R2H, homelessness received new attention and direction and new funds — the cumulative effect is better, but not ideal pathways, out of homelessness;
- The pathway should move from homelessness to sustained tenancy and give attention to those in vulnerable existing tenancies to retain their shelter under an extended early intervention regime. There are systemic blockages that prevent smooth transitioning along the pathway;
- Early intervention services added to the structural composition of the pathway to sustained shelter in that it acted as both an initial barrier to entering the pathway as well as providing important responses at critical junctures along the pathway continuum;
- The existence of a 'mirror' or regressive pathway that shadows the progressive pathway to sustained tenancy was detected. Regression occurred when events or circumstances spiralled people off the pathway to sustained tenancy. The 'mirror' pathway worked to take people back to homelessness or less secure accommodation when they were unable to move to the next stage on the progressive pathway. Often the breaks were at critical points of the service system and were at times, the result of systemic reasons such as the time limitations on staying in temporary accommodation and an inability to locate more secure accommodation at the next stage of the pathway. At other times, the behaviour of individuals resulted in a breach of tenancy or shelter rules;
- The Program Logic focuses on, yet is deficient in defining how these integrated responses operate together along the pathway to plug the gaps through which people are falling;
- Resolving homelessness requires both a continuum of care and moving people onto the pathway from homelessness to sustained tenancies.

## Innovation

- In the overall service system, innovation may be found at three levels, ranging from 1. the Client Service level, through to 2. the Program level and finally, at 3. the Strategic/system level;
- The Program Logic is silent on innovation in the R2H strategy. This may be one of the reasons for the relative lack of strategic level innovation evidenced in the R2H study;
- Most innovation occurred at the client service level, drawing on the knowledge, expertise and experience of service providers navigating creatively the service network;
- It was found that innovation was occurring; however services did not recognise that they had developed a level of innovation in establishing their service delivery approaches and mechanisms;
- Incremental innovation is the main model of innovation in evidence. Due to the intractable nature of the complex problems addressed by the community sector, novel ways of dealing with short-term issues have been developed;
- Innovation-on-the-run is the norm for services which have been stretched beyond capacity and still are required to find shelter and draw on scarce resources to not only house clients but bring together the requisite services (health, medical, counselling, budgeting and welfare) for their complex needs;

- The concept of bricolage is introduced to describe the way that service providers creatively 'make do' with limited resources and funding regimes for programs of service packages that specifically limit expenditure to certain agreed items. An example is that some programs cannot offer funding for 'fares home' but other service providers are able to fund this type of expenditure and it requires services to understand the regimes of each type of program to integrate the array of services required by each person;
- New services were brought into the mix as a result of R2H. Inclusion of new players into a network of established service providers offers the prospect of new connections, innovation and dynamism into existing systems. However this approach is not without difficulty. New funding through R2H was injected into the community sector and created competition between both existing service providers and new entrants.

Examples of key innovations at the different levels are outlined below.

### Strategic level innovation

R2H is a good overall example of strategic level innovation in that it seeks to restructure the entire system of services to resolve homelessness. The inclusion of departments previously not directly engaged in addressing homelessness helped to garner a more holistic government approach. The non inclusion of Disability Services Queensland was noted as an oversight since clients of this department represent many of those who are complex needs homeless.

The introductions of initiatives such as the Homelessness Diversion Courts have impacted at the structural level by addressing public order homelessness as a social not legal issue and the referral of offenders to support services. This innovation is considered to be an important advance on dealing with homelessness issues.

### Program level innovation

The findings distilled a number of innovations that coalesced at the program level of operation. Some of these are set out below:

#### Hubs

- Three different hub operating modes were evident. All were successful in their service role and context. This outcome highlights the benefits of a range of model options to accommodate locational variance;
- Co-location established a new way of operating, bringing services together to share common resources and avoid duplication;
- Virtual network models provide for access to an expanded, more loosely connected service set whereby an administrative core acts as both a direct service provider and a 'throughway' to other services and support;
- A linear–mobile model is evident on the Gold Coast where the geographic requirements necessitate a chain of service linkage. This approach is facilitated by network membership hosting mobile crews.

### Alternative accommodation innovation

- A clear example of innovation in responding to the accommodation crisis was the purchase of a motel that was refurbished for social housing purposes. The example of the motel was cited as a success story in not only gaining access to more accommodation in a tight rental market, but was highly appropriate for delivering the type of services sought by service recipients and providers. The motel represented a large-scale boost to the resources available to the sector;
- Another innovation was the supported accommodation for young people that combined life skills, budgeting and assistance with a tenancy that provided quality furnishings and living space;
- Those who are homeless do not have easy access to meeting the eligibility requirements of government departments for some benefits, and service providers have been innovative in developing ways of assisting clients to meet these obligations such as providing addresses and assisting with the provision of identification documentation.

### Client service level innovation

- Operating on a small-scale but with far-reaching consequences for those who are homeless have been the activity programs. Two quite different programs have delivered positive outcomes of encouraging well-being and employment. The Employment Program at the Drop-In Centre and the Art Program run by Spiritus offer new ways of engaging those who are homeless. The framing of a zero-alcohol policy for participation within an Occupational Health and Safety requirement has eased the burden of a 'policing' approach to alcohol and has also had positive results for those participating in the activities;
- Mobile service options such as outreach, and mobile services clustered around a client have shifted the service model from an agency- to a place-based model which is more client-centric;
- Tapping into the existing mobile phone connectivity of clients has enabled service providers to better stay in contact with clients and remind them of forthcoming appointments and use these as vehicles to contact other, more disconnected clients;
- The availability of free calls, including mobile phone calls to HPIQ allows clients safe and more immediate access to information and services. It also acts as a connector between clients and service agencies where previously there was a need for agencies to use resources to identify client whereabouts.

### Suggested innovations

The findings evidence a need for greater innovation at the strategic level. Some suggestions in this regard include:

- Innovative incentives for private sector landlords to give priority to social housing clients need to be introduced if the goal of sustained tenancies is to be reached. This could be achieved via improved tax treatment of rental expenditure and income and may be a way to release more housing stock for sustained tenancies for people at risk of homelessness. Owners of private rental properties would need to apply for their property to be recognised as 'social housing status' and may, for example, be compensated for the maintenance and other costs of these properties through 120-150% tax rebates similar to those available for corporate Research and Development;

- Further, insurance companies that take on the damage risk of these tenancies should be compensated or government should come to an arrangement with insurance companies to share the risk;
- Introducing governance innovation into the homelessness service system would improve the level of knowledge, expertise and resources brought to bear on the problem.

## Recommendations for Action

### Integration

The evaluation has demonstrated that there is a level of integration occurring throughout the homelessness service system in Queensland. The level and model of integration has been found to be locationally and contextually distinctive, with each area demonstrating different structural and relational characteristics. In progressing the R2H initiative some thought needs to be given to achieving a more clear articulation of the preferred level of integration, taking into account the situational characteristics, and matching this against the current integration model.

The network analysis findings provide a useful mechanism through which a process of dialogue and joint planning can be entered into. This is expanded further below.

### Relationships

Relationships have been found to be core and critical to integration in this service system. Relationships rarely occur serendipitously or without effort — they require a significant investment of time, money and commitment. The way forward points to developing strategies for a genuine relational approach, coupled with regular cross-sector dialogue. Furthermore, this interaction should occur at and between the service, managerial and strategic levels of operation and cover the horizontal and vertical mix of actors.

### Dialogue for planning and action

The Network Analysis results points to the need for better understanding of relational approaches to further develop the service system. It is recommended that future action include the preparation and conduct of different types of workshops.

1. Sense-making workshops in which the results of the network analysis are provided to the respondents or the recipients of the evaluation to value-add to the network results;
2. Training workshops to ensure that those in the government and community sectors can operate in relational ways, develop a better understanding of each other's position and establish a common language;
3. Workshop for future planning in response to the evaluation reports. In order to further develop the homeless service system it is recommended that a series of workshops to discuss findings of the evaluation and explore next steps for future planning be implemented.

## Capacity building

The findings demonstrate that integration and relationships are occurring and being established in pockets and often not in a purposeful way. Capacity building in terms of the strategic construction of relationships and their link to requisite levels of service integration is required. Such capacity building should take place in both the government and non-government arenas.

In order to improve record client and system interactions and decision-making a database that tracks service recipients and allows strategic decision-making in relation to planning, resource sharing and more effective referrals for different types of accommodation and assistance are important additions to improve the homelessness service system.

## Resourcing

Confirmation of the costs associated with integration has been evidenced through the evaluation. Planning (involving both sectors) should be focused on identifying those areas that require additional resources. Effort should be directed toward ensuring that agencies are adequately funded and resourced to deliver services as well as participate in planning and integration activities.

## Policy and Leadership

Urgent attention needs to be given to the formulation of a coherent and meaningful policy statement constructed by the whole-of-system to drive the R2H initiative. Such a policy would overcome the evident multiple interpretations by system actors and facilitate greater cohesion of effort and resources.

Leadership in both the vertical and horizontal domains is an essential requirement for sustained integration. Joint leadership training and peer monitoring and support is recommended as an imperative.

## Innovation

Innovation is most dominant at the client/service system level. For program and strategic innovation to become a more evident characteristic of the system, the Program Logic must articulate this and its link to integration more clearly. Additionally, creative space in which there is an acceptance of risk is necessary.

A wiki site dedicated to capturing and sharing the array of innovations should be established as a way to replicate these innovations throughout the service system and also to progress them to higher level sponsorship within the system.

Governance innovation and greater engagement with the private sector in offering tenancies as discussed in the suggested innovations above should be pursued.

## BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

### Introduction

Ending homelessness has been an ongoing and international problem, addressed globally by a wide array of national and state governments. In response to the growing numbers of those experiencing homelessness, resources have begun to move from a focus on securing more emergency resources to instead dealing with homelessness dynamics in either new or redefined ways. The effectiveness of housing rather than shelter as an intervention was also found to lead potentially to ending, not just managing people's homelessness. Such practices, and such an ending, were also recognised as not achievable by only the involvement of governments, service providers and faith-based organisations alone. The concept and new practice of a whole-of-community response was introduced. That response included business, government, local leaders, Non-Government Organisations, and community members to develop local plans, networks, and collaboration. It is evidenced that such a collaborative and inclusive approach to changing the course of homelessness, by working across sectors in a complex and challenging environment, builds relationships and other capabilities that can serve the community in many other complex undertakings<sup>3</sup>.

In Australia, the Federal Government created a "New Approach to Homelessness" titled *Which Way Home?*<sup>4</sup> The overall approach focuses upon moving from crisis accommodation services toward retaining people in public and private rental housing. In essence homelessness has been an issue for a long time, and has had significant resources applied to its resolution. Previously fragmented approaches have in some instances become more integrated through adopting a whole-of-service approach that is proving more effective.

Locally, the Queensland Government Responding to Homelessness (R2H) Initiative was introduced in 2005. Overall the R2H whole-of-government framework/approach was provided with \$235.52 million over four years and designed to be implemented by seven state government agencies<sup>5</sup> namely:

- Department of Housing
- Department of Communities
- Queensland Health
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Police
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Department of Tourism, Fair Trade and Wine Industry Development

The R2H in practice comprises a suite of some thirty two initiatives based within these departments developed and offered in conjunction with community agencies organised under six themes:

- Providing more accommodation and support options
- Connecting people with services
- Responding to homelessness and public space issues
- Meeting the health needs of homeless people

<sup>3</sup> Haggerty, May 2008. Ending Homelessness in Tasmania, [www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au) State of Tasmania

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government, 2008, *Which Way Home: A New Approach to Homelessness*, May Canberra: ACT

<sup>5</sup> Qld Government Dept of Communities, 2006, Funding Information Paper 2005-2006, Responding to Homelessness.

- Meeting the needs of homeless people in the legal system; and
- Helping residential services stay open

Initiatives have been implemented across the state, but predominantly five key locations of Brisbane, Gold Coast, Townsville, Cairns and Mt Isa have been targeted for specific attention. In addition, to assist in connecting people with services, including early intervention to prevent both homelessness and passage into long term homelessness, \$12.60 million was to be spent over four years for people (in Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast, and inner Brisbane) to improve access to both accommodation and information. Service hubs were to be established to provide “information, referral, assessment and brokerage.” The service hubs were to include outreach to homeless people, especially those living ‘rough’, on the street, in parks, and other public locations.

In particular the goals of the Responding to Homelessness (R2H) Strategy were to “reduce over time the number of homeless people who have no shelter”; to “ensure that homeless people have access to an integrated service system that meets their immediate needs and that leads to opportunities for connecting with and participating as part of the community” and to respond to public intoxication<sup>6</sup>.

## Underpinning Assumptions and Program Logic

The primary assumptions underpinning the R2H strategy are set out below:

- a. There is a need for an extension of services to accommodate the complex needs of homeless people; and,
- b. R2H is based on the belief that individuals, families and communities who have complex and multiple needs are better served by a service delivery system that is better linked or ‘joined-up’.

These objectives are articulated in the Program Logic statement developed to guide the formation of the initiative and its implementation. The Program Logic has also served as a framework for the subsequent evaluation components.

## Scope and Scale of the Report

A comprehensive evaluation of the R2H Project has been commenced with responsibility for various components falling to the Department of Housing and Department of Communities in accordance with core service roles and capabilities. Supplementing the evaluation process is this Place-Based Network Analysis and Case Study sub-evaluation. This evaluation provides additional data on the level of integration achieved within and across programs and is oriented to gaining insights into the integration models and practices adopted.

This report provides the findings in relation to case studies conducted at Brisbane, Gold Coast and Townsville. In particular it:

- Undertakes place-based network analyses and case studies that focus on key outcomes achieved in relation to coordination and service system improvements; and

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<sup>6</sup> Queensland Government (2005): Responding to Homelessness, Brisbane.

- Provides the following primary evaluation:
  - Impact on the existing crisis accommodation service system in Brisbane of the new Roma House service and HPIQ
  - Service Hub facilitation and integration of existing and new elements in the Gold Coast service system
  - Linkages between public intoxication and homelessness services funded under the Strategy in Townsville
  - Comparisons of early intervention and prevention services implemented in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Townsville
- Provides suggestions for improvements to enhance service delivery and integration.

As well as meeting the above primary evaluation objectives, the report also presents findings in relation to research questions that are specific to each case study. These are presented in each separate case study report.

## Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The methodological approach comprising data collection instruments and analytical process has been designed specifically to meet the evaluation requirements. In formulating the methodology, the Evaluation Team has liaised strongly with departmental personnel (Strategic Evaluation and Research, Public Intoxication and Homelessness) as well as with key community based service providers.

The *Place-Based Network Analysis and Case Study* evaluation methodology adopts a mixed methods approach drawing on network analysis and case studies. The application of a network analysis component in the research design aims to develop an evaluation model that maps, measures and assesses the level of integration within and between selected initiatives working to redress homelessness. The application of a network approach in the evaluation process determines the impact of current structures, strategies and systems on the homelessness service system. The network analysis was conducted at three of the key locations where investment occurred: Brisbane, Townsville and the Gold Coast.

Through the use of a purpose designed case study pro forma the evaluation project provides a suite of case studies that unpack, interrogate and analyse homelessness and integration initiatives. Specifically, the case studies provide an in-depth qualitative view of the selected service initiatives and their outcomes, highlight examples of innovative practice and identify the level of interconnection within the service system, as well as factors that have impacted on the achievement of these outcomes.

The project was structured and executed around three core stages: (1) Evaluation Design and Initial Data Collection, (2) Network Data Analysis and Case Development and (3) Integration, Learning and Reporting.

## Evaluation design and initial data collection phase

### Data collecting instruments

Data collection for this evaluation consisted of three main sources:

#### Semi structured interviews

Interviews were conducted with providers from the three selected evaluation sites — Brisbane, Gold Coast and Townsville. The interviews consisted of a set of core questions administered across all three sites. This approach was supplemented by additional questions designed to tap into the particular characteristics of the sites. Interview questions were designed to gain information on the purpose and operation of the initiatives, perceived benefits and barriers as well as the perceived level of connection between agencies.

An additional set of questions were included in the interview process designed specifically to gain an understanding of the role, implementation and impact of the early intervention programs across each of the case study sites and in Townsville the level of involvement of public intoxication initiatives in the homelessness service system.

In addition to the service provider agency respondents, Regional Managers and key personnel from each of the Regional sites were interviewed. The Regional Managers' interviews, while drawing on a similar suite of questions, focused on gaining insights into the models and impacts of higher level integration processes in each Region.

A novel feature of the interviews was that often single interviewees invited colleagues to participate in responding to the questions. These multiple perspectives added strength to the findings as they verify and extend information presented.

#### Questionnaire/linkage survey

In addition to the interviews, respondents were asked to complete a short questionnaire to solicit extra background information on the demographics of the participating organisations, the nature of their work as well as perceptions of how agencies link with others in the service system. Embedded within the questionnaire was a Linkage Survey to capture the relational or linkage data necessary to construct the network analysis component of the evaluation. The selected integration variables of shared information, shared resources, joint programs and planning, and referrals (in and out) provide the basis for building the network maps<sup>7</sup>. The data generated from the Linkage Survey provides evidence of the level of connection (integration) between selected initiatives and the broad service system.

#### Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted with key informants in each of the three evaluation sites. Key informants were identified as those persons (including existing R2H providers) nominated as having broad service sector experience and knowledge. The focus groups were directed at gaining an understanding of homelessness services or the sector generally, as well as a more detailed insight into the R2H program and its impacts.

<sup>7</sup> Provan, K. and Milward, H., 1995, Preliminary Theory of Network Effectiveness: A Comparative Study of Four Community Mental Health Systems *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25 (2): 200-225.  
Provan, K. and Milward, H., 2001, Do Networks Really Work? A Framework for Evaluating Public-Sector Organizational Networks *Public Administration Review* 61 (4): 414-423

Difficulties in securing participants resulted in departmental personnel being included in focus groups alongside of community sector representatives. The views of government representatives unable to participate in focus groups were captured through interviews that mostly took the form of mini-focus group with two to five respondents.

Focus groups were conducted using a standard schedule of questions and were approximately one hour in duration.

Interviews and focus group sessions both followed a set administrative format including:

- Introduction and background to the evaluation
- Overview of QUT ethical requirements (emphasis on confidentiality) and participants provided with a consent form to sign as an indication of agreement to participate; and
- Permission sought to audio record the interview/focus group process; summary of transcripts offered to respondents for verification and/or amendment.

**Table 1: Overview of Evaluation Data Bank**

Method	Key Focus	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
		HPIQ & Roma House (Crisis Accommodation) Service Hubs	Gold Coast Service Hub	Townsville Public Intoxication & Homelessness Services	Early Intervention Townsville, Gold Coast and Brisbane
Semi-structured Interview	Purpose & function of initiatives, innovations, service level & regional coordination, impacts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Questionnaire/ Linkage Survey	Organisational demographics Actual flow/exchange of information, resources, referrals	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focus Group	Overall service system background, impact & integration of initiatives, differentiation and alternative approaches	✓	✓	✓	✓
Documentation	Policy, historical & evaluation information	✓	✓	✓	✓

This array of data gathering mechanisms has allowed for results to be ‘triangulated’ with the findings of one research tool testing and confirming the results of the others.

By its conclusion the study had involved:

- Preparation meetings with Department of Communities Strategic Evaluation Personnel; Homelessness Steering Group meetings
- Individual interviews with key departmental informants from the Departments of Communities (Public Intoxication, Homelessness) and Housing;
- Three focus groups — one in each of the identified case sites — were conducted with an average of eight people per focus group;

- Interviews were conducted involving fifty five people.
- In total more than eighty five people provided insights and information to the evaluation process and results.

### Data analysis

The evaluation data gathering approach generated a broad suite of data. The analysis of the data was undertaken using two approaches:

#### Thematic analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the qualitative data generated. Themes were derived at two levels — (1) the case question level and (2) more nuanced themes emerging from a deeper analysis. Issues raised and reported upon in the findings relate to themes that were raised consistently across the data source groups; or which presented as critical to individual respondents.

#### Network maps and metrics

The data generated by the Linkage Survey was collated and subjected to a process of network analysis. Network analyses were performed using the Ucinet software. The network analysis produced two data sets: network maps and network metrics. The network maps provide a visual overview or snapshot of the structure of the system under examination. However, the map only provides part of the data. Network metrics, mathematical calculations, make it possible to gain deeper insight into the actual texture and operation of the system.

The three key network metrics applied to the R2H evaluation included:

- **Density** — measures the number of connections compared to the total number of possible connections. The higher the density ratio the higher the level of cohesion within the network. Cohesion is an important indicator of collective action towards achieving outcomes. Density values range from 0 to 1; the closer the score is to 1 the higher is the level of connection.
- **Centrality** — degree to which network activity is centred on one or a few actors (the core) providing insights on where influence and power may be concentrated, blockages and patterns of information flow. The centralisation score is expressed as a percentage and can vary from 0 (every member is connected to every other member) to 100 (all members connected to only one member). A high centralisation score indicates that some members have many more connections than others<sup>8</sup>.
- **Average Path Distance** — is a measure of the number of steps that it takes to navigate through a system. It can indicate how quickly information can spread; how easy it is to access resources, engage in planning and programming activity or make referrals. Reachability is often used as a proxy indicator of efficiency.

The network analysis component draws from the above suite of 'maps and measures' to inform the analysis of agency interconnection.

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<sup>8</sup> High indegree centralization would indicate that a small number of members are consulted by the rest of the members. High outdegree centralization would indicate that a small number of members do most of the consulting of others.

## Limitations of the methodology

### Questionnaires and focus groups

The initial shortened time lines for the evaluation and the associated need to condense the interview and focus group administration into a four week period presented some difficulties in terms of accessing a number of key respondents, especially within the government sector, for the focus group sessions. This difficulty was partly overcome by additional interviews being undertaken. Many of these interviews included multiple respondents and as a result formed 'mini focus groups'.

The complex and widespread nature of the R2H strategy also presented some problems in both the interview and focus group sessions, as a number of respondents were unaware of their involvement in the strategy. This situation was most noticeable in the Townsville case study site.

### Network analysis

**Response rate:** Network analysis relies on a high response rate to generate accurate maps and metrics. Without a good response rate, there will be linkage gaps and the data may not be sufficient to undertake a useful analysis.

Each case site generated a large number of agencies and connections. However not all of these links were able to be verified due to the difficulty experienced in obtaining responses from all participants. Nevertheless, the data collected was derived from key agencies within each of the service systems. This, coupled with the overall good quality of the data allows it to be reported on with a high degree of confidence.

The initial Linkage Survey design included a value metric to ascertain the overall level of value of each of the linkage variables to the service system. After trialling the instrument it was found that some respondents were unable to answer the questionnaire with this added level of detail. Accordingly, the decision was made to remove the value metric from the Linkage Survey. The effect of this has been to limit the nuances of connections and the relative importance and dynamics of the exchanges between agencies. It is recommended that future network analysis should include a value measure to enable more detailed analysis to occur and be reported upon.

## Network Analysis — Further Considerations

Although network analysis offers many advantages in terms of uncovering and assessing the structure and operation of the homelessness service systems, it should be used carefully, wisely and with correct intent.

**Privacy of Respondents:** Network maps and metrics provide strong visual images of the connections and disconnections within a system. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the display of names within network maps to respect respondents' rights and adhere to ethical standards<sup>9</sup>. In this evaluation report two sets of network data have been provided, one with names displayed and the second without. Given that network analysis has often been applied to uncover broad patterns and structures, such anonymous results often spark more useful dialogue.

<sup>9</sup> Borgatti, S. and Molina, J., 2003, Ethical and Strategic Issues in Organizational Social Network Analysis, *Journal of Applied Behavioural Sciences* 39 (3): 337-349; Kadushin, C., 2005, Who Benefits from Network Analysis: Ethics of Social Network Research, *Social Connections* 27 (2): 139-153.

**Snapshot in time:** Since service systems are constantly evolving it is important in presenting the results of network analysis that it is stressed that it is a 'snap shot' in time of the relations and that any relationships, connections and structures may have changed.

**Benchmarks:** All networks and systems are unique. Consequently, there are no 'right' or 'correct' patterns or metrics that can be used to gauge effectiveness. Furthermore, the context in which networks are located will have an impact on how they operate and the types and levels of connection emerging. The coupling of other methodologies, particularly qualitative case studies, is argued to value add and 'turbo charge'<sup>10</sup> the network results by providing deeper insights and rationales for the patterns.

The maps and measures made possible through network analysis offer a different and important approach to understanding and assessing systems and their operation. However, it is important to appreciate that while they can help to answer some questions about the structure and performance of a network, the real goal of network analysis is to prompt good questions that stimulate genuine and informed dialogue and planning. Sense-making workshops are useful tools in which the results of this network analysis can be provided to the respondents for their interpretation. A key question to be considered in this evaluation's context is "Does the systems structure support its stated purpose?" Sense making workshops in which the results of the network analysis are provided to the respondents or the recipients of the evaluation are an effective mechanism to value-add the network results.

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<sup>10</sup> Rogers, E., 1997, Problems and Prospects for Network Research: Investigating Relationships in the Age of Electronic Communication Technologies, *Social Networks* 9: 285-310.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

### Integration

#### Introduction

Homelessness is a complex issue and one that has resisted attempts to resolve it through narrow programs that lead to competition between service providers for scarce resources and service recipients 'falling through the cracks'. Governments at all levels together with non-government organisations currently emphasise the need for integrated approaches to policy development and service delivery. The intractability of homelessness has proved beyond the capacity of individual agencies to resolve and more limited attempts at integration have failed to make inroads into addressing the problem. The current domain differs from prior responses in that it brings a whole-of-government and-community perspective to the problem.

There is broad consensus that increasing the level of service system integration should lead to improved client outcomes. System integration can be defined broadly as the provision of services with high levels of coordination, communication, trust, and respect among service agencies so that they are better able to work together to achieve common objectives.

Reasons for integrating services include improving program efficiency, alleviating a scarcity of resources, correcting inadequacies, improving access to comprehensive services and achieving system reform. The goals of service integration are, first, to attain a better match between clients' needs and the services provided, and second, to create a more coordinated and responsive system. Goals can therefore be oriented toward making minor improvements in the service system, while others, such as the goals of R2H, look to and require a new services paradigm.

A review of the integration literature reveals that there are a number of models and frameworks for integration that help guide design and analysis<sup>11</sup>. These look to differentiate levels of integration based on activities and effort. Keast et al<sup>12</sup> have extended this model to include an emphasis on different relational strengths as indicators of integration strength as well as purpose. Their Integration Continuum is set out in Figure 1 (see over).

<sup>11</sup> Konrad, E. L. ,1996, A Multi-dimensional Framework for Conceptualising Human Services Integration Initiatives, in J.M. Marquart & E.L. Konrad (eds) *Evaluating Initiatives to Integrate Human Services. New Directions for Evaluation* San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Waldfoegel, J.,1997, The New Wave of Service Integration, *Social Service Review* 71 (3): 463-484; Fine, M. ,2001, The New South Wales Demonstration Projects on Integrated Community Care, in M.P. Mandell (ed) *Getting Results Through Collaboration: Networks and Network Structures for Public Policy and Management*,Westport,CA. Quorum Books  
<sup>12</sup> Keast, R., Brown, K. and Mandell, M. ,2007, Getting the Right Mix: Unpacking Integration Meanings and Strategies, *International Public Management Journal* 10 (1): 9-33

**Figure1 Integration Continuum**

Integration Continuum		
← COOPERATIVE	COORDINATIVE	COLLABORATIVE →
Low trust — unstable relations	Medium trust — based on prior relations	High trust — stable relations
Infrequent communication flows	Structured communication flows	Thick communication flows
Known information sharing	'Project' related and directed information sharing	Tactic information sharing
Adjusting actions	Joint projects, joint funding, joint policy	Systems change
Independent/autonomous goals	Semi-independent goals	Dense interdependent relations and goals
Power remains with organisation	Power remains with organisations	Shared power
Resources — remain own	Shared resources around project	Pooled, collective resources
Commitment and accountability to own agency	Commitment and accountability to own agency and project	Commitment and accountability to the network first
Relational time frame requirement — short term	Relational time frame medium term — often based on prior projects	Relational time frame requirement — long term 3-5 years

Source: Keast & Brown, 2003; Keast et al 2007

The central message of this framework is that there are different levels of integration and these lie on a continuum from loosely to fully integrated and integration mechanisms range from cooperation, through to coordination and collaboration. Each of the '3C's has merit and application. However, based on the framework, the key to implementing successful integration is to be clear on the purpose of the integration, and build the system 'fit-for-purpose'. The reason for this is that a mismatch of integration level not only increases the costs of interactions and integration mechanisms but also can limit the attainment of effective results.

If what is required is about members knowing about each others' services and the sharing of information, then cooperative efforts will be fruitful and sufficient. Likewise, if the goal is to do the same activities more efficiently through a better alignment of resources and effort, then coordination is the appropriate integration level. In general, the bulk of activity within the service system can be dealt with using cooperation and coordination. However, if the problems are intractable or there is a crisis, both of which require a fundamental systems change, then collaboration is needed.

The Integration Continuum is used as the central analytical framework against which the network and qualitative case study results, with respect to integration, were assessed.

## Integration: Network Analysis

As noted previously a core element of the evaluation was the application of network analysis to ascertain the level of connection and cohesion of the service systems in the three case study sites. While the network analysis results cannot be used to directly compare the cases, it does provide some important insights into their structure, operation and performance. Furthermore, it can help to make some overall assessments of the sector in terms of its purpose and current condition.

Overall, the network data has shown the three case study sites to have quite different structures and relational patterns. Drawing from the case studies it is evident that these different structures are (a) affected by individual operating contexts and (b) will impact on the type of activities and level of integration required.

With respect to the Brisbane case site, the network analysis has depicted a service sector with several core areas of service clustering supported by a more loosely connected meshing of organisations. The size of the Brisbane service sector and the existence of two service hubs with the express purpose of linking services partly explain the structure and level of connection in this case site. Nonetheless, it was expected that a more overall dense pattern of connection would have been evident.

Townsville displays a different linkage topology characterised by a dominant grouping of predominantly 'older' and embedded agencies and overall a relatively sparse level of connection.

The Gold Coast maps and metrics highlight and support the stronger level of connection expected of a region with a history of ongoing structural and relational interaction.

The Referrals In/Out variable was telling for all case sites with a high level of activity evident. Such a large amount of activity points clearly to a system under strain as agencies try to locate services and resources for clients. The resultant average path distance (the number of steps taken for a referral) of 2+ for the three cases re-enforces the stress on the system and highlights the additional work that must be undertaken to secure a referral. While the average path distance exhibited in each of the case studies is reasonable for the size of the systems, they do present some concern as research elsewhere highlights a general reluctance of people to persist beyond two steps for assistance<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting, yet unsurprising, to note the thinning of connection or interaction in terms of shared resources and shared planning and programming, with the Gold Coast the only area with a level of consistency across all variables. That is, as the level of commitment and effort required increased, the level of interaction decreased. This indicates that overall the service system is at an early stage of integration, with pockets of tighter action evident around some key variables and issues.

When these findings are applied against the relational and linkage characteristics outlined in Figure 1, it can be argued that cooperative and coordinative relationships form the primary basis of the integration approach and patterns. The Gold Coast represents a system that has the level of relational maturity to demonstrate collaborative integration on any extended basis. This is not to say that there are not examples of collaborative effort elsewhere, but rather that these are isolated and often not sustained.

Overall there is evidence that stronger integration is required. However, this integration should be more purposeful and follow a more focussed design and application. That is, the level of integration and the associated strengths of connecting relationships should be much more closely aligned to a strategic intent for each area. Work undertaken by Provan and Sebastian<sup>14</sup> also confirms that integration modes should reflect the purpose of the program, and add that there is benefit in an array of clustered activities around particular issues underpinned by loosely coupled elements. This, they argue provides for residual strength in the system. Other network evaluations have highlighted the importance of an administrative core or body around which agencies can coalesce and through which action can be mobilised<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Cross, R, Thomas, B Dutra, A. and Newbury, A., 2007, Using Network Analysis to Build a New Business, *Organizational Dynamics* 36 (4): 345-362.

<sup>14</sup> Provan, K. and Sebastian, J. 1998, Network within Networks: Service Link Overlap, Organizational Cliques and Network Effectiveness, *Academy of Management Journal* 41 (4): 453-463.

<sup>15</sup> Provan, K. and Milward, H., 1995, Preliminary Theory of Network Effectiveness: A Comparative Study of Four Community Mental Health Systems *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25 (2): 200-225

The point is that there is no one 'ideal' integration model and that work must be undertaken to determine what is required in each individual setting and build the response 'fit-for-purpose'<sup>16</sup>.

The network analysis results (both the maps and metrics) have provided interesting and important insights into the level and types of connection in each of the sites. They have distilled the particular operating structures for each, highlighted critical points of connection and disconnection and demonstrated clustering habits around different variables. As stressed previously, the real value of network analysis in this evaluation is that in providing this information more relevant questions and considerations of the service systems can now be asked.

## Integration mechanisms

As it has evolved the Queensland homelessness service system has come to be made up of a diverse range of programs, services and initiatives spread across the three layers of government as well as the non government or community sector. The inclusion of the R2H initiatives has added to the mix and complexity of this system. Integration mechanisms are defined as the programs, processes and systems that serve to link together the various parts of the systems at different levels of operation. As befits the size and complexity of the three service systems under study, a wide array of integration devices have been developed and applied at the client, service and system level of action.

The integration devices in place at the case/client level that have proven to be most effective include case management, the HHOT initiative, brokerage funds and resources at the disposal of the front-line worker.

At the service level, inter-agency meetings and arrangements, co-location of services, single point for intake and assessment, a networked relational approach, coordination or consolidation of programs and a Memorandum of Understanding have been identified as providing links between agencies. A more comprehensive management information system, including a vacancy data base and 'people' oriented data sets to inform the sectoral service planning, were identified as missing elements at this level. In addition, processes that allowed for more flexible and pooled funding approaches for services were called for.

At the system level, integration mechanisms have largely taken a vertical format driven by government through formalised committees and task forces. It has been apparent that in most sites, these formalised integration devices have been less than successful as many have shifted their focus from homelessness to other priority issues. These have been less than successful as membership has lost focus and become out of touch and no longer engages vertically throughout the entire system. With a few exceptions, e.g. the Regional Managers' Coordination Network in the Gold Coast and the Responding to Homelessness Reference Group, these have remained within the boundaries of the government and have not been inclusive of community organisations.

Where the institutional integration arrangements have deliberately and genuinely involved the community sector, stronger and more sustained commitment and effort has evolved. The Gold Coast provides an excellent example of this high level connection. Such a model, as well as building good will and coalescing knowledge, expertise and resources to the issue, it offers a strong level of integration purchase and leverage that can be directed to addressing homelessness.

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<sup>16</sup>Keast, R., Brown, K. and Mandell, M., 2007, *Getting the Right Mix: Unpacking Integration Meanings and Strategies*, *International Public Management Journal* 10 (1): 9-33

Taken together, these integration mechanisms establish a range of 'place' and 'space' based initiatives that have improved access to services and provide links between various stages and locations on the homelessness intervention pathway. The evaluation's observation is that the integration mechanisms are requisite to the level of integration sought. All of the integration mechanisms have merit and serve to link together client needs, resources and effort. Some, because of the level of dialogue that has gone into their implementation, have led to a better articulation of the roles and capacities of services, thus helping to 'smooth over' tensions and turf stakes. This is not to say that attention should not be directed to for example, the assessment and referral processes and adding to the brokerage fund allocation.

However, by far, the most central and valuable integration mechanism, especially in terms of horizontal efforts, is the relationships that have been forged over time by workers. The reliance on relationship between workers and agencies is most prevalent and embedded within the non-government sector. It is acknowledged as 'the glue that binds' them into collective action and which allows them to work together to meet client needs. The social capital generated by these relationships allows for more coherent and collective action within groups as well as affords links to other agencies for additional resources and support. Both bonding and bridging social capital are considered vital to the effective operation of a service system. It must be re-enforced that this social capital is the property of the community sector and should not be used instrumentally, tool, to meet government goals and priorities.

In essence, what is called for is a transformation of service systems rather than changes by one organisation or change at the peripheries of the system. Such governance innovation<sup>17</sup> in the Queensland context, would necessarily involve both the government and non government sectors in a genuine partnership that is characterised by shared information, power, resources and decision making around agreed levels of interaction. Introducing governance innovation into the homelessness service system would improve the level of knowledge, expertise and resources brought to bear on the problem. Furthermore, it would serve to reduce the costs of overlap, lack of common purpose and a spread of commitment foci.

A relational approach to integration has long been held to be an appropriate model in complex and multi-faceted systems<sup>18</sup>. However, for this to work and be sustained there is a need to build and maintain relationships. The development of such relational capital does not occur overnight or by magic. It requires a considerable investment in time, funding, resources and effort. Government would be wise to genuinely consider this element and provide both sectors with adequate capacity, reflected especially in funding and timelines, to enable relationships to develop. As Keast et al<sup>19</sup> and others<sup>20</sup> have stressed it takes up to 3 years to build trust and relational capacity. There are a number of strategies and approaches that allow for relationship building to be 'fast tracked'. Indeed, in this regard the human services sector could learn from other industries such as construction and implement workshops and other mechanisms that bring people to the same table, secure engagement and commitment to joint working, as well as establish the terms of engagement for this to occur.

<sup>17</sup> Moore, M. and Hartley, J., 2008, Innovations in Governance, *Public Management Review* 10 (1): 3-20

<sup>18</sup> Chisholm, R., 1989, *Coordination Without Hierarchy: Informal Structures in Multi-organizational Systems*, Berkley: University of California Press.

<sup>19</sup> Keast, R., Mandell, M., Brown, K and Woolcock, G., 2004, *Network Structures: Working Differently and Changing Expectations* *Public Administration Review*

<sup>20</sup> Annie Casey Foundation (undated)

## System integration

A positive feature of R2H was the whole-of-government approach that extended the number of government departments previously not directly involved in the delivery and policy for homeless people. The adoption of this more holistic approach enabled a better overall understanding of homelessness, including the unintended impacts non-integrated policy and action can have. The exclusion of Disability Services Queensland was noted as an important gap in the chain. Despite the formal involvement of these departments it is instructive to note that many do not feature prominently or otherwise in the network analysis findings.

At the systems level there were a number of formalised processes and mechanisms put in place to coordinate the development and implementation of R2H. Overwhelmingly within the government sector these mechanisms failed to deliver any sustained level of oversight or direction. Within the government arena R2H was coordinated by a largely vertical process which relied on formalised meetings and working groups ranging in order of seniority and authority from the Chief Executive Officers' Sub-Committee on Homelessness (with reference to public intoxication), Senior Officers' Group on Homelessness (reporting to the CEOs), State Homelessness CBRC Implementation Steering Committee (Departments of Housing, Communities and Health). Together, these committees provided a level of coordination at the strategic level of operation but were distant from the more 'grounded' involvement offered by the Regional Managers' Coordination Networks.

Regional Managers' Coordination Networks (RMCN) were responsible for implementing and monitoring R2H within their area of jurisdiction. However, as was identified there was not real consistency of approach, level of assumed responsibility or focus with some RMCNs identifying homelessness as a 'high priority for action', while others addressed it as a 'standing agenda item at bi-monthly meetings or dealt with it as part of a Joint Management Group. The affect of the later, it has been contended, have been a loss of focus on homelessness as a core and important work. Conversely, the Gold Coast model, which activity engages with the non-government sector to develop local responses, presents as a way forward for sustained focus and committed action. Respondents were largely silent on the contribution of the Reference Group, other than to say that ...

Local Level Agreements were presented by government respondents as a useful instrument for clarifying roles and information sharing. The non-government respondents, with the exception of Townsville, largely discounted these initiatives. The employment of Public Space Coordinators to facilitate cross-government connection as seen as working against the R2H goal of whole-of-community integration.

## R2H Outcomes and Impact on Client Pathways

Integration and new services have provided a strong foundation to an overall improvement to the homelessness service system, especially in those locations addressed specifically in the R2H response.

New service models have added depth to the array of services and support previously available to clients. These new service models, which cross an array of areas including housing and support, early intervention, service and referral hubs, health outreach teams and court diversion, relieve some of the pressure experienced by existing services with limited intervention options. In doing so, the new services shift the intervention focus from predominantly a crisis orientation and have offered existing SAAP based services additional resources and support to better meet the needs of homeless people with complex and multiple needs.

Within this suite of new initiatives the Health Homelessness Outreach Teams have had a very positive impact, not just because of the additional resources brought to the sector, but because of the linking capacity the mobile model offers to both clients and services. Working with clients in their own locations offers an important additional service dimension, especially to more vulnerable clients and those less willing to present to 'formal' intervention sites.

Likewise, the service hubs, in their various operational models, have provided a coalescing point for clients and service support that was previously dispersed and lacked a client centric approach. In the Brisbane context, the presences of alternative hub models serves different client needs, and as such, are thought to be complementary. HPIQ has added a state-wide information and referral capacity to the service sector and acts as a 'first point of call' for many newly homeless or housing vulnerable people. The full potential of HPIQ has not been reached, with attention to the development of expanded service protocols, establishment of a vacancy data based and a more sustained role in service, program and systemic integration called for. Dedicated crisis accommodation facilities, such as Roma House, for complex needs clients, has helped to take pressure off existing housing facilities. The early intervention programs, while confined to selected locations, have also contributed strongly through their early and diversionary interventions (education and advocacy) as well as supporting interventions at critical stress points further along the homelessness intervention pathway. The ongoing economic and housing crisis is straining the ability of many of these new services to add value or to sustain some of their intervention achievements and goals.

Specific benefits for Public Intoxication were more difficult to discern as these projects and interventions were integrally connected with homelessness services generally. Where there has been noted value it has been at the point of contact by for example, Police Liaison officers and the Community Patrols who are in daily contact with homeless people and able to make the necessary connections to services.

The value to the sector through R2H's injection of funds has been widely acknowledged and appreciated. Nevertheless, there have been some negative experiences which have impacted on the overall quality of services and may limit the ability of the sector to better integrate. The overall lack of policy driving the R2H agenda and the limited engagement with the non government sector in its conceptualisation and rollout present as key inhibitors. Graphic examples of this position are the descriptions of R2H as a 'stream roller' event or a 'big fridge' being dropped on the sector. Furthermore, the complexity of the initiatives and the funding allocations made it difficult for some services to understand where they fitted into the 'big picture'; if in deed they did at all. This complexity, the spread of the initiatives and their allocations also seemed to complicate rather than simplify access for clients. The opportunity for advanced planning between new and existing services to identify overlaps and points of connection might have helped to alleviate fragmentation.

A key concern across all of the case sites was the tension caused by differential funding for new and old services as well as the higher level of funds provided to government agencies. The perception of such inequitable funding allocations created 'them and us' positions within the community sector and between the community and government sectors, which were hard to overcome, even with strong practice orientations in place. In effect, rather than creating the environment for integration and collective working this funding split generated competition between agencies.

The evaluation findings have demonstrated that overall there have been some positive gains made in better linking up services, people, resources and clients. Nevertheless, as the network analysis and case studies have found there remains some way to go before the service systems can be considered fully integrated, if, indeed, this is the correct goal.

A wide array of integration mechanisms are in place at a number of levels of operation to assist with the process of linking together the various elements. These appear to be working well and offer agencies vehicles to make connections and share resources and knowledge. They also help to 'smooth over' some of the more difficult service transactions for example through the provision of brokerage assistance. As noted above the infusion of more planning, particularly within and across sector planning would greatly aid in rounding off some of the sharp edges and allowing a smoother merging of effort and resources.

As previously noted, the strongest and most prominent linkage mechanism in place within all three case sites is the relationships between workers and agencies that have been forged over time and through the common experience of working in a difficult environment. These relationships are a form of social capital that enable workers to band together to achieve outcomes not possible alone (bonding) as well as make cross-agency and sector connection (bridging). Facilitated and nurtured through regular contact, network meetings and 'by chance' interactions such social or relational capital is the 'glue that binds' the sector together and which provides the foundations for work and integration. However, as has been noted previously this social capital is the property of the non-government sector actors and can not be borrowed on or used by the government sector without some significant contribution to ensure ongoing capability.

## Pathways

Enhanced and better connected services formed the driving objective of the R2H Strategy. In meeting this objective, better pathways linking the elements of the service system on the way to sustainable housing needed to be developed. Across all case studies there was agreement that the additional resources and attention coalescing around R2H has filled some of the gaps in service provision along the pathway and has thus assisted clients in their 'route to secure shelter'<sup>21</sup>.

There was evidence that despite gains achieved there remains gaps in service delivery and the support offered to those who are seeking sustained housing. R2H overall offered a way forward for services whose resources were stretched or could not be directed to providing assistance outside of set guidelines. Further, R2H invested in new services such as Hubs and HPIQ and new entrants into the service arena such as Red Cross.

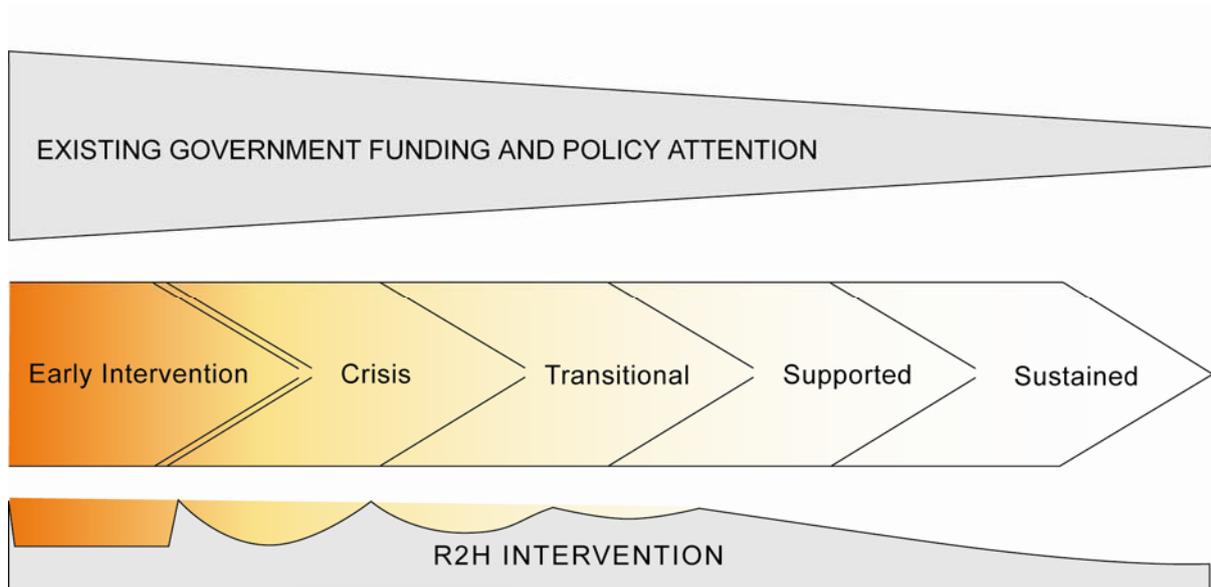
The introduction of new more accessible programs and services were also presented as a key conduit to the path toward more stable housing. The Health Housing Outreach Team (HHOT) was frequently cited as key to this process since they expanded the array of services to include a health focus — thus embedding clients within a continuum of care.

Overall the position is that R2H has helped to smooth over some of the gaps in service delivery options and importantly to 'make links to things that were previously not linked'. New services such as other early intervention services and programs including the Court Diversion Program and the Police Liaison workers not only added to the array of options available but offered the potential to reduce demands on services higher along the pathway.

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<sup>21</sup> Anderson, L. D. Tulloch. , 2000, *Pathways to Homelessness: A Review of the Research Evidence*. Edinburgh: Scottish Homes

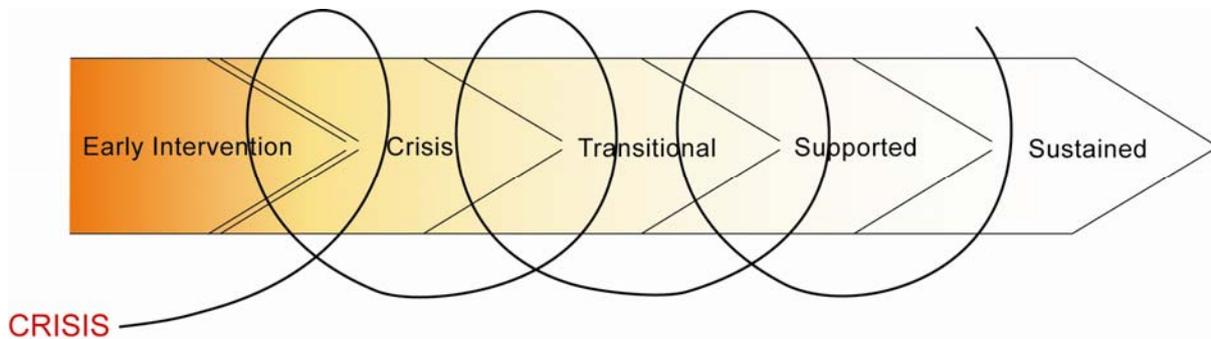
Figure 2 Current Homelessness and Intervention Pathway Overview



In reflecting on the concept of a pathway, a number of respondents raised concerns about the paucity of options available to people, particularly at the more resource intensive end of the service continuum. In particular there was wide spread and intense concern at the lack of attention to support and, especially the failure to address what was perceived as the real cause of homelessness, the lack of affordable housing. For some there was frustration that more innovative and imaginative initiatives have not been explored in this context or, in instances in which innovative responses were shown to work, that these had not been repeated. In this context, it was noted that government and community are working together but, with a few important exceptions, there is a noticeable absence of real estate and housing providers.

Moreover, it is apparent that without a strongly constructed pathway, with adequate services and support and a level of back up built in to catch people before the fall through the gaps, clients will be subject to a mirror path resulting at best into a reversion to earlier stages on the intervention continuum and at worst spiralling back into homelessness. Either outcome serves to add additional pressure on the system and draws resources away from the sustainable end of the housing pathway. The effect of the 'shadow' pathway is depicted below.

Figure 3 Shadow Pathway



Overall, although R2H has made some strong inroads toward addressing homelessness in Queensland via extended services, this is just the beginning. It has been argued that in order to achieve service integration there has to be a shift from tinkering at the edges of the system to a more whole-sale adjustment or change in the current systems and the way organisations work.<sup>22</sup> This more large-scale and creative approach to integration is warranted in the homelessness arena.

## Innovations

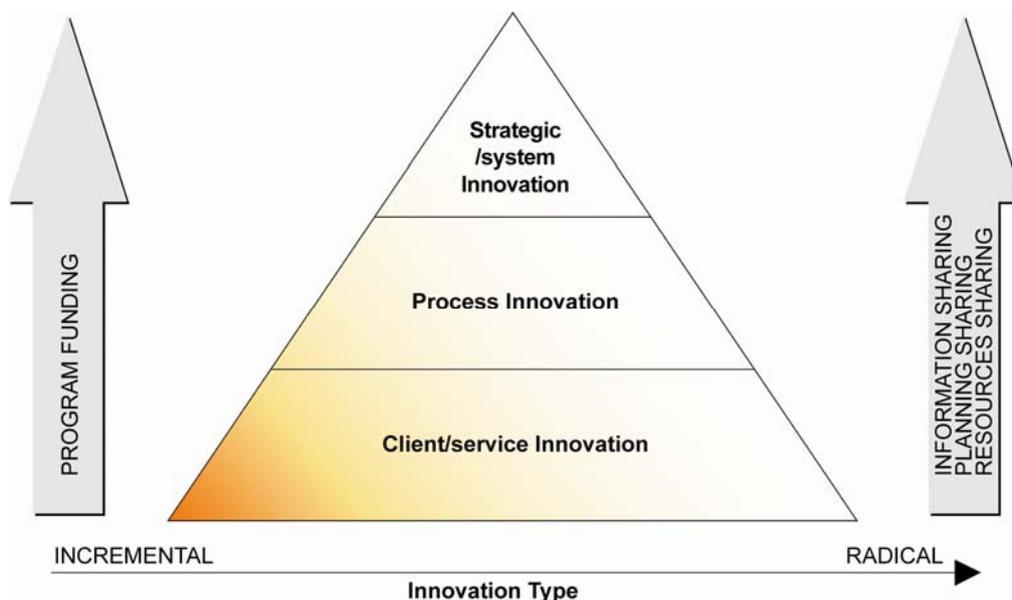
Over the past decade there has been a growing interest in the promotion and use of innovation as a means of improving performance. While the primary focus of innovation as a conduit to effectiveness, sustainability and competitive advantage has been directed primarily at the private sector, the value of innovation for the public and community sectors has not been ignored. As part of its change agenda the R2H strategy was looking for new and innovative ways to enhance and link up services and systems.

The case study findings in relation to innovation indicate that integrated innovation occurs within different spaces, for different purposes. The existence of innovation in different innovation spaces highlights that innovation is not just about the creation of new processes, programs and services. Rather, it can involve an array of activities and approaches that build on and extend existing services and structures. This incremental innovation is the main type of innovation found in the case studies.

The aim of R2H in terms of developing innovation in services, processes and systems and the impact of this on integration may have been too ambitious. This result is made evident in the lack of recognition of the community and government sector workers in articulating their work in an innovation context. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that innovation in a number of forms and levels can be identified.

As Figure 4 displays, these innovation types occur at the 1. client service, 2. process, and 3. strategic systems levels.

**Figure 4: Integration Innovation Spaces**



<sup>22</sup> Valenine, K. Fisher, K and C. Thompson, 2006, Making Integration Happen: The Families First Policy Experience, Child Abuse Review 15 (6): 414-428; Keast et al, 2007, Getting the Right Mix: Unpacking Integration Meanings and Strategies International Public Management Journal 10 (1): 9-33.

Importantly, it should be noted that the bulk of the innovation activity is occurring at the client service level. It is likely this outcome is a product of both the immediate need for creative service responses and the funding models that have allowed flexibility and space at the service delivery rather than the strategic level. It is possible this result reflects the funding intent which focused on incremental rather than large scale systems change. This result concurs with the findings of Walker et al's (2002) study of housing innovation in the UK which found that most innovation was evolutionary rather than revolutionary for the sector.

The evaluation has revealed that much of the innovation occurs through improvising with existing human, financial, knowledge and relational capital. This creative approach in 'making do' by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities is defined as bricolage<sup>23</sup>. In effect, the sectors are utilising bricolage to draw together and where necessary, reconfigure the existing resources to better meet demands. It is primarily at this service level that innovation is taking place. Rather than a sustained program that is comprehensively funded to develop innovative services, practices and approaches, what is in train is 'innovation on the run' developed in response to an absence of a fully developed and adequately resourced intervention pathway. This response is often in a context of crisis with the consequent shortened timeframes for action and a limited number of alternatives available.

The sector was much less involved at the process level of innovation. Where such initiatives were identified they appeared to be a result of longer term effort and higher level planning, often accompanied by a program champion. A key characteristic is the capacity to manage up while remaining linked at the grass roots level. Such program champions are defined here as 'enterprising individuals' who bring the requisite program resources, intellectual capital and bridging connections to bear on issues.

Less evident across all case studies were innovations at the strategic/systems level. In the Gold Coast case study there was horizontal and vertical strategic links forged, over time, which deliberately incorporated new actors into the strategic decision making and planning processes. This cross-fertilisation of personnel and expertise was innovative of itself and also contributed to strategic innovation the outcome of which is meshed knowledge and action being directed to the Gold Coast region. This sustained level of interaction was not a common feature of the other cases. Creating such an innovation space at the strategic level requires significantly more funding, joint planning and pooled resources. Furthermore, it is highly dependent on an ongoing commitment from all parties to bring the objectives to fruition. System innovation is derived from individuals who can see 'the big picture' and know the step to achieve this and have the capacity to mobilise people to collective action.

It is argued that together these elements create an innovation space to develop new processes and systems. From the insights generated from the case studies, coupled with the extant literature, it becomes apparent that for such innovative services, programs/process and systems to be developed and embedded takes time, commitment and targeted and adequate funding. Success of innovative endeavours relies on building relational capital between the parties. Innovation outcomes from the process and strategic systems level have been less than optimal and require the provision of a conceptual space to develop new initiatives, evaluate risk/reward and devise implementation strategies. For innovation to develop, thrive and be adopted there is a need for an adjustment in current practices and monitoring processes to encourage, adequately resource and make room for exploring, experimenting and correcting mistakes.

<sup>23</sup> Baker, T. and Nelson, R., 2005, *Creating Something from Nothing: Resource Construction Through Entrepreneurial Bricolage*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 50 (3): 329-366.

Government has a role in helping develop the capability and capacity to undertake these tasks. Moreover, government should invest in developing in-house capacity and commitment to innovate. While innovative individuals operating at the grass roots level are vital for the system to operate and adapt, innovation capacity remaining only at this level puts in jeopardy the ability to achieve process and systems change through innovation. The R2H program Logic needs to take account of innovation as part of the driver for innovation and integration of services. Currently, the program logic is silent on these issues.

Integration requires that there be changes to the existing system and it is clear that this is not going to happen without innovation at all three levels.

Figure 4 outlines the findings in relation to innovation in the homelessness service system. It summarises the way in which innovation should be considered as multi-faceted and operating at different levels. This reconceptualisation of service and system innovation draws out the distinction between levels of innovation and the effort and resources required to formulate requisite and sustained integration.

## Early Intervention

The results of the evaluation indicate there was a difficulty in developing an agreed understanding of what constitutes homelessness early Intervention as it was not systematically defined, or understood within the sector. The resultant uncertainty about what defined early intervention made it not only difficult to identify what it means, and should look like, but has resulted in confusion about what the program involves and how to operationalise this work. As a result there is confusion about who, then, should be involved in early intervention.

Further, the study indicates that homelessness early intervention workers frequently were not anchored within spheres of activity with their sole attention to the issues of vulnerable tenancies and often got drawn into the work of the host agency.

Many of the available services in the sector involved themselves in early intervention as this aspect often was entwined in the wider spectrum of work being undertaken. They perceived they were doing early intervention anyway as part of the mix and in this way, the “special program” status of early intervention was not recognised.

Nonetheless, there was strong support for the homelessness early intervention initiative. This support was based in both normative ‘it is the right thing to do’ positions and as a result of ‘evidence’. The homelessness early intervention workers have involved themselves in a wide array of program, service and support initiatives. In doing so, they are filling many of the gaps appearing in the intervention continuum. A ‘client focused’ approach, which often requires cross-agency working, has helped to make closer links to other services. Cross-case coordination is undertaken through vehicles such as inter-agency meetings or through more ad hoc opportunities as they emerge.

Those undertaking service provision within the sector have been stretched beyond capacity especially in relation to dealing with clients with complex needs. Indeed, the high levels of need and crisis at the ‘homeless’ end of the pathway has often meant that homelessness early intervention competed for attention.

## Public Intoxication

Public intoxication by itself is a serious social issue in Australia and one receiving increased attention. When combined with homelessness, together they form an intractable problem that is still in need of a satisfactory solution. One of the main issues identified from this study is that public intoxication is viewed by different actors differently as either a political, legal, health or social issue. The political influence into interventions addressing public intoxication often does not acknowledge the frequently accompanying issue of homelessness with the result that public intoxication is addressed with short term and immediate solutions whilst the underlying social problem of homelessness remains.

Despite these fractures in views of public intoxication, the agencies charged and funded with addressing the joint issues, as well as those agencies not formally involved, deal with them as almost undifferentiated problems. Intoxication is therefore viewed as being an additional dimension to deal with when aiding clients. As such, funding from R2H has largely been pooled into existing MPIP and, in the case of Townsville, used to employ additional resources that regularly visit local 'hot spots' to offer assistance. Added to this resource is the introduction of community patrols. These two initiatives allow for public intoxication, combined with homelessness, to be treated more as a health or social issue than being addressed as a legal infringement. This is an important, early step in providing holistic care to publicly intoxicated, homeless people and represents a shift along the integration continuum to one of greater coordination.

Greater coordination is also evident in the progress made towards more formal information sharing mechanisms between agencies and government departments such as Centrelink and Housing. Client confidentiality and consent has, however, been a major obstacle to overcome and continues to be complicated by the need to complete different confidentiality and consent forms for each agency and department. Coordination between agencies and government is further evidenced by the positive acceptance by agencies to the appointment of a government employee as public space coordinator in Townsville. The appointment was seen as a positive link between government and agencies as well as a legitimising influence in agency interventions. The subsequent disbandment of the position was met with considerable disappointment. Townsville service providers recognised that the success of this appointment may well have been a phenomenon particular to local political, topographic and demographic characteristics and that similar appointments elsewhere had not been as successful. It is possible that personality also acted as another contributing factor to the success of this position. Importantly, this again points to the need for integration and hub models to develop that are 'fit for purpose' so that they meet the particular needs of the area in which they are located.

Innovations addressing public intoxication and homelessness evidence the seamless way in which agencies deal with the combined issues as part of programs aimed at a wider target population. The housing screws program is open to all homeless persons and the arts events and workshops open to all indigenous, homeless persons. Combined within these programs, however, was a requirement that all participants blow 'zero'. Agencies involved in the roofing screws assembly commented that 'everyone that was coming through was an alcoholic'. There is therefore a conscious and concerted effort by all agencies to address the joint issues of substance abuse and homelessness under the broader umbrella of homelessness more generally.

The extent to which R2H funding has influenced this level of integration at the service level is difficult to establish as agencies appear to have always 'picked up the pieces' of dealing with alcohol-related issues combined with homelessness. What is evident from the findings is that R2H has enabled legitimisation of the issue as a social, rather than legal or political, issue and allowed some limited success in greater integration between government and service providers.

The establishment of a suitable hub model in Townsville, resourced and populated with the right 'personalities' will be critical to the success of future intervention programs. The hub will need to play an important role in brokering the relationships between government and agencies.

## Program logic

The findings from the case study suggest that the Program Logic, as it currently stands, is not adequate in that it does not fully address:

- Integration differentiation; and
- Innovation levels

In terms of conceptualising how the R2H was designed and structured to deliver on its aims and objectives the program logic consolidated integration as the linchpin for intervention. This was encapsulated in the following program logic or hypothesis: "that improved coordination and enhanced responses will lead to better service delivery; improvements in the lives of homeless people; increased community amenity; and will overtime, reduce the number of people in Queensland without access to shelter".

However, as the evaluation findings demonstrate the nuances for action around integration mean that there are varied and multiple degrees of integration. The Program Logic needs to take account of these nuances. Specifically, integration should not be seen as simply coordinating existing services but service linkage models should be built fit-for-purpose and thus may be tightly or loosely linked and integrated more either horizontally or vertically according to service and client requirements and the capacity of the region.

From the case study findings, innovation emerges as having the potential to occur at different levels dependent upon levels of funding and the extent to which program participants are willing to share knowledge, planning and resources (refer to Figure 4d). Innovation is therefore an interim outcome of the creative work undertaken by the sector to respond to homelessness. However, for the whole-of-system change that is required under the R2H initiative innovation must be present in and transcend each of the three levels. Yet, the program Logic is silent on innovation with the result that innovation is not consistently occurring across the client, program and strategic levels of operation.

# CASE STUDY 1 — IMPACT OF THE EXISTING CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICE SYSTEM IN BRISBANE OF ROMA HOUSE AND HPIQ

## Background

Inner city Brisbane has long been a congregating point for homeless people. In earlier times delivering accommodation was a relatively straight forward undertaking provided through a hostel or private boarding facilities. Over time, as the nature and causes of homelessness have become more complex and intertwined, the ability to respond has become more challenging. Homelessness is no longer just about being without accommodation. It is now recognised that a cocktail of issues blended together often lead to and entrench homelessness. Financial problems, relationship problems such as domestic violence and family disruption, sexual assault, substance misuse, mental and physical illness can all play a role in the path toward homelessness. Moreover, many of the people presenting for housing assistance experience multiple problems. These individual factors interact with and are further compounded by broader policy decisions (e.g. deinstitutionalisation; urban redevelopment) and structural causes such as the decreasing housing market and economic downturn<sup>24</sup> and are exposing people previously protected to the vulnerabilities of homelessness.

There have been many attempts to respond to and address homelessness and significant funds and efforts have been directed to this purpose. This contribution has been evident across the three levels of government and also within the community sector. The end result has been a largely ad hoc accumulation of funding regimes, programs and initiatives, generally delivered through a single agency approach. Various attempts have been made to coordinate these often disparate entities into a more integrated service model. Indeed, periodically there has been some measure of success in bringing together the various actors via mechanisms such as cross-government meetings, inter-agency meetings, networks and various protocols and plans. These coordination efforts, while making some inroads to alleviate problems, have largely failed to halt the continuing and expanding issue of homelessness.

During the early 2000s the need for a more coordinated response to homelessness in inner Brisbane was again highlighted in a number of independent research studies<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, there were calls for new approaches to working based on more holistic 'joined-up' service models and a more comprehensive policy agenda. Ongoing emphasis on the issue of homelessness and related problems such as public intoxication brought homelessness to a higher level of attention and provided an opportunity for a more concerted attack on homelessness. In June 2005, the Queensland government committed \$235.52M to the Responding to Homelessness Strategy. This whole-of-government approach sought to extend existing services and develop new and innovative models. Specifically the aim of the strategy was to "create an integrated homelessness service system and to reduce, over time, the number of people who are completely without shelter by enhancing existing, and implementing new initiatives, responding to homelessness and public intoxication"<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Eardley, T., 2008, The Impact of SAAP Homelessness Services on Client Self-Reliance *SPRC Newsletter* 99 (July) 8-10; Healy, K. and Gal, I., 2007, Homelessness to Home, Micah Projects Inc.;

<sup>25</sup> Walsh, P., 2003, More Than Just a Roof: A Study of Family Homelessness in Queensland; QUT.

Department of Communities, 2008, Brisbane Region Sub Regional Service Integration (SRSI) Project, Brisbane.

<sup>26</sup> Queensland Government, 2005, Responding to Homelessness

The inner Brisbane new initiatives included Roma House Crisis Accommodation, Homeless Persons Information Queensland (HPIQ) and the Information and Referral Service Hubs – HART 4000 and the Brisbane Homelessness Service Centre (BHSC). There was particular interest in establishing a strong pattern of connection and integration between the four cornerstone projects – Homeless Persons Information Queensland (HPIQ), Roma House (crisis accommodation) and the two Service Hubs.

The primary focus of this case study is on examining:

- a. The introduction of the new Roma House service providing crisis accommodation for people with complex needs, and its impact on the existing Brisbane crisis accommodation service system, and
- b. The role of HPIQ in facilitating and coordinating the Brisbane crisis accommodation service system and engagement with Brisbane Service Hubs to assist people with homeless needs.

In doing so the study undertakes an analysis of the mechanisms and connections that may integrate services across the service system through place-based network mapping and identifying from interviews with service providers the critical issues in responding to homelessness under the R2H strategy.

## Homelessness Service Integration: Place Based Network Analysis

A central focus of this evaluation is on gaining a more detailed understanding of the level and nature of the connections between the Brisbane service sector organisations and, in particular, the role the four new services play in this integration. Service integration has been hard to prove and has often relied solely on the subjective experiences of service providers and/or recipients. Such a view, while beneficial overlooks the tangible properties of the underlying structure of relations present in a service system. This evaluation uses network analysis as a core methodology to uncover the hidden and often opaque patterns of connection between agencies and makes an assessment on the level of integration occurring.

### Network Analysis

Network Analysis is an empirical tool to map, measure and examine social structures on the basis of the multiple relationships between entities such as organisations. Uncovering the topology of the sets of relations and connections allows a clearer understanding of the interaction dynamics (how it works), the level of connection (how it is integrated) and provides insights into how such patterns might predict action and performance.

Using the data generated by the Linkage Survey, (Section Two of the Questionnaire) a set of network maps were constructed to demonstrate the extent to which agencies in the Brisbane homelessness service sector are connected to others through the service ties of shared information, joint funding and planning, shared resources and referrals in/out. This set of variables has been selected because the variables represent the types of linkage activities necessary for integration to occur and have been used previously in network-based integration evaluation<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Provan, K.G., Veazie, M.A., Staten, L.K., Teufel-Shone, N.I., 2005, The Use of Network Analysis to Strengthen Community Partnerships. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), 603 – 613.

Milward, B. and Provan.K. 1998, Measuring Network Structure *Public Administration* 76 (2): Agranoff, R. (1991). Human Services Integration: Past and Present Challenges in Public Administration *Public Administration Review* 51: 533-42

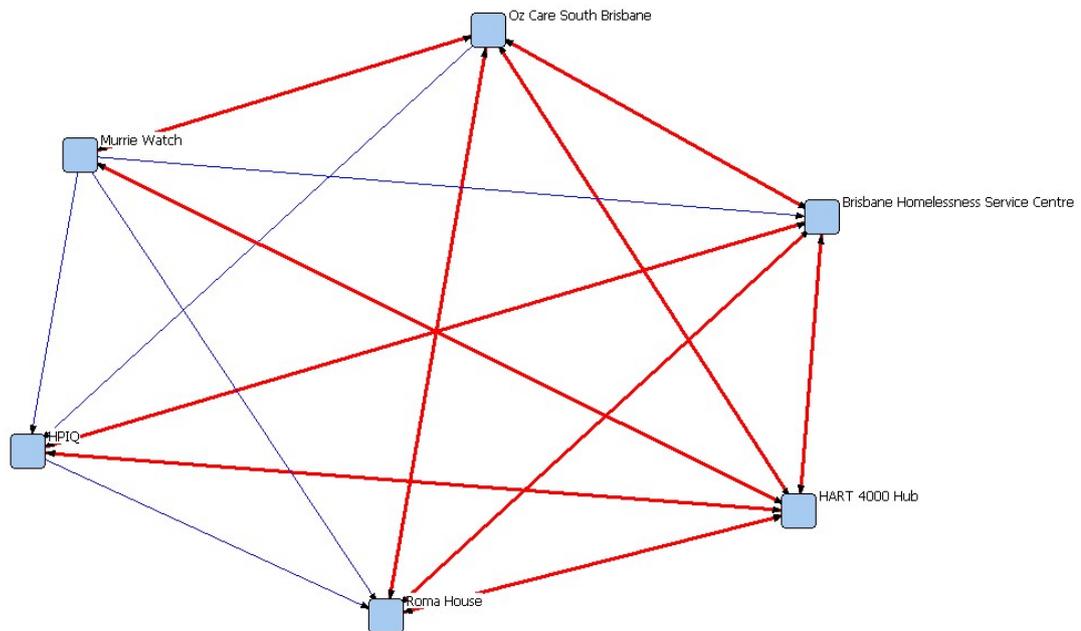


This diagram provides a visual indication that the Brisbane service system is characterised by a relatively sparse level of inter-connection between agencies in terms of their information sharing. Furthermore, it confirms the presence and functioning of the two hubs each operating primarily around their individual ‘client spaces’ and highlights the existence of a more loosely tied web of agencies engaged in information sharing activity.

This map indicates that the Brisbane homelessness service system is engaged in a relatively high level of activity around information sharing. Within this information sharing space, the two Hubs appear to be fulfilling a key dissemination function, particularly in terms of their ‘own’ specific service sets but also to the broader system.

These linkage patterns for information sharing imply that overall, with the exception of some core actors, the Brisbane homelessness service system is still largely characterised by an independent orientation. Furthermore, especially in relation to the Hubs, the results suggest that effort might need to be spent on back linking and establishing more overall connections between agencies. This effort would assist in the overall connection of the system. Such a task, however, would require an additional investment of time, effort and resources.

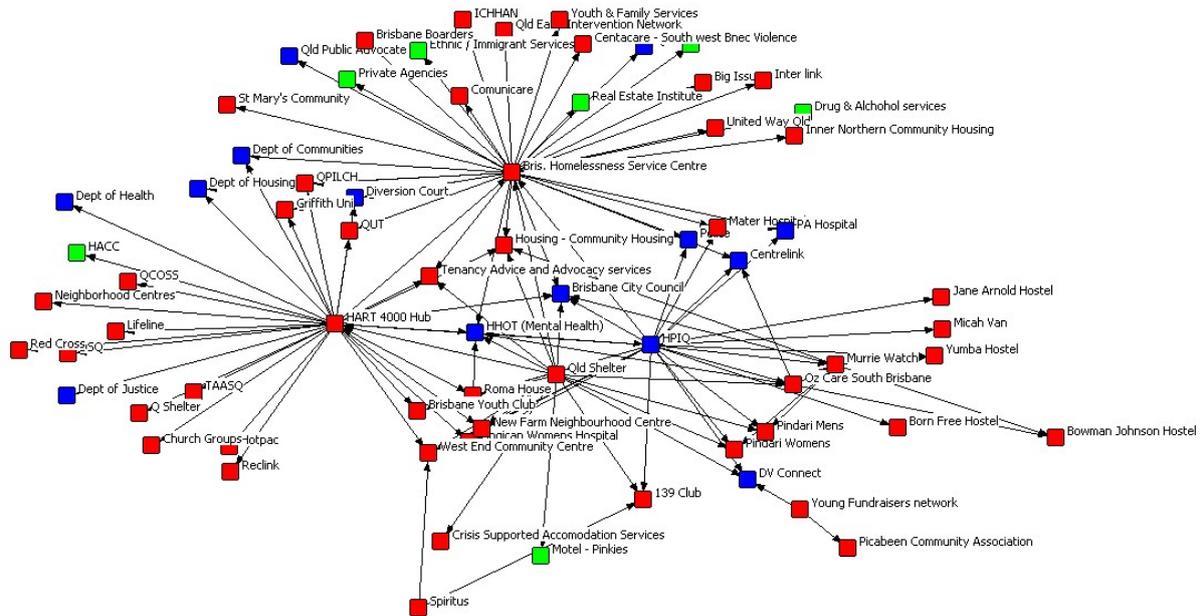
**Map 2 Brisbane Information Sharing — Ego-Network**



Map 2 highlights reciprocal relationships (i.e. when two actors indicate the existence of a tie between them) between several agencies particularly — Hart 4000, BHSC and OzCare demonstrating almost a complete reciprocal relationship. Although reciprocal ties are evident between the previous agencies and Roma House, HPIQ and Murrie Watch, the latter do not provide complete links to all. Nevertheless, the findings highlight a strong relationship between this set of agencies with respect to information sharing. The limited number of reciprocal groupings suggests the need for extension of relationship building since reciprocity forms a strong basis for cooperation. Additional interrogation into the particular characteristics (structure, relations and time) of this reciprocity is recommended.

### Shared planning and programming

Map 3: Brisbane Shared Planning and Programming



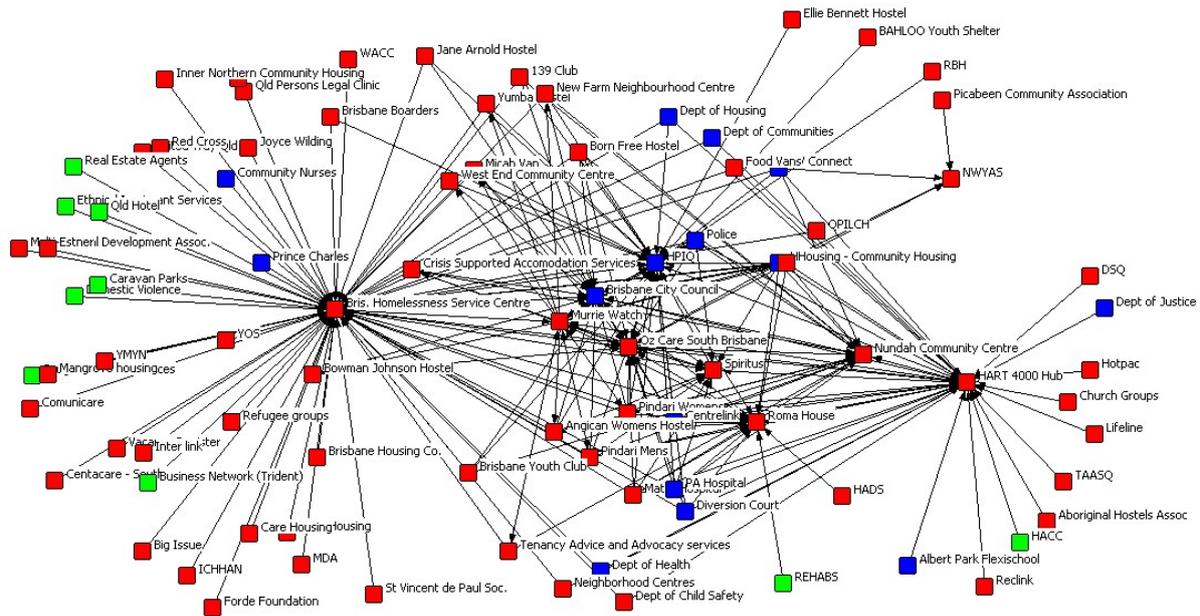
Shared Planning and Programming brings forward a more obvious variation to the previous network maps. This difference is exhibited in the emergence, alongside the ongoing Hub groupings, of two additional clusters of agencies coalescing around HPIQ and, to a slightly lesser extent, Queensland Shelter. This finding highlights and supports the additional coordination function of HPIQ and validates Queensland Shelter’s role in this regard.

Providing a point of connection between the four clusters is a suite of agencies that are quite loosely connected. Included in this underpinning set of planning-orientated agencies are Murrie Watch, the Mental Health HHoT program, OzCare, the Brisbane City Council, and Roma House. Not surprisingly, government agencies and universities also feature, to a slightly lesser degree in the planning role and appear to act in minor way as bridges facilitating interaction between the various clusters. Again, for this variable, the network structure has remained relatively sparse in terms of its level of connection. This sparseness may be explained by an absence of planning and programming capacity in other agencies. A key question to be considered for future planning in the Brisbane homelessness service context should focus on whether there should be an expansion of agencies more heavily involved in the planning and coordination of the sector.



Referrals in and out

Map 5: Brisbane Referrals In and Out



The integration variable of referrals in and out sought to better understand of the flow of clients between agencies within the Brisbane homelessness service system. As can be determined from the network map there is a lot of activity around this linkage variable. The main set of referring agencies includes BHSC, Hart 4000, Roma House, Spiritus, OzCare, Murrie Watch, HHOT and HPIQ. It is interesting to note that in terms of the in-degree measure (the sum of the relations going from all other nodes/agencies to a single node/ actor) BHSC has exhibited almost double the number of referrals to nearest agencies (Hart 4000 and HPIQ). This result suggests that agencies are turning to BHSC as a first point of call for referrals and may be a function of the longevity and dominance of the auspicing agency Micah Inc. Such an over-reliance on one agency will, if it has not already, place additional strain on personnel. This higher level of inter-agency activity around referrals may be a direct result of the increased number of clients presenting to services and the decreased resources available to assist and implies that this is a system under stress.

Overall the network data indicate similar network architectures for information and resource sharing, with some variance for planning and programming and referrals. It is expected that linkages such as information sharing and referrals would be more frequent than those that require the joint effort/commitment joint programs and resource sharing.

Discussion network maps and metrics

Some of the main structural metrics that reveal the texture of a system include density, centralisation and distance<sup>30</sup>.

**Density:** The density measure refers to the number of connections identified by respondents compared to the total number of possible connections. It is often used as an indicator for integration. Density values range from 0 to 1; the closer the score is to 1 the higher is the level of connection. At .02, Referrals in/out is the most dense of all the linkage variables. This is followed by .017 for information sharing, with planning and programming (.001) and shared resources (.001) dropping off considerably.

<sup>30</sup> More detailed descriptions of these metrics are provided in the Introduction section

Brisbane's comparatively low density scores should not be interpreted in an overly negative way. By virtue of its size Brisbane will always report comparatively lower density scores than the smaller networks of Townsville and the Gold Coast. That said, given the nature and function of the network a higher degree of interaction between network players was expected, at least in relation to information sharing. This finding points possibly to the need for more work to be undertaken on cross agency and sector linkages and relationship building. The metric results lend support to the earlier statement about a system under stress as a result of increased clients and decreasing resources and limited referral options.

**Centralisation:** Overall the Brisbane service system tends to be highly centralised with a few organisations accounting for 53% of the information connections taking place. As befitting their information dispersal role the two Hubs (HART 4000 and BHSC) account for 26% of the total number of connections being made. It is interesting to note that HPIQ does not feature as a high connector in terms of information sharing; however has a much stronger appearance in terms of planning and programming. Indications are that HPIQ plays a wider role than purely first port of call. Nevertheless, the findings highlight a need for stronger emphasis by this agency in terms of its information sharing role.

Additionally there is a relatively high level of centralisation with respect to resource sharing, with two of the agencies (BHSC and Hart 4000) at the centre of activity. As noted earlier while the findings reinforce the important role of the Hubs, it also places them under pressure. Consideration should be given to better resourcing these two agencies as well as widening the spread of agencies with resource capacities.

**Average Path Distance** is a representation of the ease of navigation of the system, that is, how many steps it takes to access information, engage in planning or programming activities, acquire a resource or make a referral. It is often used as an indicator of the efficiency of a system. Overall the Brisbane metric displayed an increase in the number of steps between actors for each of the variables, with planning proving a slight deviation. Again this result supports the reduction in ability or capacity to work together as the level of commitment increases. The average path distance for referrals is of particular concern as it shows that clients pass through at least 2.5 referral stages. Work done elsewhere has highlighted the general reluctance<sup>31</sup> of people to stay engaged after two steps. Clearly, this is an issue that should be the subject of further examination and cross-sector dialogue.

As a further indication of performance, the network analysis results have demonstrated that, in general, the agencies that have a central role in the sector are engaged in terms of the variables examined. There is also a relatively strong underpinning group of agencies that play a support role, as well as quite an extensive set of less involved agencies that appear to be called upon periodically for non routine assistance and act to round out the array of services available for the system to draw upon. Importantly, through their weak ties these agencies often provide an important bridge to other service systems, thus potentially adding to the capacity of the homelessness system. A useful starting point for a sense of the health of the system would be an assessment of those actors occupying the core and periphery — in terms of the appropriateness of their locations.

The Brisbane network is a very clear example of a network conforming to the "3 C's" model — the greater the required investment in the relationship the less likely the relationship is to exist. A visual inspection of the three main network types (Information; Resources; Planning and Programming) along with a review of the key metrics shows a gradual "thinning" of the network when moving from information to planning and further along the integration continuum. In simple terms it can be seen

<sup>31</sup> Cross, R., Thomas, B. Dutra, A. and Newberry, A., 2007, Using Network Analysis to Build a New Business, *Organizational Dynamics* 36 (4): 345-362.

that less agencies interact less when carrying out activities that require more resources, time and effort to produce a result.

The two hubs appear to be operating as intended, particularly in terms of referrals and information sharing, however they are slightly less evident in relation to the facilitation of shared resources and shared planning and programming. The Brisbane sector is one that is also a good example of a set of networks that can be described as “highly centralised” with a small number of players reporting a high proportion of the ties. Seven of the 241 listed organisations in the network owned 53% of the ties that were reported, with HART4000 and the BHSC owning 26% of those connections. In real terms this means that some organisations control or direct the majority of information and resources throughout the Brisbane network. This is both positive in that it is easier to organise and rally actors. Conversely, their relative dominance in the sector may prevent others from emerging and taking on a more involved role.

One additional observation of note in relation to the Hubs is that a significant proportion of the ties are “outward” in that the hubs appear to be giving more information than receiving it. It is possible that this is an appropriate role and a situation that is desired by the Department of Communities and the community sector. However, it is suggested that establishing more effective back-channels from agencies may assist in receiving “grass roots” feedback as to the health of the network and the sector in general.

A point of interest is the planning role of HPIQ that the network analysis has identified. While HPIQ essentially was established as a “first point of contact” it did not record high levels of connections either in information sharing or in relation to referrals. At this point a definitive answer to explain this result does not exist, but it is thought that once clients are “in the system” HPIQ is no longer needed as clients are able to access and use alternate sources of information to navigate their way round various services.

In contrast HPIQ is the third most central agency when it comes to engaging with the network in relation to shared planning and programming. This is a significant finding and is one worth pursuing given the vital nature of the planning process on client services integration. Further investigation is recommended to determine the exact nature of HPIQ’s involvement in the planning process and how this emergent role may be reinforced and capitalised on.

Together, the maps and metrics have provided new insights into the structure and operation of the Brisbane homelessness service system and have helped to identify where to make the connections that will be useful as well as understand the overall ‘health’ of the system. The data has highlighted the important role of the Hubs in this service system both in terms of services and systems integration. The role of HPIQ and Roma House are less central in the overall system, however they do contribute to an extension of the existing system in terms of information and referrals and crisis accommodation. Furthermore, through their interactions both agencies serve to link up not just crisis accommodation but also related services. In this way, both HPIQ and Roma House could be argued to be contributing to ‘filling the gaps’ in crisis accommodation in the Brisbane area.

In contrast to the ‘holy grail of full integration’<sup>32</sup> the Brisbane homelessness service system has been found to be only relatively well-connected and that this connection clusters around a small core of agencies underscored by a secondary service web. However, as a number of authors have noted, integration is not a set model and the most effective integration initiatives are those that are requisite to the service context. The important question here becomes “do the current integration arrangements support the purpose”?

<sup>32</sup> Peters, B.G., 1998, *Managing Horizontal Government: The Politics of Coordination*, *Public Administration* 76 (2): 295-311

## Qualitative Insights: Brisbane R2H Initiatives

This section draws on the qualitative data to extend the findings and insights generated by the network analysis component of the study. It provides a brief description of each of the four cornerstone initiatives — HPIQ, Roma House, as well as the Brisbane Homeless Support Centre and Hart 4000 — that are the primary focus of the evaluation. In doing so, it identifies and examines some of the factors that have facilitated and hindered integration.

### Homeless Persons Information Queensland

Homeless Persons Information Queensland (HPIQ) is a state wide 24-hour; seven-day telephone information and referral service for people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless. This call centre initiative is intended to be an entry point to the homelessness service systems. The formation of HPIQ was informed by national and international research which stressed the value of a central contact point to improve the consistency and timeliness of information and advice provided<sup>33</sup>. Additionally, a coordinated response is considered more effective in directing people with diverse and often multiple needs to appropriate services and to limit the number of times clients would have to 'tell their story' to a suite of different agencies.

Funded by the Department of Communities and operating under the managerial auspice of SMART Service Queensland, HPIQ acts as a 'contact centre'. That is, it provides a continuous contact point for information about accommodation options and other support services that are available across Queensland. Supported by an online information and accommodation referral database, HPIQ can provide help on a broad array of accommodation issues (including bonds, rent arrears or legal advice), as well as direct and assist people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless on where to get practical support such as food, showers and laundry in their area<sup>34</sup>.

A brief initial assessment process allows for immediate advice or targeted service referral support. For those clients presenting with more complex issues HPIQ offers professional assistance and support. This service is offered in-house by Departmental professional staff between the hours of 8am to 9pm, 7 days per week. Incoming calls after 9pm requiring an escalated response are directed to DV Connect under a sub contract arrangement. In this way HPIQ is able to provide a 24 hour service for all client calls.

HPIQ presently averages about 400 calls per week. Of this total, approximately 80% have been identified by staff as people looking for short term accommodation or seeking basic information. It has been suggested that this first time contact function makes HPIQ particularly relevant to people who have no prior exposure to homelessness and therefore are unaware of what services are available across the state. A viable 'first port of call' information and referral service is considered to act to shield new clients from becoming further enmeshed within the system.

As well as delivering initial information and referrals to presenting clients, HPIQ plays a role in assisting support services with up-to-date information. On this function, it was noted that information and referral exchanges between HPIQ and other services was quite frequent and often occurred several times a day. These ongoing exchanges were presented as evidence that 'from a communications part it [HPIQ] is working'. It was also expected that the service would enhance

<sup>33</sup> Newfarm Neighbourhood Centre, 2004, *Finding Beds for Homeless People*, report prepare for the Brisbane City Council; Walsh, P., 2003, *More than Just a Roof: A Study of Family Homelessness in Queensland*, QUT Centre of Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies (October 2003).

<sup>34</sup> [www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/homelessness/homeless-persons-information-queensland.html](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/homelessness/homeless-persons-information-queensland.html)

access to existing homelessness and housing assistance services and new services such as early intervention, crisis accommodation and integrated service hubs.

In furthering its service enhancement and coordination role, HPIQ has acted to establish service protocols with some agencies. The agreement with Pindari House for dedicated placements is one such example. However, for many respondents, both government and non government, this has not reached the level of development expected. There was a strong view presented that HPIQ has 'settled' into an initial role of providing basic information rather than extending its efforts to add value to the sector. *"It got to a certain point and then it stalled"*. Specific developments expected included the establishment of a suite of placements and direct referral protocols with a range of providers as well as the development of a comprehensive data base and vacancy register.

It was noted that concerted effort by HPIQ during its formative period was directed to the development an agreed assessment and referral process. However, there were difficulties in attaining agreement on 'what referrals were' and 'how they should be processed'. There were concerns expressed especially by Roma House and the Hubs that this assessment process was flawed and exposed already vulnerable clients to the prospect of having to disclose sensitive information inappropriately. The frequency and volume of the anxieties regarding the assessment process for HPIQ point to the need for further exploration of these issues.

Several other informants offered a less positive view of the functioning of HPIQ as an information and referral point. Key issues raised during the interviews and focus group session centred on what was described as a lack of sector specific knowledge and therefore an inability to provide relevant and timely information. Ongoing staffing changes were thought to have contributed to the lack of sector knowledge and the related inability to link clients to most appropriate services. On this it was suggested that HPIQ was simply an 'integration tool' that relied on the sector to make referral connections for clients.

A further limitation with HPIQ's referral processes is apparent at night when there are much fewer resources available. In this context there was a greater reliance by HPIQ on the sector to respond to presenting problems and provide services. The Street-to-Home Van was noted as a key and critical community based resource utilised after-hours. Furthermore, without resources of its own, HPIQ is dependent on Hub brokerage funds to assist clients in crisis situations. Together, these factors were seen as adding to the work of community agencies with little additional reciprocal benefit.

An important and novel feature of the HPIQ service is that all calls to the service are free. This initiative is seen by the broader service sector as valuable to both clients and to agencies. Clients are able to make unconstrained contact including by mobile phone [which has been identified as a prominent mode of communication for clients] thus enhancing the immediacy of response and the potential safety of callers. Service agencies have commented that the free service enables contact to be retained with clients as they will often call HPIQ and leave contact details for agency follow-up.

*You can give HPIQ's number, it's a free call so keeping in touch with rough sleepers, HPIQ plays a great role, because it is a free call and they can put them through to the Hub. For those regulars it's been good. You can just say to people ring in the morning and we can work out where to pick them up.*

The above suggests that, in terms of its information and referral function, HPIQ is providing an important service to new clients and plays a part in the linking process between core agencies in the Brisbane region.

### Expanded role: adding value to the sector

Returning to the theme of value adding identified earlier, many informants within the non government sector saw in HPIQ a valuable avenue to collect, process and disseminate new and different data. This situation arose from the belief that conventional data limits a more united or 'big picture' of the sector. The view expressed was that government collects data on numbers 'counts' whereas the community sector is looking for more detailed data on people and services. This added insight would help them to be better informed, shape their service response and planning. The desire for a proactive data set and the potential for HPIQ to be reconfigured to deliver such an instrument are encapsulated in the following:

*The sector genuinely believes that HPIQ can be a very useful agency for the NGO because it has IT capacities and information capacities that we don't – that it could start to look at the problem in greater depth.*

HPIQ, because of its state-wide coverage, has a secondary role to contribute the overall coordination of the service sector. In this regard HPIQ was thought to have made some early progress. Its role in facilitating discussions on the development of an assessment and referral tool process was given as an example of the wider system development function: "It acts as a catalyst to discussion and planning". Further, as Brisbane Focus Group members noted, the involvement of HPIQ in network meetings provided another link in the coordination chain for the local homelessness service system. However, this involvement appears to have been short lived as it was subsequently noted that HPIQ has not actively participated in these community network meetings for some time. Again, staff shortages and turnovers were posited as potential reasons for this lack of engagement. Furthermore, while the network analysis data has provided confirmation of HPIQ's central role in planning and coordination, its impact in this regard appears to be restricted largely to the Brisbane area.

Overall there was general agreement that HPIQ has emerged as an entry point to the homelessness services, especially for new clients to this system. Furthermore, through its information sharing and planning processes it does act as a connector in the Brisbane service system. The scale and scope of HPIQ's potential role in the Brisbane service system remains underutilised. As with the network analysis findings the case study highlights a number of areas, which, if strengthened, would more deeply embed HPIQ within the Brisbane service system and assist it in fulfilling its state-wide coordination functions.

### Roma House

Roma House was established as crisis accommodation facility for people with complex social problems. Complexity in this instance goes beyond a client presenting with, for example, mental health issues; it involves a mix of problems such as mental health, physical abuse, drug abuse/misuse, trauma and violence. The facility, which is operated by Mission Australia with triennial funding of \$M2.1 per annum from the Department of Communities, is able to house up to 37 people [16 men, 15 women and two couples].

A key component of Roma House is the 12 week intensive support program that requires clients to work with designated case managers to address their many issues. Such an intensive and personalised support coupled with a holistic approach to case management is argued to help clients to make the necessary changes in their lifestyle and build a stronger pathway to sustainable accommodation.

*We link them with agencies and offer a personal, one-on-one relationship with a case manager which is a major factor in the success of the service.*

Key to the success of this service delivery model is the ability to link clients to broader resources and support services that will set them on the path to sustained accommodation. As the network maps (across all variables) have demonstrated Roma House is regularly interacting with a small set of agencies that offer specific assistance toward this goal. The importance of links to essential resources has been identified in the integration literature as a key service enhancement task. It also highlights the need to continually monitor and extend resource and support sources in order to extend and develop a suite of services that best meets client needs<sup>35</sup>.

Roma House is presently operating with a 95-98% occupancy rate. Documentation and staff interviews reveal that many of the 200 people assisted thus far have moved on to sustained accommodation. Initially, however, the ability of the facility to 'fill its beds' was hampered by the staged capacity implementation process. This situation had subsidiary implications for related services such as the Hubs particularly in terms of additional calls on their brokerage resources. The effect of the delay was described as follows:

*The expectation was because Roma House could take people in, would reduce our need for emergency accommodation, whereas it hasn't.*

The ongoing demand for crisis accommodation is made apparent in the network analysis findings for referrals which note a relatively high in-degree centrality score for Roma House. This result indicates that the facility is a key point of contact for referring agencies. Such a high referral score could be an indicator of a lack of accommodation in the district, especially for high need clients.

As the facility has evolved and more accommodation has been made available, its contribution to the service sector has been strengthened. Nevertheless, across the respondent groups it was widely agreed that the optimal operation of Roma House has been compromised by a number of factors including in particular (a) tensions in purpose and the client mix, (b) the referral process, and (c) the location and history of the facility. A more detailed account of these factors follows:

### **Tensions in purpose and client mix**

The different orientations of the two key departments involved with Roma House were considered by a number of respondents to have presented initial problems for the facility and to have limited the embedding of the intervention program. Specifically, this was noted as a tension between the philosophies of basic accommodation and intervention or supported accommodation. This duality is more graphically described as follows:

The main point of contention, however, relates to the broad client groupings which were considered to present problems both in terms of intervention and the perceived safety and security of residents. In particular, the mix of male and female clients was identified as a potential problem in cases where sexual assault was a contributing factor to the residency.

*There have been issues along the way with the mix of men and women on different floors and the family component has not worked well.*

Additionally, for some community sector respondents this lack of target specification resulted in "... a lot of confusion around who they [Roma House] are actually meant to be taking in as clients". This lack of clarity for some agencies was seen as working against the ability of related services to refer correctly and efficiently and therefore undermined coordination efforts and intervention impact. The inability of Roma House to assist families was also identified as a problem which had repercussions

<sup>35</sup> Provan et al., 2005, The Use of Network Analysis to Strengthen Community Partnerships, *Public Administration Review* 65 (5): 603-613.

for other agencies that had to 'pick up the slack'. The impact of this has been felt most keenly by the two service hubs; both of which identified problems arising from the deficit of accommodation and the attendant consequences on brokerage funds.

The 'non exclusion' clause for the facility was also identified by several respondents (both government and non government) as adding to the tensions and difficulties of providing a safe environment and 'quality' case work intervention and undermining the potential of the service. The following statement encapsulates this view:

*There was no exclusion policy. People had to put up with appalling behaviour, violence ... it is naïve to think [you] could manage all those people in one house.*

In April 2008, as a result of ongoing discussion by the core service providers, a change was made to the client criteria and it is now more closely 'aligned to the case management process'. This change represents a trial 6 month period and re-approval is subject to stakeholder consultation and departmental consideration.

### Referrals

Initial referrals to Roma House are managed through HPIQ or through one of the two Brisbane homelessness hubs — HART 4000 and Brisbane Homelessness Service Centre (BHSC). This approach was to ensure that clients referred to the facility met the eligibility criteria and were prepared to engage in a case management intervention approach. It was also to circumvent the practice of daily line-up to secure accommodation.

For many respondents this referral process is problematic. This response was partly informed by the view that Roma House should be able to manage its own intake in order to 'balance existing residents with new people'; especially where there were vulnerable people involved who could be unintentionally exposed to issues that might escalate their problems.

A further and strongly stressed position centred on the inefficiencies of referrals going through HPIQ or the Hubs particularly when there was no certainty of admission. Further, the referral process was described as 'quite invasive' requiring the 'disclosure of a lot of personal information' — with no guarantee of admission'. This not only placed stress on clients but also placed service providers in a difficult position.

A significant change in the assessment and referral process for Roma House occurred in April 2008 when the previous reliance on 'waiting lists' gave way to a more fluid 'vacancy based access' arrangement. As expected in such an embryonic service ongoing adjustments are likely to occur for some time.

### Venue

Roma House is part of the historic Lady Bowen complex in Spring Hill and is situated between a hospital, motels and residents. It has been recognised that there has been some 'angst' from neighbours related to the behaviour of some clientele, including verbal abuse, fighting and other forms of anti-social action. This issue has been acknowledged and efforts have been made to both curb the 'spill over' of client behaviour and liaise more positively with the local community.

Furthermore, it was noted that Roma House's status as a heritage building limited its ability to be configured to achieve maximum benefit. *"The facility is really not suited to the task"*. Such a stance was not perceived as totally negating the potential contribution of this facility. Rather there was a strong belief in the need to better match the purpose and activities to the resource, its location and

structural configuration. An alternative operating function for the facility as a community centre is one such proposition.

Roma House was included as an R2H initiative to provide much needed crisis accommodation for clients with high, complex needs in the Brisbane area. The review has identified that a number of factors have limited the facility's ability to quickly deliver on this accommodation goal. This had implications for other services in terms of client expectations and resource re-allocation. As Roma House has become more established and these initial problems largely overcome, it has become a more reliable, if limited, accommodation venue for the sector. On this later point, it should be noted that Roma House is, at most, a 37 bed facility. Evidence from this evaluation and many other sources stress the need for more and innovative accommodation options for homeless persons, including those with complex needs<sup>36</sup>.

The focus of Roma House is to assist complex needs residents into more independent and sustainable accommodation. The service recognises that its 'holistic' approach is heavily dependent on building and maintaining strong relationships with other service providers. The network analysis data<sup>37</sup> provides evidence of Roma House's connections to prominent contact services such as the Hubs and HPIQ as well as a range of other related community services. In this way it can be argued that Roma House does contribute in a supplementary way to the integration of the sector; albeit confined to a small service core. While it does not occupy a central position in the service system for any of the integration variable variables, by way of focused activity around its core service function and deliberative linkages to services that transcend the facility to provide ongoing support within the community, it does begin to fill a critical gap in the service pathway to sustained housing for clients with more complex needs.

## Service Hubs

The final components to this evaluation profiles the two Information and Referral Service Hubs- Brisbane Homelessness Service Centre (BHSC) and Hart 4000 (Homeless Assessment Referral Team). The Service Hubs are a new initiative and have been allocated an average of \$420, 000 from the R2H Strategy to meet their objectives. In essence the purpose of the Service Hubs is to provide homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, with coordinated and therefore easy access to a wide range of housing and support services within the Brisbane target location. The target group for this initiative includes clients who are chronically homeless and clients with multiple and complex needs. Clients are to be assisted through direct service delivery and/or through referral to other services including a housing provider. The intention is that the Hubs will play a central role along the continuum of services including front line engagement, immediate assessment of support needs, provision of facilities to meet basic needs, case plan development and brokerage, referrals and advocacy<sup>38</sup>.

The underlying conceptualisation for the Hub model of service provision centres on the understanding that 'joined up' services are inherently more accessible to clients as well as being more effective and efficient<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, there was an expectation that the Hubs would become a service location where specialist knowledge and intervention skills would amass, creating a collective service space.

<sup>36</sup> Eardley, T., 2008, The Impact of SAAP Homelessness Services on Client Self-Reliance *SPRC Newsletter* 99 (July) 8-10; Healy, K. and Gal, I., 2007, Homelessness to Home, Micah Projects Inc.; Walsh, P., 2003, More Than Just a Roof: A Study of Family Homelessness in Queensland; QUT; QCOSS, 2008, Social Policy Forum Report 2008, Brisbane, Qld.

<sup>37</sup> In particular Map 2: Brisbane Information Sharing Ego Net

<sup>38</sup> Department of Communities, 2005, 'Funding Information Paper: Responding to Homelessness –Service Hubs for Homeless People, 2005-2006, Brisbane.

<sup>39</sup> Wolch, J., 1996, Community-Based Human Service Delivery *Housing Policy Debate* 7 (4): 649-671.

*The theory was they would be pretty much like a centre of excellence, where organisations come together.*

With their inclusion in the R2H funding regime, role of the Service Hubs was extended to provide a point of contact between HPIQ and Roma House.

To assist with the process of joining up previously autonomous (and often competing) agencies, a series of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) was stipulated as part of the Service Agreements. These MOUs were put in place within individual hub consortia partner agencies and between the two Hub initiatives. The rationale for formalising and documenting the relationships between the hub actors via an institutionalised arrangement such as an MOU was that it would provide a basic framework to guide the shift from single agency working to a collective approach.

In the Brisbane context two key approaches to the Hub model of integration were established and trialled — a place based co-location model and a local 'virtual' network of agencies. As the network analysis findings have revealed despite their differences both Hub models have fulfilled the required function of acting as core points of connection or central points within the service system. A brief, but more detailed exploration of each of these approaches services follows. The intent is to distil and highlight the particular operating characteristics of the two models, and their advantages and limitations, to assist future planning and operation, both within this service system and wider.

### **Brisbane Housing Service Centre: Co-location model**

Established in September 2005 the Brisbane Housing Service Centre (BHSC) was the first of the Hub initiatives to be trialled and commenced prior to the formal introduction of the R2H Strategy. The genesis for the formation of a hub approach emerged from the growing strain placed on physical and service infrastructure in the inner south Brisbane district, coupled with the prospect of continually rising rents for non government organisations. Following a series of meetings facilitated by the formation of the Southside Homelessness Action Network (SHAN) a 'one-stop' model was proposed as the most effective mechanism to integrate services and provide a greater level of economy of scale and scope for existing and emergent activities. It was reported that the vision for a co-located service model was driven by a strong and collective commitment by participating agencies to enhanced service provision and a willingness to move outside of a single agency approach to a collective model.

The BHSC is a consortium of agencies (Brisbane Boarders, South West Community Options, St Lukes (Spiritus) and Murri Watch) under the coordination of Micah Project Inc. It operates on a one-stop shop approach which has involved the majority of the partner agencies positioning the parts of their organisation relating to homelessness to a co-located venue in West-End. Within this model all partner agencies retained their own legally constituted governance structures, organisational culture and service foci while undertaking to work within a jointly agreed service framework.

Each of these agencies provided a specialist service to people experiencing homelessness with the aim of providing a more seamless service model that better responded to the complexities of homelessness. In addition to integrating the work of the partner agencies BHSC also acts as a neutral base for visiting agencies to access clients and deliver outreach services. The ability to bring in and accommodate (temporarily) other agencies further contributes to the continuum of care provided to this client group. Micah Services received additional one off funding from the Department of Communities to develop a web based, IT client coordination system to work across consortium services. Specifically this was intended to create enhanced information sharing and common work practices between participating bodies. However, securing and maintaining commitment to a common information system has proven to be a difficult task. Research elsewhere has highlighted the

difficulties inherent in establishing common information systems and processes across agencies, even those committed to 'working together'<sup>40</sup>. In reflecting on this situation, a respondent noted that difficulties in aligning existing systems and work processes contributed to the uptake issues.

Time pressures enacted through condensed implementation processes and evaluation requirements were also identified as contributing to the difficulties of cross-agency working in this form. The literature on multi-tenant service centres<sup>41</sup> such as the BHSC confirms and re-enforces the challenges of working within this mode including the establishment of common information processes and collective work practices. A greater up-front investment in relationship building, the establishment of operating terms of agreement and training focused on joint working are presented as mechanisms to pave the way for these more closely coupled service arrangements.

There was a general agreement across the case study respondents that the co-location mode with its mix of services in the one location 'makes sense'. The ease of assistance to clients offered by a closer clustering of services was considered to be highly beneficial, especially for clients with multiple and related service needs. The close proximity of the venue to existing clients and the stability of a single place of contact were also identified as providing for continuity of service. As Wolch and others have noted many clients become territorial and are reluctant to engage with services outside of their normal environment<sup>42</sup>.

Other agencies also commented on the inherent benefits that co-location could offer in terms of stronger relationship building and overcoming agency turf issues. Informants theorised that these strengthened relationships could be used as a catalyst to enhanced integration which could be leveraged particularly for the more difficult or intractable client issues. On the other hand, concern was expressed that in such a tightly coupled arrangement, clients may be reluctant to raise service complaints and that confidentiality and privacy rights may be compromised.

Another finding emerging from the review centred on the tendency for the most central agency to become the 'face' of the consortium. While this may not present as an issue for clients it may have an impact on the perceived 'equality' of the consortia relations, potentially limiting the strength of the grouping.

The network analysis maps and metrics highlight the regular centrality of the BHSC Hub across the suite of variables. This, coupled with internal agency reports and departmental reviews<sup>43</sup>, provides evidence that the BHSC is successful in assisting clients. Adjacency to transport and other services was also identified as an advantage of the BHSC location and was considered to have contributed to a high number of presenting clients. However, the number of people presenting to the BHSC was thought to be somewhat of 'a double edged sword' as the increasing numbers of people seeking assistance have caused traditional clients such as rough sleepers to 'feel uncomfortable' in their space.

On the surface the co-location model appears to be quite straight forward. However, it is a much more complex and difficult arrangement than simply locating a set of services in the one spot.

The moulding of a number of autonomous agencies with different approaches, service foci and ethos into a relatively coherent body is a challenge. Moreover, it can take number of years to build the

<sup>40</sup> Integrated Services Sub-Committee, 2003, *Integrated Service Delivery: A Critical Analysis*. Ontario, Canada: Public Service Delivery Council.

<sup>41</sup> Lennie, J., 2007, *Challenges and Strategies for the Sustainability and Viability of Non Profit Multi-Tenant Service Centres: A Literature Review*, prepared for Department of Communities (April)

<sup>42</sup> Wolch, J., 1996, Community-Based Human Service Delivery, *Housing Policy Debate* 7 (4): 649-671

<sup>43</sup> Department of Communities, 2008, Implementation Evaluation of the Responding to Homelessness Strategy, Queensland Government, Brisbane.

relationships and this requires additional financial support<sup>44</sup>. As an indication of the difficulties in sustaining a higher level of integration, two of the partner agencies have withdrawn from the original consortium — one for governance reasons and the second as a result of parent organisation changes. It should be noted however, that the latter still provides a visiting service to the centre.

The BHSC offers a range of programs and services to presenting clients. It has a regular schedule of visiting services that clients can access as needs. The outreach service function has been curtailed due to increased service demands at the main location.

A co-location model is characterised by tighter-coupling of agencies. This requires much more effort in relationship building, establishing common purpose and blending services. The literature on multi-tenant service arrangements is clear that such an approach requires more time and resources at start up as well as on an on-going basis<sup>45</sup>. In these models more work is generated through the need to undertake additional processes such as holding meetings, developing agreed governance arrangements and establishing agreed terms of engagement for the participating agencies. As acknowledged in earlier studies, integration can cost before it pays<sup>46</sup>.

Nonetheless, all the data (qualitative and network) demonstrate that the co-location model adopted by the BHSC has been successful in providing and coordinating information and referrals. Indeed, the influence of the Hub extends well beyond this designated client service level function to contribute strongly to integration at the program and system level.

## HART 4000 — A virtual network hub model

In December 2006, a second Hub auspiced by the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre was funded under the R2H Strategy. Consortium members for the HART 4000 Hub include: New Farm Neighbourhood Centre, West End Community House, Brisbane Youth Service, Better Housing Projects Association, Inner North Community Housing and Wesley Mission. Given the dispersed locations of the consortia membership this hub is described as working as a 'virtual network model'. The operating model centres on linking services and locations through shared processes and protocols and a coordinating central office with workers. This more loosely connected model allows for the preservation of the existing administrative and governance structures of member agencies, while enabling them to work together to address client needs. The coordinating central office which is the presenting form this Hub undertakes the main body of intervention and has dedicated resources to achieve this. The Hart 4000 office location is the first point of contact for clients for assistance. This facility also acts as a drop in centre, and provides clothing and food distribution. As with the BHSC, Hart 4000 has arrangements in place for specialist services to be provided at the 'office' and at other consortia locations.

However, the value of the model is the multiple access points afforded by the consortium membership. The main strengths for workers within this Hub model are the sets of relationships and links and expertise that can be drawn upon by workers to assist clients. On this it was noted: "the model works well because there is a lot of knowledge and resources held by the consortium members that can be directed to clients. The physical distance between agencies that clients would have to

<sup>44</sup> Keast et al, 2004, *Network Structures: Working Differently and Changing Expectations*, *Public Administration Review* 64 (3): 363-377; Lennie, J., 2007, *Challenges and Strategies for the Sustainability and Viability of Non Profit Multi-Tenant Service Centres: A Literature Review*, prepared for Department of Communities (April)

<sup>45</sup> Brotsky, C., 2006, *Strategic Considerations in Creating and Operating Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Centers*, presentation to the 'Moving Forward' Conference, Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 10-11 May.

<sup>46</sup> Leutz, W., 1999, *Five Laws for Integrating Medical and Social Services: Lessons from the United States and the United Kingdom*, *The Milbank Quarterly* 77(1): 77-110.

navigate to access some services was put forward was a potential downside to the virtual network model.

The Hart 4000 consortium is stable and appears to have strong working relationships, coupled with a clear and agreed vision. Much of its work is grounded in a community development approach to service delivery and this is reflected in both the nature and description of the service offered. Good relationships based on communication, shared values and mutual support are identified as the basis for operation. As a demonstration of the collective approach to working there has been discussion on the appointment of workers who could be 'shared' across the consortium members. It would appear that the looser virtual network model, while it is embedded in strong relations, does not require the same level of effort as does a co-located model. Nonetheless, clearly a good deal of attention is directed to retaining and nurturing the linkages between participating agencies within this model.

From this overview of the operation of the two Hubs it is apparent that they function in different ways, have developed different structures and have different service philosophies. These characteristics have presented opportunities and challenges for them in terms of implementation, responding to client needs and establishing a service niche. Several respondents expressed the opinion that there were 'tensions between the philosophies of the two hubs' that might have worked against their ability to work together. Conversely, other respondents saw the differences between the services as a 'good thing' as this enabled the two consortiums to 'complement each other' and add value to clients and the sector. Through their agreed Terms of Reference the Hubs have set out a working agreement that enables each of them to fulfil their information and referral functions within their operating form. A respondent reflected on this process:

*The two Hubs connected really well through that mechanism and it wasn't so much that it was mandated, but because it was good business.*

As evidence of these working relationships the network analysis results show strong, reciprocal ties between the Hubs across a number of variables. The result of the independent and collective work of the Hubs has been described as "...the establishment of "some joint systems". It was further acknowledged that this "... was an incredibly good piece of work and it has not been easy".

This limited review of the Hubs indicates that they are both successfully providing a form of seamless service delivery to homeless clients of many types. The models and operating principles of each of the hubs have strengths and weaknesses that may translate across to impact on service delivery. Each appears to meet the specific requirements of their main client group. On the surface it may appear that the more intensive co-location model is not necessary to achieve integrated outcomes. However, decision makers should be cognisant that such an approach is particularly valuable for vulnerable clients and those who are more territorially inclined and, as such, serves a specific and important service function.

As well as working together, the Hubs, as reflected in the network maps, have strong connections to HPIQ and Roma House. Together this service quartet has been charged with a key role in both enhancing services and improving the level of integration. HPIQ, the Hubs and Roma House are seen as 'critical services' in the Brisbane service system. While they have made some headway, there is still a long way to go to achieving a quality and requisitely integrated homelessness service system in Brisbane.

### Integration: resources and linkage mechanisms

The integration literature identifies an array of potential devices, systems and processes that serve to link together the various parts of a service system<sup>47</sup>. This case evaluation has revealed that the Brisbane service system uses a number of integration mechanisms situated at the client, service/program and system levels of operation. Some of these are set out below:

**Client/Service level:** case work, case conferencing, brokerage funds, outreach services, common computer and data systems, information services.

**Program level:** inter-agency meeting, joint services and programs; cross-boundary workers (outreach), operating terms of reference.

**System level:** Reference Groups, Memorandum of Understanding

Given the breadth and complexity it is to be expected and required that there would be a number of integration mechanisms in place. While all these linking devices appear to be working well, the most effective and enduring in terms of 'weaving the threads of the system together' are the relationships that have been forged between people and organisations. The following statement captures the key elements and benefits of relationships:

*I think the depth of the working relationships. I think there is a high level of trust between most of the R2H services. You know you can call someone and ask for a favour and there is that level of trust — you know you can trust their judgement.*

There is a level of consensus across both sectors and at all levels of operation that good relationships, both existing and those facilitated through the R2H program, have contributed to improved service system integration. However, this was qualified by the view that there needed to be some processes in place that set a framework in place to formalise, capture, and, if necessary, replace relational capital within the sector.

*I think on a person to person level, it [service system integration] is working quite well. There have been some good relationships made with key people and agencies. Where it tends to fall down a bit is the formal connections, so if people move there is nothing to forward it, there's nothing institutionalised.*

Overall, the perception was that the integration of homelessness services came down to individual people and agencies making it happen. That is, people and services with vision and the willingness and wherewithal to see this vision through to fruition. At the same time, there was awareness that relationships alone may not be sufficient to achieve integration and that more formalised plans and processes are also required. In the non-government sector such institutional arrangements have mostly taken the form of interagency networks.

Whereas the community sector is characterised by horizontal, informal but organised integration, the government sector relies on vertical and more formalised arrangements. It was noted that the CEO Human Services Forum and Senior Officers Group also had a central role in information sharing and building relations across government. However, ongoing liaison within government and with the community sector fell to the Regional Managers' Coordination Network. In the Brisbane context the RMCN did not sustain dedicated attention to the issue of homelessness.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander, E. (1995). *How Organizations Act Together: Inter-organizational Coordination in Theory and Practice*, London: Gordon and Breach;

The consequence of this lapse has been a linkage deficit with the R2H operators and a vertical disconnect to the legitimacy of the hierarchy.

## Innovations

Confronted by an increased demand for services, limited budgets and the growing complexity of social ('wicked'<sup>48</sup>) problems related to homelessness service providers are searching for different ways to deliver services; that is, more innovative solutions and approaches. Innovation refers to the development and/or adoption of new products, services, processes and systems<sup>49</sup>. In the context of the service delivery system, although there can be genuine new models, innovation generally consists of the adoption of existing approaches or the mixing of elements, or as Walker et al (2002) describe this 'evolutionary' innovation. That is, there is an incremental approach to innovation, which draws on ideas and practices from other sectors and services, rather than the development and implementation of radical changes.

This review reveals that while not necessarily innovative in the strictest definition, the Inner Brisbane service system, a number of alternative processes and strategies have been employed as agencies create different ways of working. Drawing from the interviews, focus groups and documentation Table 2 provides a summary of these initiatives, their drivers and perceived contributions.

**Table 2: Summary of Brisbane Identified Innovation Initiatives/Strategies**

Innovation	Basis/rationale	Contribution
Mobile phone free call	Most clients have mobile phones	Allows clients to stay in touch with other service providers — establishes a point of contact
Mobile phone SMS alert system (Proposed)	Use of mobile technology and social connection to inform of service developments	Enable alerts to be called through to service providers (especially those out of office)
Use of mobile phones to connect/share information — link clients	As above (2)	As above (2)
Brokerage funds	Dedicated funds to	Flexibility allows for creative ways to intervene; link client to services/resources
Co-located service model	Based on extensive independent research and existing/literature arguing for 'place based' services	Clients are serviced in own location via a one-stop delivery model. Seamless model helps clients to quickly access a holistic package of care. Specifically important for 'territorial' or vulnerable clients
IT case system a web based client coordination system to work across consortium services.	Common system across partner agencies – efficiencies in services & integration costs	Enhances communication and service links. Provides for access to similar data & information sets.
Industry Partner engagement	Engaging with industry as source of support	Provision of equipment, resources and linkage to broader community
Virtual network service model	Coordination of information, expertise & services via loose network links.	Extends the set of resources, links clients to a wider array of services
Outreach services	Provision of services & support to clients in own location	Increases the opportunity for client contact & engagement; a direct point of contact

<sup>48</sup> Refers to intractable social problems, those that can not be addressed by single agency working alone, Clarke, M. and Stewart, K. , 1997, Handling the Wicked Issues: A Challenge for Government, In LOGOV Discussion Paper, Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham; Commonwealth Government, 2007, Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective, Australian Public Service Commission: Canberra  
<sup>49</sup> Osborne, S. and Brown, K., 2005, Managing Change and Innovation in Public Service Organizations, London: Routledge.

As this list clearly demonstrates the agencies are engaged in a range of activities and processes that are outside of, or which supplement the range of normal practice. It suggests that there has been considerable thinking and reviewing of action that has resulted in a shift in ways of working.

It was interesting to note that when community sector respondents were requested to identify the innovations in their work there was often silence, followed by almost a discounting of the initiatives as 'pragmatic responses to need'. Indeed, many respondents spoke of 'making do' with the situation and resources at hand. Improvising with current resources, systems and creating new forms and order from tools and materials already at hand have been defined elsewhere as 'bricolage'<sup>50</sup>. Bricoleurs use their familiarity with the tools and material (and knowledge) they have gathered because they as a way of dealing with tasks and challenges that arise. This practice of improvisation was evident in the use of mental maps to plot out service options and links.

*I guess I know that we have this, and they have that and another agency will be able to provide something else and we work it out as we go.*

As an interesting aside it was considered by the sector that service recipients also engage in a similar process of mental mapping by linking services to resources until a requisite package of care has been attained. It was agreed within the Brisbane Focus Group that the clients "have as good, if not better understanding of the system and know how to use it to get the results they want, not necessarily need". In this way, it could be said that homeless clients are also engaged in a process of 'service bricolage'.

A recurring theme within the community sector was the use of personal, professional and program based networks as the means at hand to access resources, find out or clarify information and directly link clients to preferred services. Indeed, the evaluation process itself provided a space in which this improvisation and opportunistic action was demonstrated, with people using the networking occasion to serendipitously canvas for assistance and make linkages not previously available.

It could be argued that rather than engaging in innovation, the nature of the work [crisis driven] and the largely loosely coupled condition of the service system, that homelessness work is permeated by the need to make do and bricolage.

This view was succinctly put by a Government respondent in relation to the service hub concept:

*We talk about the Hubs being innovative and different, and in lots of ways I don't think we have new ideas. It's new funding to do things and I think that case management and linking agencies are not new ideas. We have allowed some good ideas a chance to happen.*

Many of the innovations developed have been described as valuable additions to the service system. The contribution and value of the initiatives notwithstanding, the real benefit of the R2H has been providing the financial support and the conceptual space to try out new ideas and experiment. Proving capacity and capability for the sector to be innovative is considered to be an important and necessary function of government. It is important to note that bricolage innovation generally only has a short term effect<sup>51</sup>. Accordingly, adequate funds and assistance should be made available to shift the reliance on bricolage to more sustainable innovation forms.

<sup>50</sup> Levi-Strauss, C., 1966, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Baker, T. Miner, A, and Eesley, D., 2003, Improvising Firms: Bricolage, Account Giving and Improvisational Competencies in the Founding Process, *Research Policy* 32: 255-276.

## Benefits of R2H and Impact on Client Pathways

There is little doubt that assisted by additional funding and focused attention the Brisbane homelessness service system has been improved. The whole-of-government approach has more closely linked in several departments previously playing limited roles in the sector (despite their impact on the sector through policy and service criteria). The inclusion of Disability Queensland was identified as an important next step.

Further, the number, range and quality of services available to homeless people in Brisbane have been extended. The addition of new services has improved the quality of existing services through access to additional resources such as training, increased specialist knowledge and capacity as well as greater array of referrals options. Some of these initiatives such as HPIQ, the Hubs and the Health Outreach Teams are acting as key linking points in the service system. On the latter it has been said:

*Health Outreach Teams are huge elements and are universally applauded as a helpful thing ... they deal with our officers, they deal with clients, they go to the Hubs. They are a key thing linking everything together.*

These initiatives extend the previous emphasis on crisis to incorporate a more holistic perception of homeless client.

For some agencies the receipt of additional 'top up' funding was perceived as a benefit of R2H. Specifically it was considered to provide a level of 'viability' or 'buffer' enabling services to continue delivering services that were under threat.

An additional positive outcome of R2H relates to the stronger linkages between agencies brought about by the introduction of the service Hubs and HPIQ. These initiatives, while predominantly focused on linking to core services, provided a foundation for broader integration across the sector. At the service level a number of programs and in particular the outreach services and the HHoT program have made some good inroads linking clients to services and, in doing so, services to services. While the Brisbane service sector has a way to go before it could be considered fully integrated, if indeed, that it is the goal, many inroads have been made in this direction. Indeed, high levels of integration may take up to several years to start to develop.

### Unintended consequences

While it is apparent that the R2H has made some inroads to enhanced services and service integration, there are some areas where the response has solicited unintended consequences. First, the expansion and enhancement of the service system, coupled with the growing number and variety of clients, has uncovered a much larger underlying need than was expected. As a respondent described this situation:

*There were high expectations around more resources, a more immediate response. That did not happen. It might be partly explained by — create a new service — create more demand — and if you don't have a plan how to respond — it can get worse.*

Prior reports have also highlighted this dilemma with, for example, Seelig et al<sup>52</sup> describing the process as an “unplugging of latent demand”. The result of an expanded client set is placing an increased strain not only on resources but on the workers. The finding lends support to the argument that integration is not an answer for an under-resourced service sector<sup>53</sup>.

A further concern attributed to R2H is that the focus on Roma House and the Hubs has reinforced inner Brisbane as the location for homelessness. It was noted that previous interventions sought to limit the congregation of people in the city because of the potential for their problems to be escalated in this environment.

Despite these issues, overall the cumulative effect of R2H — additional money, services and service models and focused attention to homelessness — has been a noticeable improvement in the number, range and quality of services and programs available to homeless people. Evidence of this improvement is manifest in the better intervention pathways for homeless clients.

## Impact on Client Pathways

An overall goal of the R2H Strategy was to improve the housing and support pathways through enhanced and better connected services. On the whole there was agreement that the initiatives, funding and enhanced focus and commitment to homelessness afforded by R2H has assisted clients in their ‘route to secure shelter’<sup>54</sup>. It was acknowledged however that the sector could not be described as ‘connected’ and that there was ‘still a long way to go’. Nevertheless, the additional services and ‘top-up’ funds provided were identified as helping to ‘patch over’ many of the previous gaps in services that had resulted in clients spiralling back into homelessness or revert to earlier stages on the intervention continuum.

Indeed the Hubs and HPIQ were considered to have played key roles in this bridging process at the initial point of contact. Furthermore, it was considered that the Hubs were contributing to the development of sustainability of pathways through their connections, and spread of services. On this it was noted: “The hubs are getting more pathways going by doing some of the case management and advocacy for clients.”

The introduction of new more accessible programs and services were also presented as a key conduit to the path toward more stable housing. The Health Housing Outreach Teams were frequently touted as key to this process since they expanded the array of services to include health focus – thus embedding clients within a continuum of care.

*I think that clients have definitely got access to better services, things like HHOT which obviously help peoples’ pathways to more stable housing in terms of their health needs.*

Overall the position is that R2H has helped to smooth over some of the gaps in service delivery options and importantly to ‘make links to things that were previously not linked’. The addition of other early intervention services and programs including the Court Diversion Program and the Police Liaison workers not only added to the array of options available but offered the potential to reduce demands on services higher along the pathway.

<sup>52</sup> Seelig, T., Phillips, R, and Thompson, A., 2007, *Mid Term Review of the Queensland Government’s Response to Homelessness: Final Report* (25 September) University of Queensland.

<sup>53</sup> Waldfogel, J., 1997, *The New Wave of Service Integration Social Service Review* 71 (3): 463-485; Government Service Delivery Project, 2000), *Human Service Integration: A Background Paper*, Office of the Public Service Commissioner, Queensland Government, Brisbane.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, L. D. Tulloch., 2000, *Pathways to Homelessness: A Review of the Research Evidence*. Edinburgh: Scottish Homes

In reflecting on the concept of a pathway a number of respondents raised concerns about the paucity of options available to people, particularly at the more resource intensive end of the service continuum. In particular there was widespread and intense concern at the lack of attention to support and, especially the failure to address what was perceived as the real cause of homelessness - the lack of affordable housing. For some there was frustration that more innovative and imaginative initiatives have not been explored in this context.

## Barriers

For many respondents across both sectors, a key barrier to the ability of R2H to achieve its integration goal was the lack of an overarching policy statement to provide coherent direction. The R2H document while setting out the broad strategy for the initiative, the array of services to be developed or enhanced and the funding specification, was perceived as an insufficient instrument to secure a united homelessness service sector. Encapsulating this view was the description of R2H as a 'funding regime' devoid of an articulated policy statement. Given the cross-cutting nature of the strategy and therefore the need to bring a wide number of government agencies and the non-government sector to the same page, respondents considered that a clear statement of direction and priorities was essential. Indeed, the current non-existence of the policy statement allowed for various interpretations and positions to be adopted on the direction of the intervention which specifically worked against integration. It was hoped that the release of the Commonwealth Government White Paper on Homelessness would provide both the incentive for a Queensland position and the conceptual basis.

*So, as I see it the service system was fractured before R2H which came in like a steam roller, including HPIQ — but there was no sense of how R2H services would connect and still no system or plan as to how the existing system would connect.*

Closely related to the previous issue, was the view held by several respondents that there was a lack of leadership being exhibited within the sector. In particular, the leadership deficit was considered to flow from the lack of direction, attending to own preserves or turf issues.

The shortfall of good leadership was identified as also contributing to some of the ongoing poor management practices that characterised business relations between the sectors. Such practices, it was contended, served to reinforce the disconnect between sectors and worked to prevent shared working including the genuine sharing of information, power and resources.

*There are certain barriers that on occasion have been reinforced by bad management practices that make NGOs very nervous about engaging with government departments and raising legitimacy issues.*

It was postulated that these poor management practices arose from a lack of understanding and appreciation rather than malicious intent. Nevertheless, this situation points to the need for closer reflection on practices and ongoing and regular meetings, coupled with interaction guidelines and shared training experiences.

The historical underfunding of the homelessness sector in Queensland and the existence of legacy systems that are hard to change were also identified as hindering the progress of the sector and its integration. The SAAP system was presented as a frequent example of a service that is 'rooted in the old model'. The adoption of a more comprehensive change in this service system has been regularly

stressed in a number reports<sup>55</sup>. In particular there have been calls a stronger funding base and a broadening of the intervention focus from shelter to sustainable housing. Clearly, in order to achieve integration there has to be an adjustment or change in the current systems and the way organisations work<sup>56</sup>.

Finally, the R2H funding itself was seen as an obstruction to real and sustained integration. This position relates specifically to the perception that new services under R2H received more funds than existing services. This tension has resulted in what has been described as a 'backlash between old money and new money'. Exacerbating the supposed 'them and us' situation, is the fact that some staff, doing same work are paid under different awards and therefore receive less money than others doing the same or similar work. Within the community sector there was also widely held belief that the government has 'done better' from the R2H funding. Together, these perceptions, whether unfounded or not, act to undermine the sense of cohesion and collegiality required for integration and quality service delivery.

## Enablers

There was overall agreement that the R2H Strategy funding was a key enabler to both the increased number and quality of services now available to homeless people in Queensland. Furthermore, it was noted that bolstering the service system helped to relieve some of the pressure of crisis care and freed workers to focus on intervention. For many informants, extending services and bridging service gaps provided the necessary fillers to better begin to 'join-up' the service sector.

The added attention in the public and media directed to homelessness from the R2H Strategy and other homelessness initiatives has been seen as a positive factor. It has been seen as a good opportunity to change the system and move it forward.

The most important enabler, however, is the very apparent sense of good will and commitment present to make a real difference to homelessness. This phenomenon crosses government and non government sectors and has created good and sustained working relations. Moreover, these relationships and the commitment to service enhancement act to smooth over some of the ongoing tensions between the sectors and maintain focus on the work at hand.

## Lessons

### Requisite integration

Integrated services should not be an end in itself. Moreover, there are a number of levels of integration that are appropriate for different purposes.

Attention and effort should be directed toward establishing the level of integration required to make the service system functional. The network maps provided in this case study provide a foundation on which to begin this assessment.

The case study has highlighted the value that different Hub models can provide to a diverse client group and that each contributes to both service delivery and broader policy integration.

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<sup>55</sup> QCOSS, 2008, Social Policy Forum Report 2008, Brisbane, Qld; Seelig, T., Phillips, R, and Thompson, A., 2007, *Mid Term Review of the Queensland Government's Response to Homelessness: Final Report* (25 September) University of Queensland.  
<sup>56</sup> Valentine, K. Fisher, K and C. Thompson, 2006, Making Integration Happen: The Families First Policy Experience, *Child Abuse Review* 15 (6): 414-428; Keast, R. and Brown, K. (2006). Adjusting to New Ways of Working: Experiments with Service Delivery in the Public Sector, *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 65 (4): 41-53

### Coherent policy framework

The case study has highlighted the important role that a strong policy framework can contribute to the enhancement and integration of the homelessness service system in Queensland. Such a policy framework should be formulated based on cross-sector dialogue and set out a vision around which shared commitment can coalesce and collective action mobilised. The policy statement should clearly articulate objectives and expectations and set out a framework through which integration can transpire. Strong policy leadership is required to facilitate and sponsor integration and the change necessary to achieve this goal.

### Relationships

Relationships have been identified as central to the integration process. Relationships take time and effort to build. They are not an 'instrument' to be used but rather should be used well and wisely with adequate time and financial support provided to build, nurture and sustain. Integration mechanisms that involve relationships across organisations and sectors as between levels of operation offer stronger integration success and the potential for systems change.

### Bricolage innovation

Innovation 'on the run' is a common practice at the client and program levels within the homelessness service system. Bricolage offers a way forward by creatively reconfiguring existing resources into novel products and services. However, it should be noted that Bricolage innovation is only effective in the short term and rarely can be 'leveraged up' to impact on the system level innovation and change necessary for integration.

## Conclusion

This case study has examined the role of HPIQ, Roma House and the service hubs (BHSC and Hart 4000) in the Brisbane homelessness service system. On average the network metrics have identified that the Brisbane system is moderately integrated. Overall, drawing from the qualitative and network data, it can be concluded that the Brisbane service system demonstrates a cooperative to coordinative integration pattern. Within this system the central role of the two hubs especially in terms of linking their own service sets is evident, while HPIQ and Roma House play a more subsidiary role. Together, the four new R2H initiatives are making inroads into improved client services and a better integrated system. The task for these agencies and other within the system will be to use the information presented in this case study to review the current patterns of connection and plan for the future.

## CASE STUDY 2 — SERVICE HUB FACILITATION AND INTEGRATION OF EXISTING AND NEW ELEMENTS IN THE GOLD COAST SERVICE SYSTEM

### Background

The Gold Coast region was selected as a Case Study site because the location has particular features and characteristics in which the integrating structures and relations of R2H could be observed. As advised by the Executive Director of the Gold Coast Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Program, these diverse geographic areas comprise:

*...the tourist strip; the areas bordering on the Gold Coast hinterland; the fast developing corridor between the northern tip of the Gold Coast strip and Beenleigh at the northern end of the region.*

The geography is characterised by diversity across economic divides and between a ‘floating population’ of tourists and a local resident population:

*It is a region of much contrast with areas of low income and others of significant wealth. On the tourist strip homelessness is often hidden as people who are homeless blend in with tourists. Cross border issues between Tweed Heads and southern Gold Coast areas further add to the challenges.*

The northern area of the region, due to changes to local government regional boundaries, has been viewed as being located either in the Gold Coast or in Logan. While this area was included as a significant part of the planning and development of the Gold Coast regional network it is now, officially, outside the Gold Coast LGA. However, Beenleigh services remain members of the Gold Coast Homelessness Network due to Department of Communities funding arrangements and project partnerships. This structural dissonance between program parameters, official LGA boundaries and geographical boundaries demonstrates the difficulties in developing integration models that can more effectively draw on combined resources and expertise to address homelessness.

### Previous interventions in the Gold Coast

The Gold Coast has a long history of responding to the needs of homeless people. Groups have developed a range of expertise in dealing with the complex issues surrounding homelessness. Historically, in the context of the Gold Coast Homelessness field of operations, early intervention work came through the Department of Communities. Specifically, the Department provided funding for a SAAP Local Area Planning project in 1996. The original Gold Coast SAAP Network was formed with membership open only to SAAP services. Through the Gold Coast SAAP Network the Sub-regional Service Integration Project (SRSI) submission was created in 2000/01 with the aim to develop a more coherent framework for the presentation of programs to better meet the needs of clients through a collaborative and coordinated localised approach. The SRSI was identified as the vehicle within which the SAAP service system would be reorganised in order to better match client needs to services, as well as to enhance general service delivery within the regions<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Department of Families, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program SRSI Implementation Project — Gold Coast March 2001

The recommendations of the SRSI submission were not taken up, and, primarily as a result of funding not being allocated to SAAP programs, the Gold Coast SAAP Network meetings and integrated activity waned leading to limited interaction and joint working.

In 2001 the SAAP Network members determined to revive their meetings and made a decision to develop a Consortium that would be well placed to successfully apply for funding including, that available through the new Queensland Government's R2H initiative. The network renamed itself as the Gold Coast Homelessness Network's Consortium and brought together nine SAAP and other community organisations in the Gold Coast. The consortium re-established the historically networked and co-operative conditions that led to the Gold Coast Homelessness Network. In November 2005 the decision was taken to open the membership and rename the network the Gold Coast Homelessness Network.

The Gold Coast Homelessness Network acknowledged an urgent need for a regional homelessness interagency network(s) due to a lack of coordination mechanisms for services at the regional or state-wide level. In effect, the Gold Coast Network considered that the R2H was correct in indicating that homelessness needed to be addressed in a different way. The Network also felt that there needed to be a QLD Health 'best practice model' for homeless people and those at risk, and overall to develop a whole-of-government protocol addressing new multiple issues.

An outcome of the identification of these issues led to the creation of a Consortium amongst members of the Gold Coast Homelessness Network. The Consortium then became a collaborative player and driver in the development of R2H submissions and responses for the region. The Network's first new project was a submission for R2H funding to develop an outreach service model to address primary homelessness across the Gold Coast region.

The Gold Coast Homelessness Network proved to be a critical element for the future development of a Consortium model and the ensuing creation of the Gold Coast Hub service system. The Network recognised that the linear nature of the Gold Coast did not lend itself to the general R2H Hub definition of work being performed from one place. As a result, the Network submitted the R2H plan that outlined a Hub with no "fixed" address and the Hub team (referred to as HOST – Homeless Outreach Support Team) was to have a variety of access points all along the 70 kms of the Gold Coast.

As a result of the linear and mobile Hub model, accepted and operational in 2007, the Network and the HOST mobile team and the Early Intervention services are together a Consortium of integrated networks using the benefits of HOST and HHOT (Homeless Health Outreach Team - the Dept of Health floating team). This innovative arrangement was developed in response to the particular geographic features of the Gold Coast however; it has also served as a novel client service model.

Consortium members include:

- Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Programme
- Spiritus Beenleigh Youth Accommodation Service
- Beenleigh Adults and Youth Services (Wesley Mission Brisbane)
- St Vincent de Paul Society Qld
- Gold Coast Youth Service
- Macleod Accommodation Support Service (Women)
- Care Housings
- Gold Coast Housing Company
- Surfers Paradise Anglican Crisis Care

- Gold Coast City Council
- QPILCH (Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House)
- Set Free Ministries
- STARH

As the network has developed, further partners were added to the mix including the HOST and HHOT teams. The HOST teams consist of 5.5 people who “travel” to the client, and are supervised by Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Programme, who heads up the ‘Hub’ program. As the new R2H initiative representatives, HOST and HHOT became part of the Consortium, along with representatives from government agencies such as the Department of Communities and Department of Health.

## Key characteristics of the Gold Coast service hub model

The underlying concept of a Hub team model to provide access to ‘on-location’ services is based on the understanding that ‘joined up’ services are inherently more accessible to clients as well as being more effective and efficient<sup>57</sup>. Integration through a hub model can take a number of forms including place based co-location or through a local network of closely located agencies or through an access team that travels across a large geographic area. The service hub model that emphasises geographical or place based linkages is most prominent in policy and in usage and is a successful integration model because “clients frequently rely on a network of services, and when that network is highly dispersed services become inaccessible and less apt to be used.”<sup>58</sup>. The Gold Coast, however, has adopted a combination of virtual and co-located structure, a travelling place-based form, with various access points co-located with consortium partners, and a HOST team to travel within the region, providing team visits to known homeless locations and meeting places, which then provided both referrals and on-site care or case management. Through this model The R2H HOST and the Health Department HHOT teams and the Gold Coast Homelessness Network interact together to service the needs of those who are homeless.

As can be seen from the collaborative Gold Coast arrangement outlined above, the Gold Coast region has a number of established networks and forums, which are utilised by members from the homelessness sector to work together and share information, resources and case management. In particular the Gold Coast Homelessness Network has worked together with the Department of Communities and the Department of Housing to develop protocols and a Sub Regional Service Integration (SRSI) process to strengthen communication and coordination between local early intervention and homelessness services and other support agencies. Such agencies include mental health services and other government and non-government bodies that may be needed by clients with complex needs. Supporting and strengthening these networks and partnerships has assisted in the development of a more integrated system of service delivery for homeless people with complex needs.

<sup>57</sup> Provan, K. and Milward, H, 1995, A Preliminary Theory of Network Effectiveness: A Comparative Study of Four Community Health Systems, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25 (2): 200-225; Agranoff, R., 1991, Human Services Integration: Past and Present Challenges, *Public Administration Review* 51 (6): 533-542.

<sup>58</sup> Dear, M., Wolch, J., and Wilton, R., 1994, The Service Hub Concept, *Progression in Planning* 42 (3): 173-271; Wolch, J., 1996, Community Based Human Service Delivery *Housing Policy Debates* 7 (4) 649-670; Fine

R2H interventions could be designed in a HUB structure and the Gold Coast was one of several areas in Queensland where a homelessness Hub structure, with a variation in structure and approach, was sponsored. The HOST linear and virtually co-located strategy and workings were described within the Department of Housing as:

*Because of the geography of the coast, there wasn't just one organisation that applied for the funding ... because they're all based in a different place on the coast it meant that the team was always going to have a base somewhere, but they didn't always expect clients [to come to that base from anywhere between Runaway Bay to Coolangatta. ... there's a range of different organisations that are part of that consortium. It is an outreach model, so they'll [HOST team] go out to one of the services or somewhere where they know they can contact [the homeless].*

The Gold Coast R2H and HOST hub strategy is built upon a pre-existing base of social capital, particularly from the SAAP strategy and the Gold Coast Homelessness Network. The R2H outreach service model is a Consortium which houses a mobile/moving service and relies on consortium member organisations and other partners providing access points from which the travelling HOST team hub service can work with clients in local areas throughout the region.

Current Gold Coast evaluation reports<sup>59</sup> and respondent interviews identify consistent characteristics of the Gold Coast service hub including portability to follow a client, flexibility in services and service delivery and ensuring local action capacity. These key characteristics of the Gold Coast HOST team Hub and Network response to R2H are indicative of an adaptive effort to integrate services for the betterment of those who are homeless and at-risk clients of the Gold Coast.

### **Network analysis: uncovering integration patterns**

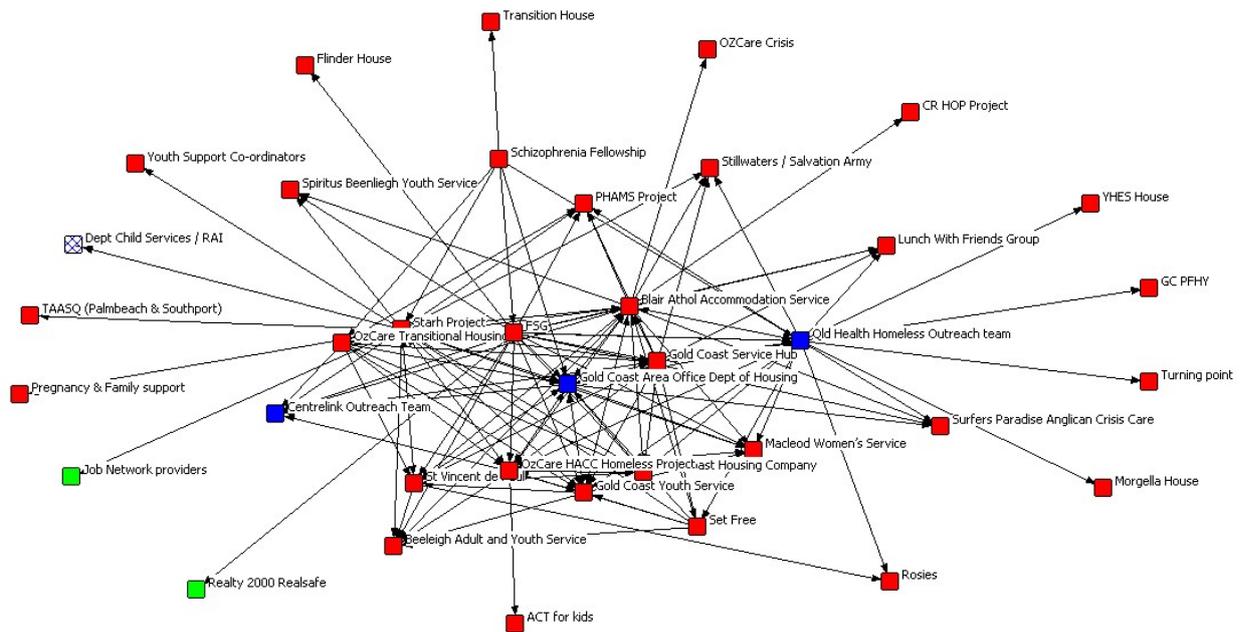
Set out in Maps 6-10 the following network maps provide a visual representation of the pattern of connection (or integration) occurring across agencies within the Gold Coast homelessness service system. For ease of analysis the nodes or system actors (organizations) have been colour coded. Government actors are depicted in blue, community red and commercially based organisations as green.

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<sup>59</sup> Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake, Senior Officer's Group on Homelessness Response, February 2008, Report coordinated by Catherine Baldwin, Principal Policy Advisor, Housing Policy and Strategy, Qld Department of Housing; Department of Communities (2008). *Internal Evaluation Report: Responding to Homelessness*

Information sharing

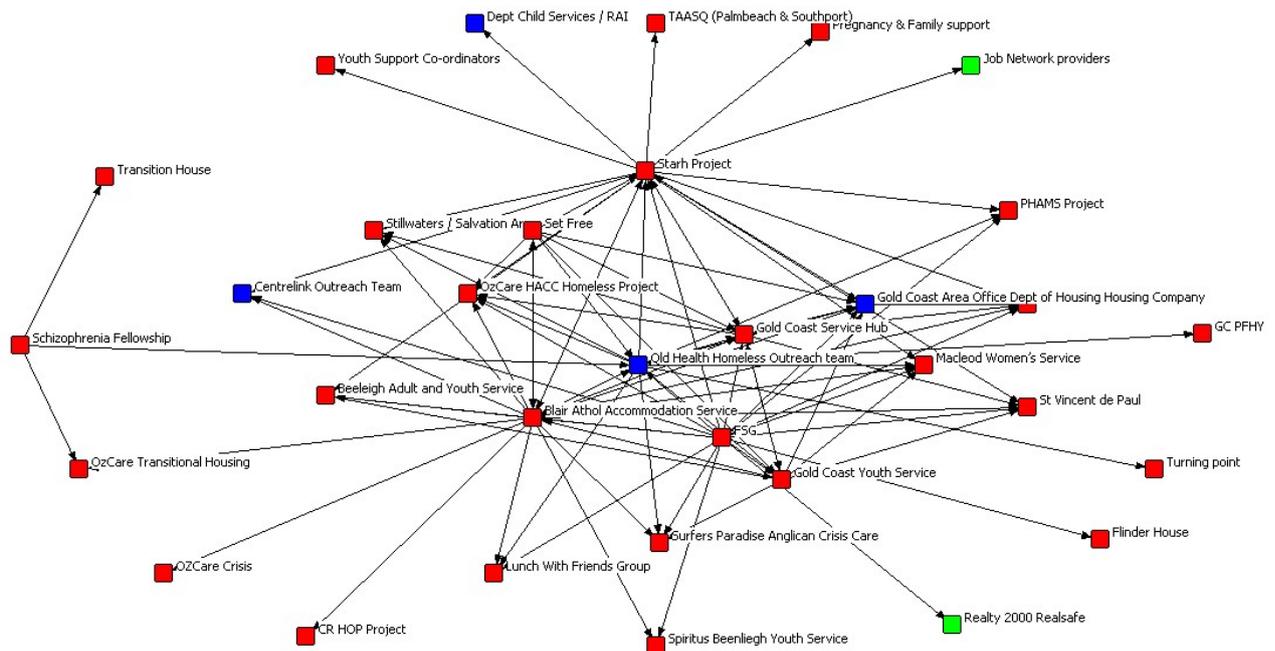
Map 6: Gold Coast Information Sharing



This map demonstrates that the Gold Coast is characterised by a relatively close meshing of agencies interacting around information sharing. Although there are substantial numbers of agencies that are actively engaged in sharing information, a core set of approximately ten actors appear to have a stronger connection in this context. What is evident in this group is that they constitute those services with either a higher level of physical accommodation and/or are long standing services. Overall, the number of agencies and the density of their connections imply that in terms of information sharing this service system exhibits a relatively strong level of connection and therefore integration.

Planning and programming

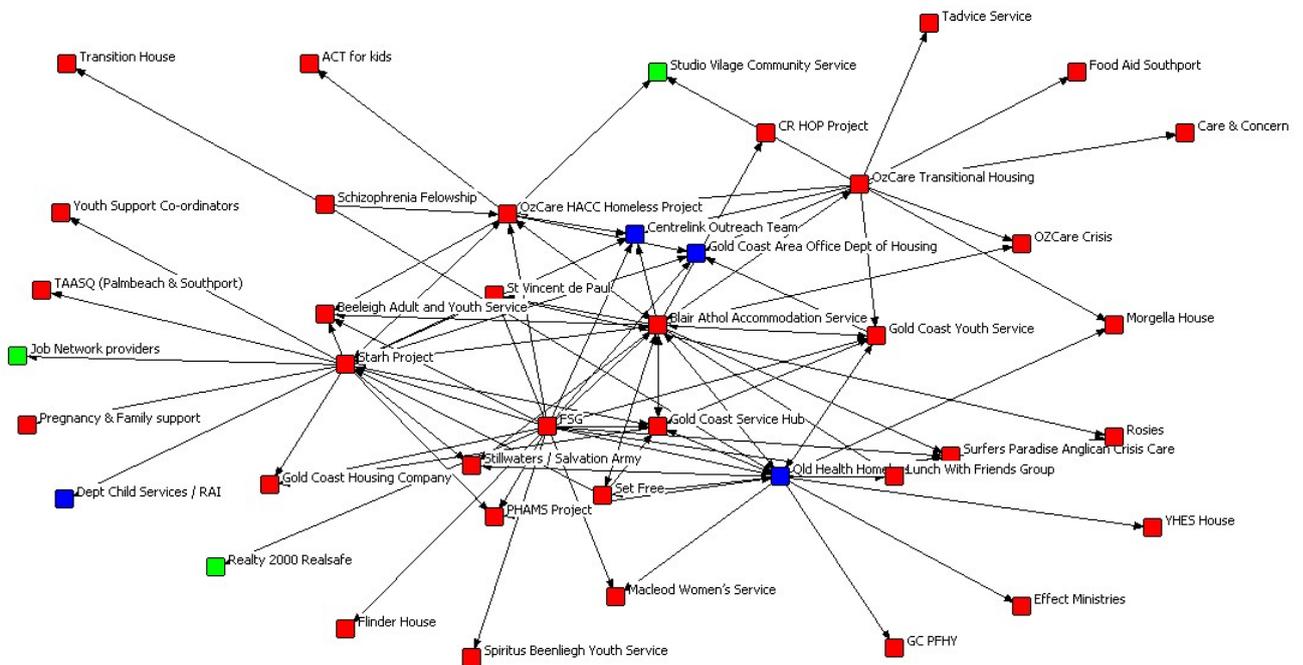
Map 7: Gold Coast Shared Planning and Programming



The map still demonstrates a moderate level of connection. For the variable shared planning and programming the map still demonstrates a level of connection. It is however, different to information sharing in terms of the more apparent dispersal of agencies and the stronger grouping around three key agencies (Blair Athol, Starh and FSG). The remaining agencies are arrayed in two layers of action, thus providing an underpinning, if less active, layer of support for planning and programming. This finding indicates that there may need to be more attention directed to extending the level of engagement around planning to a wider set of actors to ensure a more robust progression against service aims and objectives for the region for the future. It is interesting to note the absence of the Homelessness network in this space. It is postulated that respondents have identified individual agencies or people rather than the network collective as in previous variables. This points to the important role that individuals and individual agencies can have in a service system and may necessitate bolstering both these agencies and those agencies forming the next layer down. A further explanation could centre on the more individual aims and goals of the participating agencies and how this manifests itself in individualised planning.

**Shared resources**

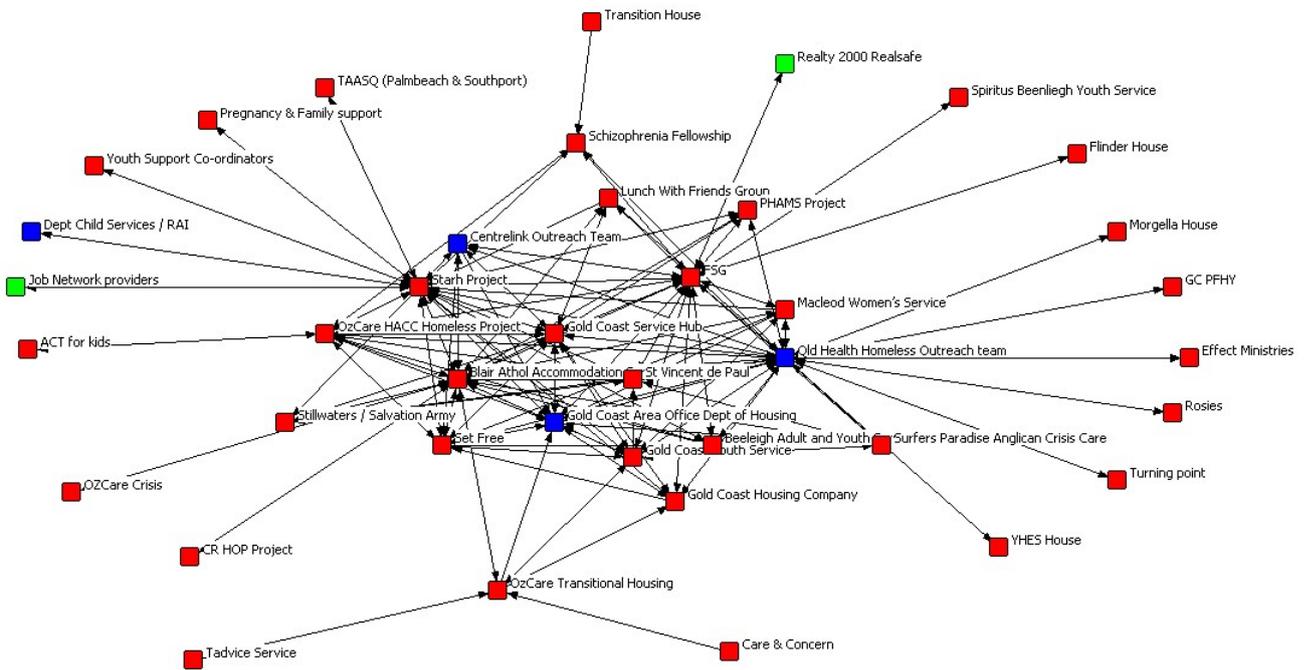
**Map 8: Gold Coast Shared Resources**



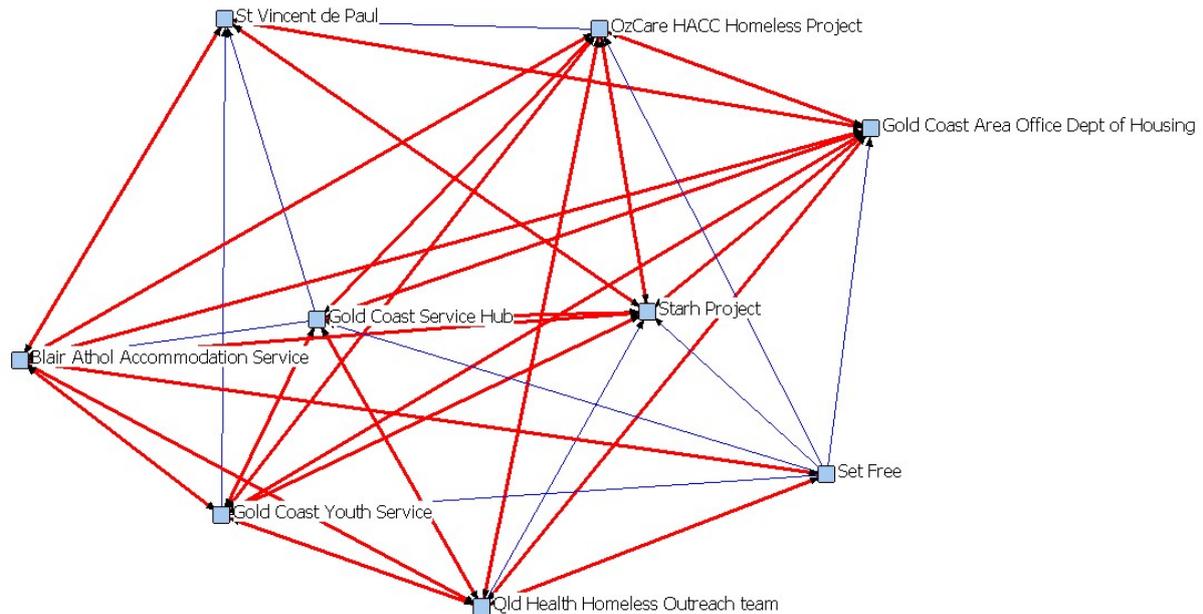
The map for shared resources demonstrates a broadly similar pattern of interaction and connection to the previous variables. Unsurprisingly, the same central group of actors remain prevalent. This result could be explained by the tangible assets held by the core clustering group. There is a noticeable drop in the level and intensity of connection by the next layer of connecting agencies which have more of an advocacy and outreach support function. The coalescing of the core agencies can be both a positive for this service system and a negative as it points to an over-reliance on a few key resource holding agencies. Overall, results suggest that greater level of resource support may need to be directed to this region and more widely dispersed.

Referrals in and out

Map 9 Gold Coast Referrals In and Out



The network map provides evidence of the continued influence of a core set of agencies within the Gold Coast homelessness service system. That is, while the overall map shows a substantial level of interaction, there are four key agencies involved in the main flows for referrals both in and out. This level of density around four key actors may indicate an overreliance on the core and an under-utilisation of the Hub as a referral agency. Indeed, the Service Hub, while featuring in the referral mesh, remains outside of the top four agencies. This is confirmed through further interrogation of the following Ego Map of referrals (Figure x). An Ego Map is a network map drawn from the perspective of one actor and shows who that actor considers they are connected to. In this application the ego net map provides an indication of the main actors within the service system. Again, while the Gold Coast Service Hub features, the map shows a clustering around the tangible resources of Starh, Blair Athol, OzCare HACC and the Department of Housing. There is a confused message here in regard to the path distance of the Gold Coast Service System. Path distance is the average number of contacts that needs to be made to achieve successful client referral. At 2.2 average steps, the Gold Coast presents as a relatively efficient referring system. However, this Ego Map suggests that the main players are extremely efficient amongst themselves suggesting that these core actors are pulling the average path distance down and that more peripheral actors may not be gaining the same level of efficiency.

**Map 10: Gold Coast Information Sharing — Ego-Network**

## Discussion of Network Maps and Metrics

The next section applies the network metrics of density, centralisation and average path distance to expand on the insights derived from the network maps<sup>60</sup>.

The Gold Coast network exhibited a number of different characteristics than those seen in the Brisbane and Townsville networks. Of the three networks the Gold Coast network represents the highest level of maturity in its ability to move from a communication model to a fully collaborative model.

Across all variables the Gold Coast network demonstrates an acceptable degree of density (.01) while still being quite centralised (40%). The network maps highlight the lack of any one dominant agency or organisation but display a core set of actors who are involved in linking services. Of the twenty three reported agencies eight have over 50% of the reported ties indicating a far more equal distribution of information, planning and resource sharing throughout the network, although there is some concentration of integration among four key players.

Interestingly, the Gold Coast Service Hub does not present as a dominant player in the Gold Coast network. Instead it appears to have a slightly lower level of interaction than other established agencies such as the Blair Athol accommodation service, and the HHOT team. It should be noted that the HHOT team features highly in each of the network mappings. The HHOT team was also consistently identified in the interviews as a team delivering the support services essential to addressing housing issues. The HHOT team appears to establish confidence and trust in the clients through contact at the places where the homeless live and/or typically congregate and to provide a virtual one-stop-shop service event in conjunction with the HOST team and other providers. It is likely the type of service (health/medicine) that HHOT provides is of greatest immediate benefit to the clients and the other services. Further investigation is required to determine whether the current role played by the Gold Coast Service Hub is deemed adequate or whether a more prominent, central role is required, particularly in relation to information dissemination and exchange. It may be that the Gold Coast Service System may not require or welcome a more significant role for the Hub.

<sup>60</sup> See Introduction section and a description of the metrics.

With a 2.2 Average Path Distance, the Gold Coast is a relatively easy service network to navigate. That is, the average distance between any two people or agencies in this service system is two steps. These are reasonable numbers for a service network of this size.

The relatively denser interactions around planning and resource sharing indicate that the Gold Coast Service System possesses a degree of maturity in that the agencies and organisations more prepared to go beyond just simple information sharing to the riskier and more work intensive behaviours of joint planning and resource sharing. The Gold Coast network also tends to exhibit an extended Core /Periphery model of network architecture with a solid group of highly connected players, surrounded by a secondary, less connected group of institutions. Importantly, those agencies that occupy a core position are those such as STARH, Blair Athol, HHoT, FSG, Ozcare, Gold Coast Youth Service and the Gold Coast Hub that that are most central to the delivery of regular services. Periphery agencies, while less essential, nevertheless assist in providing services as called upon by the Consortium, in addition to their day-to-day service delivery such as providing co-location space for the HOST and HHOT team if needed in their area. A feature of the Gold Coast system is the clear existence of a middle group of agencies that provide a strong underpinning for service support and likely provide strength, stability and sustainability to the system.

The network maps and metrics position the Hub in a non central, but core position within the service system. This suggests that the Hub is an instrument of the network and therefore this positioning is a deliberate utilisation of the initiative. The situating of the Hub within the structure of the network, rather than as an independent entity could provide a strong alternative model for integration.

## Relationships and key elements of the Hub approach adopted by the Gold Coast

There is evidence to support the hypothesis that greater integration and coordination amongst and between services and agencies is in fact associated with better access to and continuity of services. Integration and coordination are also associated with improved client housing outcomes<sup>61</sup>. While service system integration has been found to link with access to housing services, non-housing services access and client use does not appear to automatically benefit from system integration. Linkages with non-housing services and housing services in the Gold Coast region occur simultaneously with outreach and are based on case management programs established in a network of all service deliverers, and do not depend solely on basic health and mental health services outreach to have clients engaged in the service network. Indeed, onsite, travelling, and region-wide access points for team outreach is carried out by both HOST (R2H outreach) and HHOT (Health outreach). The flexibilities provided by this service system structure appear to be ideally suited to the non-homogenous and geographically dispersed communities of the Gold Coast area.

Keast et al's<sup>62</sup> model presented at Figure 1 provides a framework that discriminates along an integration continuum from co-operation through co-ordination to collaboration. It is important however to understand the distinctions amongst the terms in the continuum. Co-ordination is also defined in terms of co-operation, and collaboration has been described as a characteristic of cooperation. Based on the work of Keast and Brown<sup>63</sup> the first integrative process is to consider how to organise better with interdependent relations in order to actually be effective. The need to establish a 'new whole' is the point at which collaboration occurs. Independence needs to give way to interdependent modes of

61 Rosenheck, R. et al 1998. Service System Integration, Access to Services, and Housing Outcomes in a Program for Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness. *American Journal of Public Health*, 88(11):1610-1615

62 Keast et al, 2007. Getting the Right Mix: Unpacking Integration Meanings and Strategies *International Public Management Journal* 10 (1): 9-33.

63 See footnote 8

operation, and relationships with each other. This is particularly relevant in moving from merely working together to produce tasks, to actually changing the way service system providers work together, which then creates genuine and sustainable collaboration, more so than co-operation or co-ordination.

The Gold Coast network members were aware that bringing a diverse set of agencies and organisations together depends on good relationships. Having good relationships and relationship building appears to be their primary integration mechanism to provide a coherent and non-fragmented service Hub. The participants in the Gold Coast Hub and Homelessness Network actively value and interact in a supportive relationship structure with one another throughout the region. The interactivity is described by members of the network as due to the presence of:

*... all those organisations. It has been quite a collaborative process within the service system ... in part due to the group and leadership belief in the collaborative process in the homelessness sector in the Gold Coast. Everything around the R2H stuff sort of connects with everything else. They [the Gold Coast 'Homelessness Network' Consortium] meet on a quarterly basis and run a homelessness symposium once a year and from that have an action plan about improving service integration and just improving the way we work with homeless people ... The Gold Coast homelessness network which is a separate group made of all the government agencies and support services that meet monthly, there was no way it wasn't going to be integrated with the rest of the system, because we all see it as part of the system and whether it's Department of Housing, Department of Communities or Ozcare or even STARH, everyone links with each other and everyone pretty much knows everyone else's business. We don't get it perfect but everyone has the same idea that everyone does what they can.*

Co-ordination is very instrumental and structural in a task oriented environment. Nonetheless the goals of the Gold Coast network do indicate that where providers discussed and created their goals, as a network, there was clarity of understanding about the goals, and of why they were all there 'in the room'. Individual autonomy has not been lost; each provider indicated they still represent their issues while also aiming towards collaborating through resource sharing to provide service delivery to the clients. Efficiency and thus co-operation and co-ordination are paramount. Relationship building has produced some collaborative activity with high levels of commitment and contribution, through shared goals, joint dialogue, and some elements of trust evident. These are identified as critical elements in order to develop collaboration<sup>64</sup>. While the Gold Coast R2H network is not fully integrated (witness the poor linkage and political confusion over the Beenleigh area, and the MoU variances between the network template for case intake and management and the STARH template) the problematic has created a good balance, based in part because of the stable mix of government and NGOs in the network and network meetings and activities.

As an additional and possible explanation of such interactive behaviour, research has found that in order to have people who intentionally build supportive relationships, and therefore integrate their work, operations, services, and communicative sharing, there is a need for the presence of a belief in a sense of belonging, being supported, and having a sense of shared goals<sup>65</sup>. This commitment to connecting with others appears to be based for a start on engagement and motivation. Engagement is

64 Huxham, C. (ed) ,2000, Collaborative Advantage London: Sage; Keast et al, 2004, Network Structures: Working Differently and Changing Expectations, Public Administration Review 64(3): 363-372

65 See footnote 8

defined as a combination of a sense of support, recognition, belonging and growth. Motivation is “the set of processes that arouse, direct and maintain human behaviour towards attaining a goal.”<sup>66</sup>

The achievement of larger organisational goals is highly dependent on the ability of collective organisations to motivate, support, communicate and thus integrate. The Gallup Organisation<sup>67</sup> found that, where motivation was present, productivity and positive outcomes increased by 50%. Their report noted that engaged people, amongst several traits, display:

- commitment to a connection with others;
- intentionally build supportive relationships;
- are naturally innovative and strive for efficiency; and
- never run out of things to do and create positive things to act upon.

Commitment to connection-to-others is one explanation for understanding the forging of strong, ongoing links between the Gold Coast homelessness services and government services, based on a value of and need for interpersonal engagement. A high quality level of interpersonal engagement provides an environment in which the people create and make sense of the organisation, be it virtual, linear or a hub. This “collective sense-making”<sup>68</sup> assists in achieving adaptation by participants through the sharing of information and expertise. Prevention of interpersonal engagement diminishes people’s capacity to adapt and share, grow and learn. This finding has implications for the development of good relationships amongst members of committees, teams, collaborative hubs, and leaders. In the Gold Coast scenario, the existence of a highly committed set of service agents/actors and leaders, with an absolute belief in good relationships, collaboration, sharing of information and intense communication efforts is an integral part of the success of the Gold Coast Service System’s collaborative integration.

In addition to a belief in a sense of belonging, being supported, and having a sense of shared goals, these ‘commitment to connecting with others’ relationships based on engagement and motivation reflect a horizontal continuum of integration and progressive relational strength. The Gold Coast Network and Hub, generally see themselves as interdependent agencies rather than independent agencies and relationships, especially as they wish to remain effective in improving the situations encountered around homelessness.

The research indicates there is an essential need for a coordinating unit and the evidence of the case study confirms this in relation to the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast has strong teams in planning and decision making committees of government and can raise agendas that go to government. The Gold Coast Mapping results suggest that local government and neighbourhood communities are not as involved as they optimally should be in decision-making around issues of homelessness. The findings of this Case Study therefore suggest that there is a need to more strongly involve local communities in decision making committees in order to develop greater collaboration. Overall the Gold Coast is fairly stable and balanced. Such stability makes sense in an environment where there is so much sharing of planning. If there is broad sharing of planning across agencies then there is a greater likelihood that there is sharing of resources as well. Commitment to planning results in action as demonstrated in resource sharing. For the Gold Coast this strongly links back to the fact that the Gold

66 Harter, J.K., Schmidt, F. L., Keyes, C.L.M., 2006, Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes – a review of the Gallup studies. Gallup Management Journal. Retrieved from <http://gmj.gallup.com>. Accessed 30 January 2008 through [http://www.cuttingedgepr.com/articles/empcomm\\_employee\\_engagement.asp](http://www.cuttingedgepr.com/articles/empcomm_employee_engagement.asp)

67 See footnote 12

68 Hamlin, R.G., Davies, G., 1996. The Trainer as Change Agent: issues for practice. In J. Stewart and J. McGodrick (Eds), Human Resource Development: Perspectives, Strategies and Practice. London, Pitman Publishing, pp 199-219

Coast network and Hub have diligently talked about commitment and their terms of engagement, thus generating an interdependence and trust in their professional relationships.

The interdependence of the Gold Coast Hub reflects not only the service agency participant needs related to engagement and motivation, but also reflects a 'new whole' belief about the way they work together based on a larger focus — a bigger picture of what the clients' need<sup>69</sup>. A view of successful integration from the client's perspective is provided in The Department of Communities Service Integration Stocktake Report<sup>70</sup>. The agencies and the Network all either reported an identical belief system or stories that confirmed the following success perspective that clients are:

1. Treated with dignity and respect when service staff assist in identifying their needs;
2. They be supported by NGOs to meet these needs;
3. That they only have to tell their story once if they move from service to service; and
4. That they gain life skills to feel confident and empowered to sustain their tenancy and reach their goals if that is their desire.

Successful service integration is also reported by Department of Communities, and verified by NGO interviews, to operate for and believe in all organisations in the system (government and NGO) working collaboratively together to:

*... identify gaps, issues in the service system and work together to problem solve these via a solution focused framework either at a micro or macro level utilising mechanisms such as individual expertise, networks, practice forums (such as the Early Intervention Practice Forum in 2007), holding symposiums, attending conferences, attending relevant training and attending the quarterly non-government meetings run by the Department.*

From this it can be seen that time and effort is invested in both relationship building between agencies and within the network itself. The network leverages off these relationships and greed terms of working to enhance service planning and delivery in the region.

## Resources and Factors Effecting Service Integration

Regarding structural models for Homelessness, the interviewee at the Dept. of Housing on the Gold Coast noted the importance of a good match of model to the purpose and context. They went on to describe the key enabling elements of the Gold Coast model as:

*[the service providers in the model] do work closely, they are part of the service system, but again that is the feature of all these new services, and look I think it is both the people running those new services, but it is also ... a strong service system, and strong network that wants to make stuff work so we get more money, so we get better outcomes.*

A working philosophy of openness and inclusion is an important feature of the Gold Coast and represented a key distinction between it and other service areas. This inclusivity and its impact are explained:

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<sup>69</sup> Keast, R. and Brown, K., 2006, Adjusting to New ways of Working: Experiments with Service Delivery in the Public Sector. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 65(4), pp. 41-53, December

<sup>70</sup> Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake, Senior Officer's Group on Homelessness Response, February 2008, Report coordinated by Catherine Baldwin, Principal Policy Advisor, Housing Policy and Strategy, Qld Department of Housing

*So I think it is a two sided thing, the sector here and the new people on board are keen to make it work and make it effective, and they do work well across the services.*

In addition to the group and individual commitment to collaboration and integration found in the Gold Coast Homelessness Network, the Department of Communities has an officer whose role is to support and monitor individual services, to identify collaboration and integration, and any gaps in service delivery, and attend all network, steering committee, reference group, and similar meetings. In addition, and most likely of equal importance is accepting and carrying out a role as an encourager of individual services to integrate. Such a role from an agency is critical in validating the Gold Coast Network efforts and showing that the agency has respect for and commitment to the NGOs. Some reporting from NGOs indicates a gap in this effort, particularly at the State level of policy and funding.

In considering integration initiatives, this Case Study also examines the higher levels of the Gold Coast network and hub, where the Regional Managers Coordination Network (RMCN) continues to have a homelessness subcommittee, including a Gold Coast Homelessness Network representative. The Gold Coast RMCN has kept that sub-committee going because it is found to be exceptionally useful. The Department of Communities also holds, every quarter, a meeting with the NGO agencies. The outcome is a great breadth of feedback between the two parts of the homelessness sector. These meetings include discussions about what issues are front-of-news, including homelessness and domestic violence. These meetings provide a great deal of information and an even greater opportunity to brainstorm and explore current best practice and what might become critical in the near and distant future. In addition there is a Homelessness Symposium annually to which a broad audience of homelessness sector providers is invited.

A recent meeting of the RMCN subcommittee on homelessness was described as follows:

*The government people and the network representative discussed the homelessness legal clinic which is part of the stated strategy of the Gold Coast Network Consortium group. The RMCN agreed that it is still a priority. Since the Gold Coast Network was unable to find and engage with enough lawyers, the legal clinic project had collapsed. The RMCN felt that Dept of Communities had good lawyer contact and they will arrange meetings and bring lawyers in to discuss and innovate on means by which to have a successful legal clinic. Then the ongoing task of moving it forward and coordinating the process further would go back to the Gold Coast Network group.*

The RMCN is of benefit because it provides better access to managers within government — in both agencies and in Councils. Once issues are generated and pushed upwards, and received by the RMCN, the network's business and operations interconnect with government goals and government opportunities for support and contact with other resources. The high level leadership support legitimates and validates the work of homelessness support services and provides the requisite links to others who can commit resources and business community engagement in resolution of the issues. The relationships and incentives to forge strong, ongoing links are greatly assisted by leadership, such as within the RMCN. Collaboration, joint ownership of issues and practices, and inclusion of the Gold Coast Network and the Hub in the government process are both successful and constantly evolving. Incentive to continue the engagement and collaboration is high.

The Department of Communities' Stocktake Report<sup>71</sup> and subsequent interviews with departmental staff and NGO staff also report on the HHOT initiative from QLD Health as part of the R2H initiative. The report from all documents and interviews indicates that HHOT is collaborating and integrating extremely well within the homelessness service system. The leader of the HHOT team is also a

<sup>71</sup> Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake, Senior Officers' Group on Homelessness, Feb 2008

member of the RMCN Sub-Committee on Homelessness. The Stocktake Report states that “this team is having a positive impact on supporting homeless clients with all health issues including mental health and has been able to support long term homeless clients by providing ongoing home visits to sustain their tenancy once the client has attained accommodation.”

The above findings in regard to the outcomes of the RMNC in terms of securing lawyers point to a weakness in being able to effectively engage the private sector as a contributor to the service system. Furthermore, the espoused belief systems identify NGOs as having responsibility for service delivery to clients that arguably purposively excludes private sector involvement. Greater inclusion of the private sector within the service system is therefore potentially an area for improvement. Another area still requiring further attention is a more successful start at collaborative engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders organisations and communities.

Amongst the service providers and the agencies there is regular information sharing, referral practices, joint planning and programming. Sharing of clients and information are key activities, with shared resources readily provided as needed amongst the service providers and agencies where relationships and engagement are strong and understood by all service participants. Enhanced planning and coordination are present in strength where the services interact, attend regular meetings, call and contact colleagues in other services; participate in protocols and Hub on-site client engagement in a scheduled and continuity-based client access arrangement.

Key integration mechanisms include case management meetings, monthly network meetings, Consortium representation on Senior Management sub-committees on housing, brokerage sharing, and long term relationships — including picking up the telephone and talking with colleagues of the Consortium on a regular basis. The inclusivity and regular contact provide the ongoing knowledge of what everyone is doing, what clients are doing, how client cases are being managed, and clarity of how those involved will each handle or manage what part of any given activity or issue.

The most important integration mechanism is a solid belief by all the Gold Coast Consortium participants that they must stay in touch with one another on a regular basis. To that effect, they call, and travel and take time to attend the monthly meetings regardless of what else may be happening.

## Innovation

An evident attribute of the Gold Coast Service System was the level of innovation occurring. This was a characteristic of the system that facilitated even greater collaboration as well as being a contributing factor in delivering better access for clients to services. Interestingly participants did not see their work as innovative. They observed what they did as responding to new challenges and needs as they arose, and they were so busy working out and addressing their engagement and collaborative strategies that they were not inclined to step back and define their efforts as innovative. Many stated that they felt a need for everyone to be flexible. The interview with Department of Communities revealed a belief that what everyone in the Gold Coast situation is doing and building is not based so much on flexibility, but rather on creativity and a strong desire “to make it work”. Such commitment, engagement and innate creativity in those involved in homelessness and the R2H initiative is quite evident in the stories told by interviewees.

The presence of key drivers and support mechanisms (as opposed to the SRSI initiatives) has enhanced the desire for all to be engaged in the R2H initiative. Given that engagement, the process of working within the R2H environment has led in the Gold Coast to a linked, collaborative and mainly integrated (filled with the best of efforts and intentions) redesigned organisational modus operandi, based on an historically collaborative model, to redesign what is at hand, by using new modes of what

was at hand, in a process often referred to as bricolage<sup>72</sup>. The use of this process as a new understanding of organisational redesign begins by playing with new modes of using what is at hand. The improvisational aspects of bricolage provide the potential for new relationships and ideas to be uncovered during a collaborative process.

In the case of the Gold coast service system the opportunity for creativity and the willingness in the network to give some good ideas a chance to happen is seen as most significant. While case management, roaming and mobile teams, linkage of agencies, network meetings and such are not new, they offer the opportunity to create newness. The newness is created through rearranged usage, redesigned collaborative processes, creatively enhanced interaction, and other modes of linked response that go beyond making do and in fact make more of what is and see the possibilities of what can be<sup>73</sup>. The creativity available in the Gold Coast service staff and government agencies reflects creative human attributes and qualities concerned with imagination, inventiveness, improvisation, insight, intuition, and curiosity — the natural ‘artful’ genius and talent of people<sup>74</sup>.

These creative capabilities of the bricoleurs found in the homelessness sector are sought after elsewhere by organisations that desire long-term success. It is suggested that structural and relational processes seeking collaboration and integration must follow suit in providing environments and experiences to assist with developing creative habits. Following on from creativity, the desired presence of innovation requires organisations to provide a culture that both supports and invests in developing creativity and provides appropriate resources for that to happen<sup>75</sup>. There is emphasis for the need to develop communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, team work, creative skills, cross-cultural understanding, problem solving, emotional intelligence and right-brain stuff. Further, a focus by economic policy makers across the world on things ‘creative’ is driven by factors such as creative inputs in innovation policy, a need for new ways of working, and a changing contemporary social environment<sup>76</sup>. The benefits of supporting creativity and innovation, such as expanded capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, creation of social bonds, and expression of communal meanings, are not only of intrinsic value to the individual but extend to the public realm and community cohesiveness<sup>77</sup>.

These benefits are reflected in the following list of what was most immediately identified as innovations in the research conducted for this Case Study. There are in addition, and with no doubt, significant numbers of unidentified daily innovations created by all those working on homelessness on the Gold Coast.

### Innovations identified from interviews

- Daily health intake meetings;
- Homeless Connect event;
- Hiring of the ‘right’ people to provide service delivery – shared values, collaborative cultural belief system;

72 Levi-Strauss, C, 1966, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

73 Weick, K., 2002, *The Beauty of Disciplined Imagination*. *Puzzles in Organizational Learning*. *British Journal of Management*. Special Issue 13: S7 – S15

74 Lloyd, C., 2007. *The Role of Arts-based Learning in a Creative Economy*. Partial Report and Dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Creative Industries, Doctorate of Creative Industries. Submitted and Approved, August 2007. Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

75 Kerr, C., Lloyd, C., 2008. *Developing Creativity and Innovation in Management Education: An Artful Event for Transformative Learning*. *The Fourth Art of Management and Organisation Conference*, The Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada, September

76 Oakley, K. 2007. *Educating for the Creative Workforce: Rethinking Arts and Education*. ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation

77 McCarthy, K. F., Ondaatje, E. H., Zakara, L. and Brooks, A., 2004. *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Research in the Arts

- Education/community awareness programs about Demystifying Homelessness – (FACSIA funding attained by an NGO) for sessions attended by government, NGOs, and private sector to dispel myths, make connections, and provide knowledge of whom to contact in relation to clients who are at risk or are homeless);
- Advisory Body support for Youth at Risk Alliance;
- Models created in the R2H Interventions
  - Anti-pathological View of Client Pathway of Assistance: Biological – Psychological - Social-Spiritual – Working with the Whole Person
  - Housing Model: Motel – Crises – Transition – Long Term
- Monthly Protocols network meetings, creation of Protocols amongst Gold Coast Network and SAAP agencies;
- Vehicle/utility access to assist with moving belongings of those in transition, can't afford moving company or is not practical due to small amount of belongings — or to collect basic goods needed for new accommodation/housing situation;
- Clearer Service Protocols to handle housing closures response with better outcomes;
- Portable Service teams (can follow the client and provide flexibility in the level of support and appropriate intervention by knowing where they are and what is evolving in their life; can stop support ending during transition from one service or eligibility of service to another — handovers and transfer);
- Collaboration and network relationship with the following initiatives:
  - HOPS — Housing Options Program (to provide a continuum of accommodation)
  - PHAMS — peer helper mentoring and support
  - STARH Project — Supporting Those At Risk Of Homelessness (funded by Dept of Communities)
  - HHOT —Health Homeless Outreach Team — QLD Health initiative
  - NGO, Dept of Housing and Dept Communities meetings at a higher level informs and assists coordinating and improving all services, not just housing
  - Regional Managers Homeless Sub-Committee (focusing on the provision and success of housing leads, links with Corrections Services, Health (JAG), City Councils, Child Safety services, and Indigenous links)
  - Homelessness Sub-Committee of Regional Managers Forum, Annual Symposium
  - Department of Communities, Community Service Officer and CCSQ attendance at all monthly meetings, symposiums, and so forth, as well as visits to all service sites.

The innovations were developed due to a strong need for more time and more space, and further, greater opportunity to take risks. Given that such needs are within the means of the government to provide assistance, there is opportunity for government to recognise their opportunity to provide time and space to make processes that are more innovative. The basis for innovations of the Gold Coast network are based on people sharing ideas, creating and enhancing an ethos of inclusion, and establishing relationships in order to focus on the client rather than themselves. Their commitment and creativity and their bricolage approach to their work, allowed all to equally and as they were able and to contribute to the whole. That they did and do that, and with great success and great motivation, is indeed most innovative for those addressing an issue that can seem at times to be overwhelming and unsolvable.

## R2H Outcomes and Impact on Client Pathways

Earlier reviews of the R2H program and intervention provide identification of and validation of the findings of this current Case Study. For example, a Mid-term Review of the Queensland Government's Response to Homelessness: Final Report<sup>78</sup> states findings that:

*The need for, and opportunity for, a coordinated and ongoing service system planning was identified by a wide range of informants. The active engagement of government and non government service providers and development of effective networks was identified as an important aspect of service planning and processes because they most grounded understanding of the gaps and overlaps. There are early indications that the benefits accruing on the Gold Coast are from the establishment of a broad homelessness network with an active role in service planning and development.*

In the current case study, based on interviews amongst government providers, agency workers, NGOs, and other service providers, the formation of the Gold Coast Hub is perceived by service delivery providers to have enhanced service delivery. A Service Integration Stocktake Report<sup>79</sup> reported "Community organizations that collaborate and integrate ensure a smooth transition for clients between homelessness services and other organizations related to homelessness. (p.1) "The Stocktake identified that the Gold Coast agencies, service providers and Homelessness Network's desired outcome, of such collaboration and integration, is that "the person's cycle of homelessness is broken and they are accommodated with support from other identified government and non government services to sustain their tenancy long term, reach their potential and contribute to the community."

Twelve respondents to this study advised that the collaborative and case management collaboration of HOST and a subcommittee of the Gold Coast Homelessness Network provide an approach that addresses the issue of transitions far more successfully than has been the case in the past for the Gold Coast. A government department official described it as being a network and collaborative Gold Coast effort because the NGOs and the HOST and HHOT teams are:

*... very much focused on case management and case conferencing, as, not all the time but, there's been some significant barriers in homelessness for a number of years and especially with mental health, so they've worked with us, and the health homeless outreach team which is another thing that's come from R2H, in sitting down and working out what's happening now, what's the short/medium and long term outcome for these clients in health, housing and support. It really has that case management approach. For example a gentleman 25 years homeless with significant mental health issues who was due to be offered one of our properties after having a period of time with that team and other teams getting to know them. He spent a period of time in some transitional accommodation and now is in long term accommodation. That's the sort of outcomes I've seen from the team.*

In the Gold Coast Hub model, by establishing participative and supportive relationships, the service groups co-operate because they have made joint decisions and they are working with the same clients. The goals of the Gold Coast network, HOST and HHOT indicate that where providers discuss and create their goals, there is clarity of understanding about the goals, clarity about what everyone's

78 University of Queensland. Mid-Term Review of The Queensland Government's Response to Homelessness: Final Report. Dr. T. Seelig, R. Phillips. A. Thompson. Housing Policy Research Program. University of Queensland Social Research Centre. University of Queensland, September 25, 2007

79 Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake, Senior Officers' Group on Homelessness, Feb 2008

role is, and agreement as to why they are all there 'in the room', without losing individual autonomy. Service delivery to the clients in this Hub model includes efficiency, co-operation and co-ordination. The following reported view and story of outcomes of the R2H project is summative in its historical and operational perspectives:

*The way the service system looked before HHOT and HOST came on board, there were some massive gaps. No one went and saw anybody outside of their service. They're not funded to.*

This respondent went on to outline the influx of new resources that has been directed to the sector with the inclusion of for example the Department of Health in the strategy.

*The health team has got everyone, they've got social workers, nurses, psychologists, a doctor, and the team leader makes sure they all work together and do what needs to be done. It's the flexibility and understanding of doing what they need to do, rather than being rigid.*

The concepts of flexibility and appropriate resourcing are key success factors in this context. The main elements of introducing the R2H teams (HOST and HOTT) are 1) the support for going out and finding people based on a philosophy that supports flexibility of support location and client access; 2) all clients are 'our' clients; and 3) the ability to develop relationships by having increased time with them in the place where they are. There is recognition within the teams that the timeline is the client's timeline, not the agency's or the legislated timeline (based on estimated cost efficiencies). The fact that the HOTT health teams are fully resourced with all the people needed already on board and providing outreach to those who are homeless, not in a clinic in one area along the Gold Coast strip is a key success factor. The service workers in these teams have a mental map of linkages that tie in both the homeless clients where they are and the other service agencies that are in fixed sites, or represented by the HOST teams who are out in the field as well. The teams in the Gold Coast know what needs to be done, what services provide what support, and what kind of relationships all these services have with one another and with the teams. Based on regular meetings and decision making inclusion, there is awareness of service resources.

Also, based on the regular meetings and case management arrangements and strategies, there is an understanding that the working relationships are all reciprocal, and this drives the teams to handle and manage things "in the way things are done" which has been designed and agreed upon in advance – by all those participating in the Network. Of equal significance for the Gold Coast is the continuing and clear identification of what has worked well and where the gaps still exist, reviewed each quarter and year, particularly through the annual Homeless Symposium provided through the Regional Managers' Coordination Network (RMCN). What exists for the Gold Coast is a belief in, and actioned behaviour for, involvement and interaction between the network and government agencies, particularly regarding structural issues in the system. For example, there is an Action Plan for the year which is generated from the Symposium and the RMCN. After that occurs, the actions are taken on board by sub-committees within the Network and service organisations who, together with government commence working on the identified issues, such as with the Legal Clinic. In addition, the Gold Coast Homelessness Network sets up working parties formed within the Network. These also generate an Action Plan, looked at in conjunction with the RMCN Action Plan, and they report back to the Network members, which include government agency people. Health, Housing and Communities agencies all attend the Network meetings. This strategy, group behaviour and interaction, is due at least in part to a fairly equal mix of government, NGO, and community actors in the consortium and network. This is not something that is found in other Case Studies within this R2H project.

The impact of such a process and interaction, as Government services note, is that when there are many people with very complex issues, having all the input, from all the agencies and network participants (collaborating and focused on the clients), builds a more complete picture of what are the various defined situations. Such an informed environment provides the ability to respond in a better, more appropriate, quicker or slower, linked-to-current-and-future-need way. In terms of pathways for and to clients, the value of the Hub/HOST team and the Consortium allows services to make assessments and make decisions effectively, particularly about what to do next in a particular context. In addition to service improvement, there is the added benefit for all homelessness workers and staff of an expanded reference group.

Accountability and responsibility for service provision, as well as ongoing awareness of who is doing what, has enhanced operational and interpersonal operations and engagement. Regular coordination meetings are hailed as not only providing documentation and “minutes” that are written up, but also create a process where “someone says well I am responsible to do X and someone else says I will do Y and so on. And so we all know what we are to do and can be held to that.” This is a mental model again accepted by all as the ‘way we do things’ and then acted upon.

As verification, another service member noted that:

*I can say from the perspective of being a new service ... having the HOST team available, [for me] to talk with their workers within the field and to contact – whenever I need to discuss different issues is very valuable because they have the experience and have a lot of answers to questions that we have been asked. That is good for us.*

The fact that becomes obvious for the Gold Coast operational and relational process is that, regardless of who is funded with the new money from R2H, the ethos of the network allows them to be inclusive, which has not happened to such an extent elsewhere in the Queensland R2H operations. As final evidence of this ethos, expressed throughout by over 17 interviewees representing individual organisations and the Gold Coast Homelessness Network, one person states with great conviction:

*Talking about the HOST team, I don't know what the policy actually says, but yes the team leaders understanding of what it's meant to be has really rolled it out well on the ground. We have a homelessness service listed, with 40 services involved, so making sure if anything happens it works with everyone else and that it's successful. It's a good homelessness network that exists and it's very strong in making sure that we do the best with what we've got. That network see's us and department of communities and other government officers on the ground that we're partners. And we've worked with that as well. We're not in opposition, we work together to make things work.*

The Hub/Consortium Network based on these and many similar reports, in effect works as a coordination point that other agencies can go to and get information – liaise about what is going on overall in the environment of the homeless sector of clients. It was not thought of nor desired to be ‘the’ coordination point, as not everything would nor should go through the Hub or HOST team. It was felt that once a client did come in to contact with HOST they would at least have a case manager, and some services found self-referrals to individual services were reducing as an outcome of the HOST team. However, one outcome that needs to be recognised and addressed is that there are more high-need clients coming in through the Hub and that increase further impacts on all of the services. While there is increased access and intervention for the Gold Coast homeless, there is increased demand on all services as more homeless and at-risk people come into contact with HOST and with HHOT.

The Network mapping findings validate the qualitative reports that a core group of services interact with an ethos of inclusivity, even in the face of activities that are not funded within their share of the R2H funding program. For example, an unexpected outcome regarding the definition of early intervention is based on the occurrence from time to time, that the Hub and HOST team does provide some brief intervention or something that constitutes early intervention, particularly where the service may prevent the person's situation getting worse. Defining early intervention in that sense can happen a lot. It was found that while many services are not funded for early intervention they do a lot of such intervention which is not recognised outside of the service by the government and has no funding.

As reported by the Homelessness Network, the lack of funding and resources impact on practices that are "core" and early intervention and innovative interventions in general are the first area of practice to go when there are resource or funding constraints. Being able to intervene in the homelessness cycle is seen as critical, as the most important work, and yet the operational perception is that it must be trimmed back so as to cover core activities based on the guidelines of core funding, which is confined to homelessness, rather than innovative and early interventions.

## Proposed Service System Improvements

The Gold Coast model has been effective as both a coordinated and integrated model and tool for Gold Coast homelessness services. The Gold Coast model has both enhanced pre-existing services and the new ones such as HOST, HHOT, and STARH. Key outcomes to be highlighted are, a coordinated, co-operative, and even collaborative network; enhancement of an existing ethos of inclusion across NGO and government agencies, a reduction in service gaps, increased flexibility and appropriate resourcing, shared decision-making, and a more fully informed environment for service workers and their clients.

There are, however, some defined barriers still present in the Gold Coast system. A brief list of the key barriers includes:

- Protocol sector-wide standardisation, due to some agencies not having acceptance of Protocols in their Memorandums of Understanding and similar agreements for funding;
- Selling R2H services to youth — takes time, patience, trust and relationship establishment;
- Rigid criteria for assistance (and housing solutions) in a highly varied needs basis that is often in a change/churn environment;
- Lack of housing for males;
- Dealing with families and individuals that are on long medical waiting lists for services for health issues;
- The need for Place-Based Coordinators where at least one is needed to insure all are connecting with each other and providing earlier intervention; and
- Poor policy awareness and poor existence, with a lack of or no knowledge of a Policy from the Government.

These issues detract from integration due to protocol confusion or non-alignment, too rigid criteria, and resource issues. In order for there to be successful co-ordination and thus integration, ongoing confusion over policy and linkage responsibility, funding or resource sharing needs to be continually addressed, gaps need to be sought, and solutions collectively discussed and adopted. Otherwise such barriers will always interfere with the tasks at hand and the long term and on-going sense of well-being of those who participate in such exhausting and demanding yet potentially satisfying work.

## Lessons

Projects which create opportunities for advancement in homelessness issues as seen in the Gold Coast indicate a profound connection both with the community and with the services collaborating in delivery. The Gold Coast Case is not indicative of some form of systematic government failure, nor of lack of accountability. The Gold Coast Case does indicate the ability to discover and effectively engage with and use essential on-the-spot information only where such information is known and shared by all, including especially those teams and agencies that are on the spot, and at the coalface of homelessness in the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast R2H response is based on an organisational reality that has evolved spontaneously and overtime and has been motivated by service people who are able to recognise and act on opportunities to improve the process and system based on knowledge garnered from the immediacy and reality of their information sources. Policy and bureaucratic weaknesses are ameliorated by agency recognition of the benefit of the HOST and HOTT and Gold Coast Homelessness Network teams and organisational collaborative groupings. Such a model will succeed in future if there is explicit recognition of the participant service's abilities to continue to effectively discover and utilise their shared knowledge even as new events and needs unfold.

In the words of the Department of Communities Feb. 2008 Stocktake Report, the lesson is one of:

*Recognising that while outcomes are hard to capture and measure, the culture of the SAAP network, [and] the new version of it called the Gold Coast Homelessness Network, are critical and important to the success of the R2H initiative – [the] network puts ... real focus on clients rather than empire building; [provides a] good sense of succession planning with network collaboration; ... enhanced funding ... has allowed a new model with an outreach function which is very effective.*

## Relationships

There are excellent foundations for a hub success story on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast Homelessness network was built on collaboration and cooperation, and the addition of HOST and STARH and HHOT can do a lot of the work and make the job of the other services a lot easier because the whole network has agreed to link together and meet monthly and meet in the one place at the one time, and be out in the community in multiple places but all in one place at one time.

There is a pre-R2H existing ethos of working together and there is a cultural valuing of what each person and service can add, and all are welcomed in to the group. There is a vision of shared resources and doing the best for the consumers at the centre. It is essential that there is, in creating a linear hub, an overall Gold Coast set of shared values and shared commitment to similar goals. The network of the service groups and their values are critical. That impacted how the Hub in the Gold Coast was developed. A lot of people were involved in the development of the model. If there had not been a network and values and working relationships in place, the Hub would be a totally different concept. Everyone also then saw the Hub as an improvement based on everyone's ideas of what was needed, what should happen, how it should work.

Indeed, there is reported frequent visits from Dept of Housing and senior government bureaucrats who come to the network meetings to see what is happening on the Gold Coast and why. The frequent question is 'why isn't it happening elsewhere?' The 'it' in the question is the collaborative and heavily linked interaction of services throughout the Gold Coast service area. Without the underpinning network, relationships, and shared values, the GOLD COAST operation would likely be

structured and pictured quite differently. The connections are perceived as a network map and that is considered the strength of the Gold Coast effort.

The formation of the Hub has enhanced services because it acts as a ring of support, and the outreach part of the concept provides initial outreach, makes assessments, and coordinates what is needed, which builds a more complete picture and a defined situation so that others can respond in a much better and effective way. The connections are essential.

## Vision and modelling

The Gold Coast Hub/HOST model is a virtual and linear model that responds to the client where they are and with what they need without the client having to move around, and without having to provide transport services for the client. In the process of creating the proposed model, the service Network Consortium participants considered whether there had to be something that would cover the length of the Gold Coast. By setting up a series of access points all along the Gold Coast, and a mobile service hub (HOST and HHOT), the homeless person can be seen wherever they are all along the Gold Coast, and they are comfortable in the ability to stay in their local area (addressing a common human need regardless of social status or situation). In addition, by providing the travelling services through the access points or common gathering/meeting areas, there is the availability of other staff, where it is safer for the service worker to be, where the service worker knows they are not the only worker. The worker also has access to technology such as telephones (except in outdoor/park areas). Such a model reflects a Coordination Hub around a series of locations rather than a series of services. Both HOST and the services can hook up clients to one or the other in an organic and needs-based process at sites and on days that are located and organised for each area along the 70km Gold Coast arena.

## Policy frameworks to match demand

The Hub team is firmly believed to be widening the options available to clients. The Hub team is also enhancing awareness of services and reaching more of the homeless which is then adding to the number of people asking for services. The system could be said, and is by service providers, to be working too well.

Of serious concern to such an innovation as this model of R2H therefore is the increase in clients and client access in a system where there are resource limitations. The risk is that client services become so strained that people do not (and some say are not) getting the attention that they need. The system introduced by R2H is working very well and requires examination of the resourced infrastructure that underpins the capacity to do the support work.

*When the R2H funding came out one of the things the sector said was, 'look, that is great, but what you are doing is putting the funding into new services but expecting the existing service system to be the basis or the foundation of these new services – and that is shaky ground, that is like building on quick sand because you haven't properly resourced, or adequately resourced existing services ... which puts the service hubs at risk. ... What do they do if there is no crises accommodation?'*

The Service Hub also doesn't have an underpinning infrastructure — the buildings, for crises, transition — to manage the continuum of the homelessness process. The structural elements of the system have difficulty dealing with unaffordable housing, rental increases, sale of properties, short leases, and the TICA register which people get on to and can't get off of when they shouldn't have been on in the first place. Rental assistance needs to be reviewed — it has not been in the last seven years.

HOST, the hub system, is adding to the burden at the same time that it is reaching out to more clients. They are bringing in even more people and trying to connect them with the system — which is already overburdened and this creates a stress point.

HHOT, which is also out there moving around in the homeless 'community', and because homeless people usually can't navigate the actual hospital system to get treatment or assessment (and if they do they get labelled as difficult) they don't get proper care and end up homeless and ill. HHOT rather than just seeing people in a clinic can function alone and collaboration with HOST to have health issues addressed quickly and effectively, and identify health issues that can impact on ongoing homelessness or 'falling over' into homelessness. The HHOT team also assists in resistance to treatment through becoming known and trusted at the place where the homeless congregate — they bring the service to the homeless people who are transient.

The service hub HOST is doing an enormous amount of work around brief intervention to get people linked into services, and in taking on clients and following them for a longer term, longer than has been thought appropriate, even having them in motels longer than can be afforded in order to prevent crises and movement into deeper homelessness issues.

### **Adequate funding and housing availability**

At issue in the Gold Coast environment, for both the services and the clients, is the influx of residents into the area, and economic competition. Where there is inability to compete in rental markets, both financially and in terms of navigating the 'system', there are more people ending up shuffled out of housing and into more vulnerable accommodation options, or who fall out of accommodation altogether. Clients who are just hanging on are observed by the services to become part of a domino effect due to the client's structural position in the social environment and the lack of affordable housing.

The Service Hub team itself is perceived to be staffed and resourced well and that is important in terms of why it is working well — it is funded well. Where funding falls short other issues occur such as a lack of housing for single men with complex needs. Lack of coordination, particularly at higher governmental levels impacts on the sector, and especially where a lack of one element such as male housing, creates more requests for other services, or an increased need for seeking other organisations' brokerage dollars just to put these people into some form of accommodation that is more costly. There is also a tendency to duplication of processes. A lack of planning, coordination and thinking through of how funding will be coordinated to support the linked services is the antithesis of having the two elements come on line at the same time. This issue indicates a need for better coordination and collaboration at the regional and State level. While the Gold Coast is operating collaboratively, there is a desire for that to extend beyond the Gold Coast environment. The following member statement clarifies the Gold Coast service perspective on this matter, and provides clarity of how the model needs to work if its innovations and initiatives are to be used elsewhere and at higher levels of management and government.

*It is essential for all services to coordinate and manage processes and interactions. This requires the whole sector to work together. A reference group is essential to assisting the situation and collaboration. There is a need, for example, for the two outreach teams to be in contact with the various services, to be sure that they are not unwittingly taking on the same clients and duplicating efforts. There are people desperate for a service and, if capable, they will shop around for a service, getting it where they can, asking anyone and everyone for the same assistance. Coordination of services and regular meetings, picking up the phone and informing the other services of what and with whom they are trying to provide assistance is therefore an essential part of the lessons to be learned from the Gold Coast model.*

## Conclusion

In comparing the R2H response in the Gold Coast, and the process followed by the underpinning Hub and Gold Coast Homeless Network Consortium, there is a multiplicity of positives on which to base further implementation and financial support. The focus in the Gold Coast is on providing better long term outcomes. To do so requires the Gold Coast Hub and Consortium system to have support in:

- removing time limits on interventions — so that people get support for as long as they need it
- implementing further reform to standardise good practice approaches, including case management methods aimed at independent living and greater economic and social participation
- establishing protocols at the local level between SAAP services and other service providers so that clients receive a joined-up approach and services are accountable.

The additional lesson found in the Gold Coast case study is that reducing homelessness is a process that requires coordination of a series of locations, rather than a series of services. Travelling/virtual teams delivering contact, referrals and on-site assistance is far more effective than separating the service from the client and requiring the client to travel. That such a hub team is an integral part of a larger consortium of aligned agencies and NGOs, all of whom meet regularly, and are included in the decision-making processes and the Case Management provides a model worth supporting in the future, and worth duplicating elsewhere. In conclusion, service collaboration and cooperation is essential to such a spatially linear model.

## CASE STUDY 3 — RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON THE R2H INITIATIVES IN TOWNSVILLE

### Background and Significance of the Case Study

This case study reports on findings from research conducted on the R2H initiatives in Townsville. The case study is important and distinctive in regard to R2H initiatives for three principle reasons. Firstly, Townsville is experiencing higher than average Queensland population growth and home price increases. Secondly, Townsville has a higher indigenous population compared to the other two cases presented in this report — Gold Coast and Brisbane. Thirdly, the case study has a primary focus on the integrated response to homelessness and public intoxication — issues that are inextricably linked and, both as separate issues and in conjunction with one another are complex and present particular challenges. The following sections consider further the significance of these three issues.

#### Townsville's growth

In 2008 the sister cities of Townsville and Thuringowa were merged under the wide-sweeping council reforms of the Queensland government. The estimated population of the new combined city was 169,484 as at 30 June, 2007. This figure represents a 2.75% increase on the previous year, compared to a state average population growth rate of 2.2% over the same period.

Housing price figures to June 2008 provided by the Real Estate Institute of Queensland suggest that home prices increased by 20% in Townsville and 15.8% in Thuringowa<sup>80</sup>. In addition, the increased cost of housing, fostered by the mining boom, has caused rents to soar resulting in an increase in 'structural' or economic homelessness. This housing affordability problem was highlighted in the *Townsville Bulletin* on 15th August, 2008 when it was reported that the rise in median household incomes in the area were well outstripped by the significant increase in the price of housing (160% in Townsville in the last five years and 130% in Thuringowa over the same period). Median rents were reported to have increased by up to \$70 per week in the past two years and homeless people estimated at 1610 — most relying on boarding houses or temporary accommodation while an estimated 9% were 'sleeping rough'.<sup>81</sup>

The statistics on population and housing indicate some fundamental economic indicators of problems associated with housing availability and affordability in the area.

This data all suggests, and is supported by local news reports, that housing affordability in Townsville is becoming a major underlying cause of homelessness. An outcome is that the composition of the homeless population is also changing with an increased number of families (mainly single women with children) either becoming homeless or being more likely to become homeless.

#### Townsville's Indigenous Population

As at June 30, 2001 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for an estimated 5.7% of the population of the Townsville Division of General Practice<sup>82</sup>. This percentage represents a more realistic estimate than the 5.1% from the 2001 census data as it is adjusted for undercounting.

<sup>80</sup> [http://www.reiq.com.au/MediaReleases/view\\_media.asp?media\\_id=411](http://www.reiq.com.au/MediaReleases/view_media.asp?media_id=411)

<sup>81</sup>

[http://www.lgp.qld.gov.au/docs/corporate/publications/planning/demographics/profiles/demographic\\_and\\_housing/townsville.pdf](http://www.lgp.qld.gov.au/docs/corporate/publications/planning/demographics/profiles/demographic_and_housing/townsville.pdf) [accessed 13 October, 2008]

<sup>82</sup> PHIDU. (2005) Population health profile of the Townsville Division of General Practice. Population Profile Series: No. 78. Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU), Adelaide.

The percentage of indigenous people in Townsville is significantly higher than the 2001 state average of 3.5%. As at the 2001 census Townsville was the Indigenous Area with the highest Indigenous population in Australia contributed to by its close proximity to the densely indigenous populated area of Palm Island. ATSI people, by any major social measure, are the most disadvantaged of all sub-populations in Australia. Their social disadvantage reflects in their levels of homelessness. In May 2004 ATSI people comprised 18% of total SAAP clients (11% in urban areas)<sup>83</sup> far exceeding their representation in the general population. Townsville's large Indigenous population sets the city up as an important centre for dealing with the social disadvantage and resulting complex needs of Indigenous people.

Apart from the general population growth highlighted in the section above, the population of Townsville has also been swelled in recent times by an influx of Indigenous people from Northern Queensland and the Northern Territory who travel to Townsville with the aim of transiting to other centres. However, many are unable to afford accommodation or further travel once they arrive. The Northern Territory intervention has also had an adverse impact on the numbers of Indigenous people moving from their traditional land and into precarious living conditions elsewhere.

### **Public Intoxication and Homelessness**

The abuse of alcohol has far reaching consequences in terms of social cost. Some key findings from the submissions to the National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2009 of alcohol's impact on public safety and amenity include:

- potentially affecting everybody in some way, regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, or whether or not they drink
- reducing feelings of safety in public places
- being wide-ranging, including road accidents, violence, property damage, and public disorder
- being felt most at a local level and hence have become a burden upon families, workplaces and local communities
- often being left to business and local governments to manage, including responding to complaints from the public
- occurring at all times/days of the week, but peak late at night
- often resulting from drinking to intoxication in licensed venues
- being exacerbated by the nature of the drinking environment
- not improving at previous rates under the existing laws (such as 0.05 BAC driving limit) and enforcement practices (for example, random breath testing in country areas)
- including injuries and deaths from fires, drowning, poisonings, and workplace injuries<sup>84</sup>

The National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2009 Report identifies that an estimated 47% of all perpetrators of assault were intoxicated prior to the event. It is therefore not surprising that public intoxication causes a significant reduction in community perceptions of safety and a public perception that, whilst intoxicated people may not necessarily cause harm, they still frighten and intimidate others.

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<sup>83</sup> Indigenous Homelessness within Australia, May 2006. Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness and the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and supported by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness Consultations

<sup>84</sup> National Alcohol Strategy, 2006-2009

On average, Indigenous people drink less than non-indigenous Australians; however they are more likely to drink at high risk levels. The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) reported that between 2000 and 2004 the alcohol-attributable deaths among Indigenous Australians was more than double that of non-Indigenous Australians (4.85 deaths per every 10,000 compared to 2.4 deaths per 10,000)<sup>85</sup>. A 2008 report by Dr. Maggie Brady<sup>86</sup> has dispelled many myths regarding drinking by Indigenous people. In particular the study dispels the myth about Indigenous people's biological propensity for alcoholism instead intimating the importance of environmental, social and legislative causes:

*Prohibition and segregated drinking had an insidious impact. It encouraged and allowed for segregated, out-of control drinking, unmonitored and uncontained by any of the socially accepted constraints that are attached to licensed premises.*

A much earlier 1988 study of Palm Island by Latrobe University pointed to the exclusion of Indigenous people from the right to drink and the consequential view of alcohol as a broader issue of indigenous rights. The report suggested that the consumption of alcohol, particularly among Indigenous men, was therefore an attempt to regain power. The Latrobe University report concludes by arguing that the only intervention that will work is one that addresses the disempowerment of Indigenous people — the underlying cause of their alcoholism.

Homelessness and substance abuse, including alcohol abuse are clearly linked. In a 2006 study by RMIT it was found that 66% of study participants developed a substance abuse problem **after** they became homeless. Furthermore the complex needs of Townsville's large indigenous population increases even more the need for integrated, horizontal and vertical service delivery at **all** points of the intervention process presented in the opening chapter of this report. Given the high incidence of alcoholism consequential to homelessness, early intervention services are particularly important so as to prevent homelessness at the outset thereby averting the subsequent substance abuse and sometimes consequent public intoxication issues.

The overall aims of this study were to:

- Undertake place-based network analyses and case studies that focus on key outcomes achieved in relation to coordination and service system improvements; and
- produce a report that will summarise key findings, address evaluation questions and suggestions for improvements to enhance service delivery and coordination.

The primary focus of this case study is on:

- The impact of the Responding to Homelessness Strategy's enhancements to both the public intoxication service system and the homelessness services system in Townsville; and
- The level of coordination between these service systems in meeting client needs.

These aims and focus are addressed in the following sections of the report.

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<sup>85</sup> NDRI National Alcohol Indicators, January 2007

<sup>86</sup> "First Taste" by Dr. Maggie Brady - for a discussion see <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=44250>

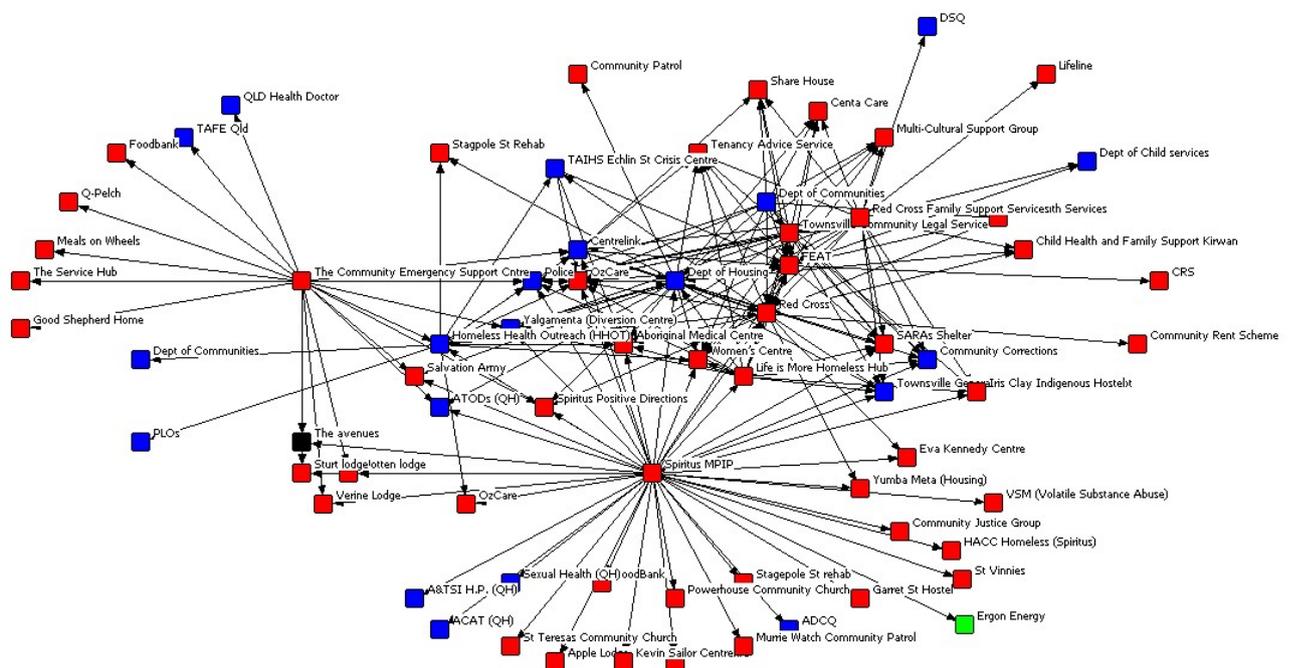
## Network Analysis: Uncovering Integration Patterns

### Service system maps

Maps 11 – 15 set out the initial network maps and provide a representation of the degree of connection occurring within the Townsville service area. For ease of analysis the nodes or system actors (organisations) have been colour coded. Government actors are depicted in blue, community in red and private sector organisations in green.

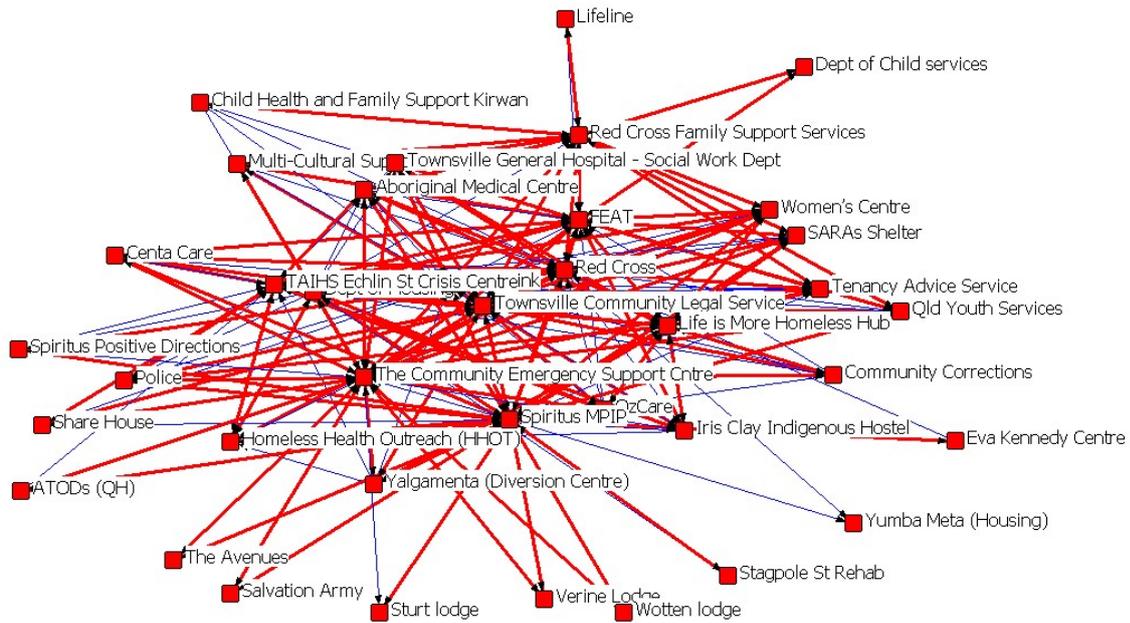
Data collection for the development of these maps was more problematic than the Brisbane and Gold Coast cases due to low response rates to the survey. Findings must therefore be approached with caution; however, when considered in conjunction with the interview, focus group and other documentary data sources some reliable conclusions can be drawn.

**Map 11 Townsville Information Sharing**



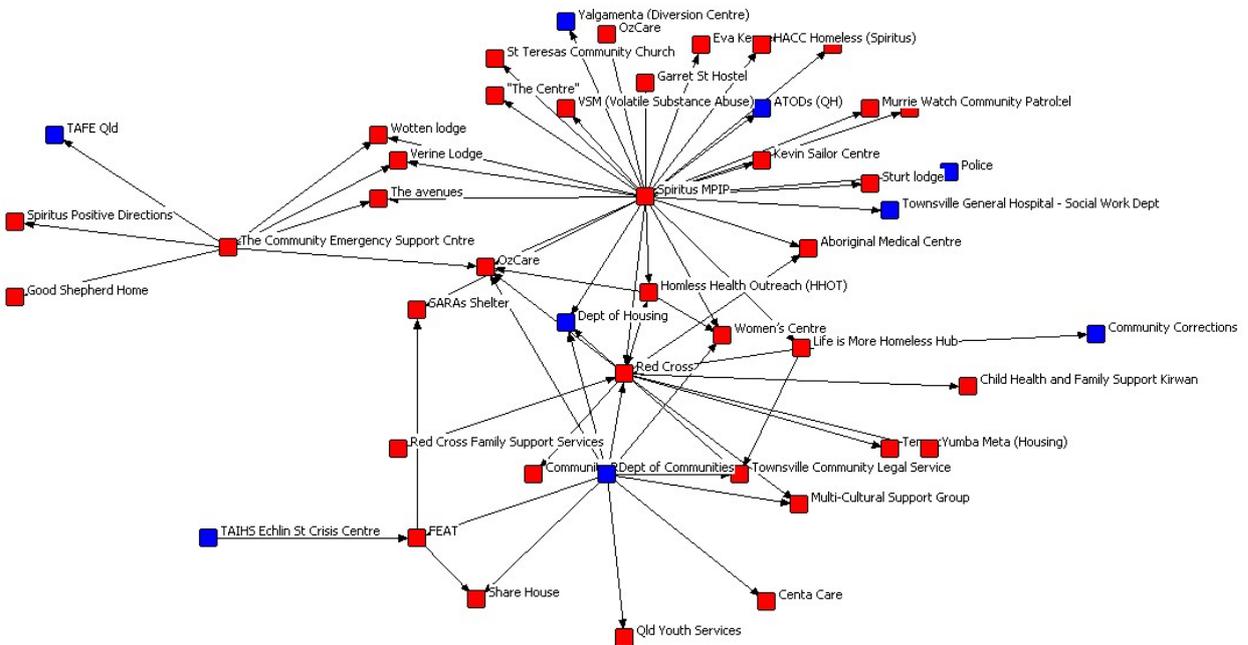
Map 11 Information Sharing displays two clusters of interactions in a hub like model around Spiritus and the Community Emergency Support Centre. The particularity of the clustering around these two organisations suggests a strong focus on delivering around a particular service. This leads to a stronger connection between these two sets of agencies because of that service focus. In addition there is a third, relatively denser meshing of information interactions with a wider set of players in which Department of Housing and the two Red Cross programs play a more central connecting role. The clustering around Department of Housing and Red Cross can be in part explained by their perceived higher level of currency of service information and the information on resources that may be available through these two sources. Map 12 provides an alternative, and more detailed perspective of the information sharing interactions of the dominant information sharing actors.

Map 12 Townsville Information Sharing — Ego-Network



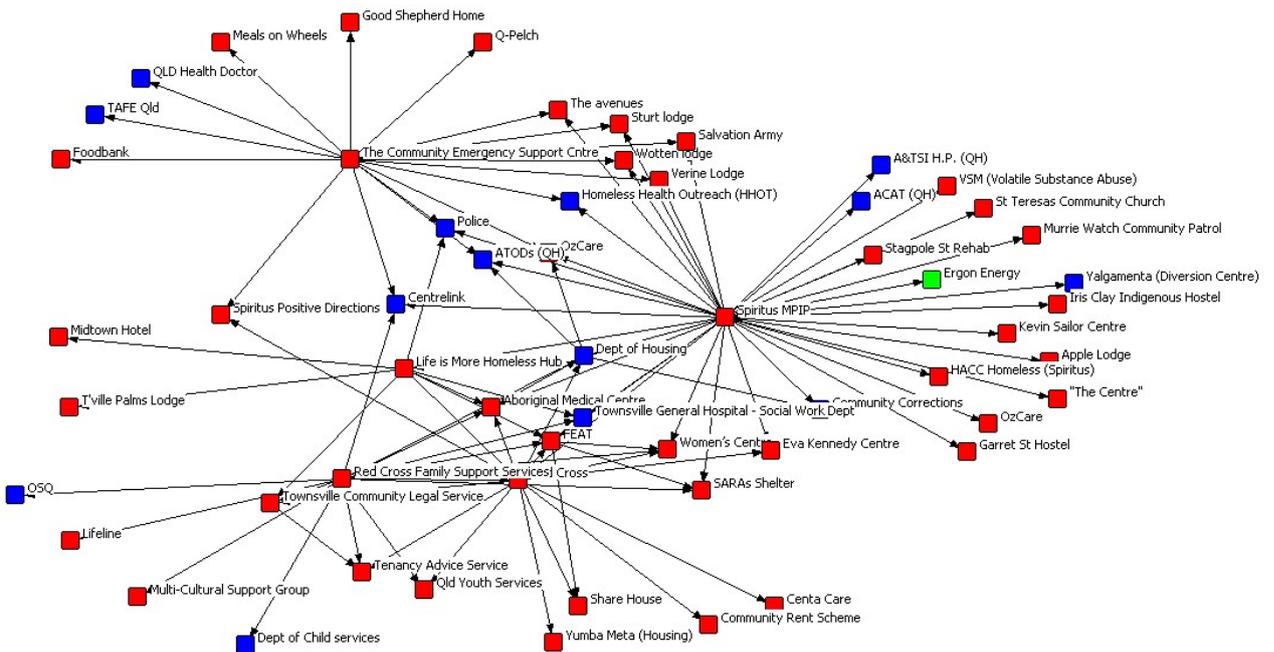
Presented as an 'ego-net' image, this diagram provides evidence of reciprocity between Red Cross, Housing, FEAT, HHOT and the Community Legal Service. This reciprocity means a tighter relationship than merely being seekers or recipients of information exists between these actors. This reciprocal relationship may be in part explained by the high level of activity and advocacy by some of these players compared to others.

Map 13 Townsville Planning and Programming



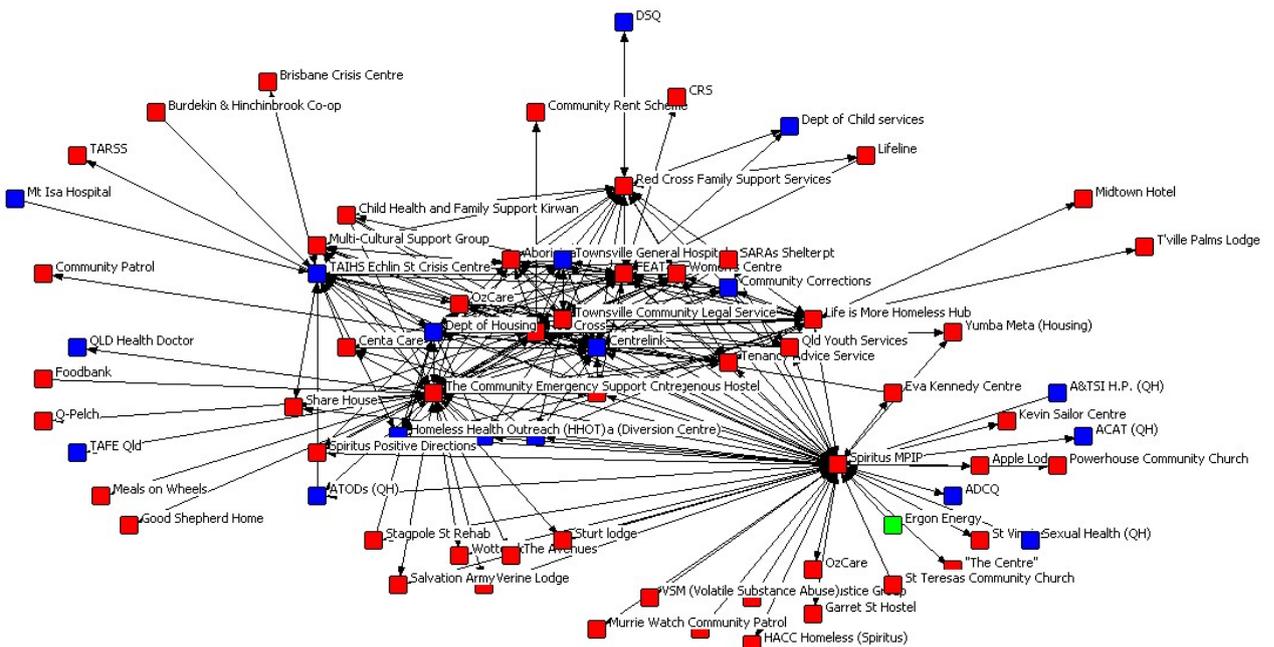
Map 13 indicates two significant actors around planning — Spiritus and Red Cross — and a smaller grouping of six agencies that are playing a secondary or supplementary planning function. A noticeable variation from the information sharing map is the substantial reduction in the level of density. This demonstrates that there are two agencies that are taking on the primary role in regard to planning which suggests that there may be a need for others to be better engaged in this activity.

Map 14 Townsville Shared Resources



Map 14 provides an overview of the level of interaction around resource sharing between agencies. Again this diagram demonstrates even greater sparsity than the information sharing or planning maps. The diagram provides confirmation that sharing tangible resources is a more difficult undertaking than the less risky sharing of non-tangibles such as information. Consistent with the previous diagrams there is a noticeable clustering particularly around Spiritus with the other high resource focused actors — CESC, Red Cross Early Intervention and Red Cross Family Support Services — forming a subsidiary grouping. Arguably the reason behind this may be that agencies acting within the homelessness arena in Townsville perceive that these are the agencies that have the resources to assist. This finding supports widely-held views that there is a deficit of available resources in the Townsville homelessness service system.

Map 15 Townsville Referrals In and Out



The referrals in and out map (map 15) shows a much denser pattern of interaction between many agencies, although there is a much higher level of activity between 10 of the agencies. While community agencies featuring in the other maps figure prominently in this 10, interesting additions are the appearance of Police and the Department of Housing. It is apparent from the high level and wide-ranging activities that this is a system under strain as clearly agencies are struggling to locate the necessary linkages to address client needs.

### Discussion: network maps and metrics

**Density** refers to the number of connections respondents identified compared to the total number possible or available in the system. The closer to 1.0 the greater the density or the percentage number of possible services utilised. At .07 the Townsville homelessness service system demonstrates a reasonable level of density of referrals. This indicates that there is interaction among agencies even if this still falls short of a more fully functioning integrated system. The smaller service system present in the Townsville region in comparison to Brisbane and the Gold Coast helps to increase its level of density and therefore cannot be seen as a direct comparator with the other two cases.

Despite the moderate density measure in regard to information sharing, qualitative data has indicated that density may be much higher. Townsville represents a long established network comprising a relatively fewer number of actors that know each other well. Much of the real interaction may therefore be occurring sub-consciously as a natural part of ongoing personal relationships and as such are not necessarily consciously identified through surveys such as the one initiated for the production of these service maps.

**Centralisation** is expressed as a percentage and refers to the extent to which members are either connected to a central point or connected to each other — that is, if every member were connected to just one central player then the score would be 100 and if every member is connected to each other the score would be 0. The Townsville Homelessness Service system displays a degree of centralisation around those agencies that are longer serving in the area or around newer agencies operating in the homelessness domain that appear, to other agencies, to be relatively better resourced.

**Average path distance** is the average number of steps it takes to gain the information or resources needed to address a given situation or case. At 2.3 the average path distance of the Townsville homelessness service system demonstrates some duplication and overlap occurring in that the initial contact, and even a subsequent one, may not be able to deliver the service requested. While Brisbane's score is higher, Brisbane is also a much larger network. Therefore, in the Townsville case this relatively high average path distance points to the previous observation that there is a lot of demand for services but arguably insufficient resources to address the extent of homelessness in Townsville. The successful establishment of a Hub may also alleviate some of this path distance and inefficiency in the system. This is further commented on below.

Overall the metrics and visual maps point to a base level of integration occurring but according to the integration continuum of Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration the service system in Townsville is largely cooperating with some pockets of coordination around key agencies in the sector. The Department of Communities is significant in these maps due to their relatively low profile. A reason for this may be that the department does not provide services, as such, and is more focused on policy and planning.

A possible contributing factor for the lack of density at the planning and resource sharing levels is that this may be a product of the history of homelessness in Townsville and political influences that historically directed resources for strategic activity towards complex needs issues and, in particular, public intoxication. The Joint Management Group (JMG) was set up as a strategic vehicle for planning involving primarily government, while community groups were more involved in the JIG and under this the Case Coordination Group. Identifying and agreeing on the roles of different agencies and the setting up of information sharing systems have been a major focus of the JIG and Case Coordination Groups and has to date led to identified case successes in addressing client need. The agency network, given its resource constraints, has been more focused on immediate service issues, how to share information and how to manoeuvre clients through the system rather than on how to formally and structurally plan and resource share. Strategic planning, on the other hand, continues to be concentrated within government agencies.

The structural elements of the Townsville Homelessness Service System described above points to an operational cleavage between agencies and government that clearly delineates the planning and resource role of government and the service function of agencies. The maps evidence this in the high level of referrals taking place and the comparatively dense information sharing occurring between agencies but which is less consistent with government. Government will need to assess whether this current system is serving its purpose and determine whether there is a need for new governance arrangements that link government to non-government agencies more substantially.

The question that has to be answered is whether the current circumstances are fit for purpose or whether greater interaction is required to meet current and future need. If it is considered necessary to shift from the current cooperative system further along the integration continuum to coordination (or even collaboration) then increased investment will need to be made in developing relationship capacity and overall funding to the Townsville homelessness service sector. Furthermore an overhaul of governance arrangements that determine the relationship between government and agencies may need to be undertaken to address the weak links identified above.

The findings presented here are an analysis of data collected prior to the establishment of a Hub in Townsville. The metrics suggest that, for a service system without a hub Townsville is reasonably integrated, strongly relying on long-standing relationships and utilising, through information sharing and referrals, those new services funded under R2H such as the Red Cross Early Intervention Service. It would be expected that the establishment and utilisation of a Hub would lead to greater efficiency in the system by reducing the average path distance. A Hub would also be expected to cause the system to become more centralised with a greater number of agencies relying on referrals and information through the Hub. What is less clear is the impact of a Hub on the density of the Townsville Service System. It may well be that density would decrease with existing inter-agency relationships declining in favour of using the Hub. This will need to be carefully managed if the significant relational capital existing between agencies in Townsville is not to be adversely affected.

## Qualitative insights

An evident feature of the Townsville service area is the long-term operation of many of its service providers. The integration between these service providers continues to focus on the sharing of information, significant referral levels and to a lesser extent planning. There is little evidence from the network mapping findings, interviews or focus group of any considerable level of resource sharing.

This comment from a long-term service provider summed up the extent of the relationships:

*I think it's the referral process, it's the networking that had nothing to do with the R2H money, but it's the way that services work very collaboratively in terms of; you know the thing that we've got going in Townsville that maybe some of the bigger areas don't have is that people know everybody in the service, there's no real overlap.*

An issue with such long-established relationships was that new providers funded under the R2H initiative said that they found it difficult to break into the existing network. A considerable amount of effort had been invested by these new services in brokering relationships with other long-standing members of the Homelessness Service System. This effort took the form of significant attendance and involvement at Case Management Group meetings through which the new services were explained in detail and on-going attempts made at relationship building. This observation from a new service provider:

*We are a different service to the other support accommodation services. We are probably the only service that I am aware of under this funding, that is early intervention. It's taken a lot of education of other services for them to understand what it is that we do and how we can support each other and how we can support everyone in this area.*

Longer-serving network members commented that newly funded services were either overlapping with existing services or taking too narrow a focus on the stated purpose of their funding. Equity raises itself as an issue for effective integration in that there was a perception among existing service providers that new services were preferentially funded. Furthermore, such funding was considered as providing for services that existing service system members were already delivering. An outcome of this was that new service providers had to work extremely hard through case management group meetings and the provision of information to gain acceptance:

*We are a different service to the other support accommodation services. We are probably the only service that I am aware of under this funding, that is early intervention. It's taken a lot of education of other services, for them to understand what it is that we do and how we can support each other and how we can support everyone in this area.*

As part of this concerted effort to be integrated into the network, new service providers were active in sharing information, and at times resources. Red Cross, for example, described how they actively managed upwards through the system, utilised resources from other areas within Red Cross as well as referrals to and from other agencies, and liaised with Federal and State government departments, particularly Housing, to bring about good outcomes for clients. One example provided was the utilisation of Red Cross' state Head Office in Brisbane, the Immigration Department and local agencies to attain residency for a client who was in danger of being separated from their child:

*...we worked with the politicians, we worked with the Townsville community legal service and what we actually did, over in our Brisbane office that has funding through other community care pilot programs, which is actually about people that are here waiting to get there residency approved, they can actually help them with the basics that they need. So that particular one is through department of immigration. So what we were able to do was get her down to the Brisbane office and they put the application in and she got approved.*

*... It could be a whole range of options ... We don't claim to be specialists so we link in with a lot of agencies in regard to issues.*

Overall the evidence from the system maps, interviews and focus groups suggest that the Townsville Homelessness service system is integrated in terms of providing information with pockets of resource integration, such as the Red Cross example above. All sources of data gathered indicate that service providers are dedicated people willing to go out of their way to assist clients, however, the system is under stress.

## Service System Improvements Under R2H

### Integrating services — homelessness and public intoxication

Public intoxication by itself is a growing social issue in Australia. When combined with homelessness, together they form an intractable problem that is still in need of a satisfactory solution. This section of the report investigates the information provided from the focus group and interviews in regard to the level of integration of services provided to address the dual issues of public intoxication and homelessness.

A feature of the Townsville service system was the seemingly undifferentiated approach to dealing with public intoxication and homelessness. The agencies directly funded under R2H to address public intoxication immediately identified that this had occurred, however in interview they then blurred the boundaries between public intoxication and homelessness suggesting that to them the joint issues are inextricably linked and have always been addressed in an integrated manner. Intoxication, whether public or not, presented as just an additional complication. Clients could be directed to services made available for their needs however these were not always available or clients, due to case history, were no longer able to access some of these services.

The findings from the research indicate that public intoxication is seen by agencies, government and departments through four different lenses:

- Political
- Social
- Legal
- Health

The political lens on public intoxication in Townsville is very prevalent and heavily influences how a number of agencies consider public intoxication can be dealt with. By viewing public intoxication through a political lens the focus is on the removal of intoxicated persons from public space, often through then adopting a legal view of the situation as one of public nuisance. In the past the response was primarily done by police with the end result being transference to jail thus an immediate, but short term solution. R2H has provided the opportunity for greater use of community patrols and there was some optimism within the Department of Communities of a shift away from more legalistic responses through these community patrols:

*The most innovative thing we've done is to link our public intoxication services with the homeless services. In particular employ the services of community patrol who are in daily contact with homeless people. They're there to support homeless people. It's not to be seen as a policing body, but patrol using bicycles or cars and it patrols all the local hotspots; either on demand from the police or the Townsville City Council security service. The patrol identify issues with people and they might call the public intoxication*

*service or the diversion service to come pick this person up or they might take this person to their home straight away.*

Agencies continued to identify, however, that responses to public intoxication were often aimed at immediately removing the 'problem' from the streets rather than addressing any longer term issues in regard to the client's homeless status or approaching the problem as a health or social issue, rather than as a public nuisance:

*I will just say that from having worked in the legal environment for four years now, it's intensely a political issue and you can't take the politics out of this issue; likewise Cairns, probably Darwin and a few other places. Where there's a lack of will to deal with it on a proper basis, which there has been here, the response has been a targeted and discriminatory response.*

*I mean I'm a bit hopeful that they'll look at it as a health issue rather than a legal issue. All the health costs and remedies are going to be better at addressing that group of people.*

Agencies that were directly involved in public intoxication stated that they had pooled the funds from R2H into their existing MPIP program and that the funds had subsequently been used to boost employee numbers. Spiritus, for example, was able to employ a full time indigenous case worker who regularly visited 'hot spots' throughout the city to provide assistance to intoxicated, homeless clients:

*...but even though we got extra money with the R2H strategy, it went into MPIP so it's actually for MPIP clients ... we were able to employ a second full time worker ... female indigenous, for cultural safety reasons ... So we had three full time staff after the responding to homelessness strategy ... So the impact out of that was we got some extra money to do some innovative programs, which have been extremely successful.*

However, service providers identified a shortage of accommodation and services for publicly intoxicated persons and noted also that some of their clients were not able to access these services. A positive for Townsville and unlike other areas in was the appointment of a government employee as a Public Space Coordinator. Rather than seeing this as further government 'heavy-handedness' agencies in Townsville considered that the political nature of the issue was such that, without input from government agencies there was insufficient 'clout' to make any substantial changes away from the existing legalistic approach:

*It was extremely difficult working across departments and agencies [on public intoxication], particularly in the government sector. Having an NGO in that position [public space coordinator] didn't really work; not for us anyway. It might have worked elsewhere, but not in Townsville. When they had someone from a government department it just gave it a bit more clout.*

Community groups working closely with Indigenous homeless were more likely to view public intoxication from a social perspective but felt 'hamstrung' to a certain extent by both the political nature of the problem and the legalistic nature of the policy response and how this was interpreted and instigated. In viewing public intoxication through a social lens the true complexities of the problem are identified and the solutions that deliver true empowerment, particularly to indigenous persons, are clear. An observation by an indigenous service provider was that:

*The other side of it is also that what I see a lot at the ... is that there's a real lifestyle around drinking alcohol and substance abuse and to take that culture away, not just from one individual at a time, not to take away the culture don't misunderstand me, but to make that culture a more healthier culture in the parks, it's like walking out to the outback in Australia and saying to everybody you've got to change now.*

Most community groups identified that they did not directly provide services aimed specifically at public intoxication, yet nearly all, in some way, were involved with problems of public intoxication or intoxication/substance abuse more generally. There is an immediacy of response required in regard to public intoxication — for the health and safety of the intoxicated person, for public safety and due to the politicisation of the issue — that brings pressure to remove publicly intoxicated persons from the streets. The extent to which R2H funding has helped to integrate services and foster the cooperation of service providers to address public intoxication is difficult to establish. The long-term network relationships in Townsville lead to an almost 'sub-conscious' level of information sharing and cooperation across groups. This cooperation, coupled with the need for immediate action, means that agencies not formally associated with public intoxication seek urgent means to assist intoxicated persons by often taking action themselves as in the case of overnight shelters. For example the comment below comes from an agency that stated that they did not deal with public intoxication:

*We're just an overnight shelter. When someone comes in with issues or whatever, we ring Spiritus, if they need a ticket to go home; this might be someone that's just been released from jail. If there's health issues we ring the HHOT team and they get medication and that's like mental health and other issues ... and ATODS ...if we try to get them to a rehab it's very difficult ... there's supposedly beds at the hospital but you just don't get them. It's very difficult to get a chronic alcoholic de-toxed and get them into a rehab ... we're just an overnight shelter.*

There were other examples given where community groups adopted an integrated approach to homelessness and general intoxication (i.e. not necessarily *public* intoxication). These present as other examples of 'bricolage'<sup>87</sup> whereby the intimate knowledge of the intricacies of the service system by service providers can be tapped to provide the missing 'links' of resources to cluster around the person presenting with a problem of gaining shelter. These programs were considered to be highly successful and were characterised by a combination of meaningful occupation, individual empowerment, individual recognition and a sobriety requirement. These initiatives included:

#### **NADOC week utilising information sharing, planning and resource sharing**

*Well a couple of years ago we got involved with a group that was with the homeless team and housing, we got together to do something called NADOC week ... One of the ladies from Centrelink had actually worked in an art gallery. She had this idea that maybe we could get people to come along to have a little exhibition. And it actually turned out really good. Department of communities gave Spiritus \$1000 and we rented a place, so for six workshops; six weeks. Various agencies brought people to the group, the diversion centre and a few people that lived in West End. They came along to this workshop on a Monday morning and the stipulation was they had to be sober and they were. We gave them morning tea and lunch and juices. We sort of put hem on the table and said there you go. It just took off. For that six weeks, those people came every Monday and it culminated in an exhibition at the cultural centre.*

<sup>87</sup> Bricolage is a term 'creatively making do', Levi-Strauss, C., 1967, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

### Projects Division — an initiative with the private sector (focus group)

*We went out and got a contract a year ago with .... in Townsville where we assembled roofing screws and it's \$7 for every 1000 screws they assemble ... but then they might spend it on drugs and alcohol. At the end of the day they've earned it and they can do what they want. To combat more so the drinking we've made a health and safety rule that everyone must blow zero because everyone that was coming through was an alcoholic."*

The Roofing Screws program brought to focus the difficulties addressing homelessness and intoxication from a vertical integration perspective. An issue that the program successfully addressed was the Centrelink requirements in regard to the amount of income permitted to be earned before affecting social security entitlements. Clients working in the program were limited in the amount of work they were permitted to do to ensure that they earned \$60 per week or less.

There is also an understanding by early intervention providers of the importance of homelessness early intervention as a preventative measure. What is less clear is the extent to which other agencies understand its importance in this regard. Given that substance abuse frequently occurs subsequent to homelessness, but often also before hand, early intervention arguably works to address intoxication before it becomes public. As such it is difficult to gauge the effect of early intervention in addressing public intoxication before it occurs, however, the impact may be considerable given this observation by an early intervention group:

*There could be lots of other issues as well, around alcohol, drugs, gambling and what we're trying to do is do a holistic approach to really get a picture of how the family got to be where they are now. So the clients identify, so we do have an assessment procedure and we do have a set of goals.*

The responses in both interviews and focus groups suggests that integration of interventions into homelessness and public intoxication is happening almost sub-consciously but that this is occurring in an ad-hoc way when cases present themselves that agencies are able to address rather than through any particular higher-level initiative or coordinated, planned response. Bearing in mind the limitations of the survey data, the focus group and interview findings do support the findings from the network mapping that the network has not advanced significantly past information sharing and that resource sharing and planning are less evident.

The coordination of services to address issues of combined homelessness and public intoxication has been negatively affected by the delays in setting up the hub in Townsville. Initially there was the issue that there were no applicants for the role and when an organisation took the role temporarily they were not able to leverage enough support in either physical resources or network capital, to maintain momentum. Department of Communities staff commented:

*We had difficulties getting a provider ... had no applicants when we advertised. One organisation took it on but they could not get staff. There was no applicant originally ... That's been a significant delay around the hub and also a delay around the complex needs service for the same reasons.*

These observations by Communities were again borne out by service providers. Spiritus commented:

*Also the roll out of the, well the complex needs funding and the homeless hub funding, had impact on us, because they weren't actually getting off the ground, they're only just getting off the ground now.*

The ability to integrate services is hampered by an inability to move those who have complex needs along the pathway from homelessness to sustainable shelter. Often those who are homeless are rejected from shelter options as they are problematic tenants who are 'burning bridges' with shelter providers. The mix of prior homelessness and intoxication at early stages of shelter will result in people 'get[ting] into a fight' and then cannot return to homeless accommodation provision. This is one of the instances of the operation of 'mirror pathways' that return people to homelessness when they are removed from shelter options through an inability to exhibit behaviours that allows them to maintain shelter. Private rental is particularly difficult for vulnerable tenants who may have few social skills and alcohol dependency. Those formally funded and involved in public intoxication are doing an excellent job in providing emergency solutions that their resources provide for and are active in seeking to use their network to assist these high risk cases where possible. Emergency shelters are also active in trying to move complex needs clients through the system.

The lack of available housing in the private rental market generally means that people who have experienced homelessness are unable to supply the appropriate credentials to move into rental accommodation. This is even more the case for the complex needs clients described above who have almost exhausted pathway options within the service system. They require living skills as well as budgeting skills in order to maintain their tenancy. Services that undertake to fundamentally alter people's behaviour and teach life skills that effectively avert regression back to homelessness are scarce and, in the case of Townsville are primarily directed toward the young, as in the case of Sharehouse discussed under "Innovations" below.

The findings from the study suggest that public intoxication with associated homelessness can be viewed through four different lenses and that each of these lend themselves to particular preferences in regard to addressing the issue:

- A social lens leading to either:
  - Police intervention, jail with subsequent community group intervention transitioning to allied health services and housing (long term).
  - Immediate community group intervention transitioning to allied health services and housing (long term).
- Medical lens leading to hospital or de-tox facilities (short term, but sometimes leading to longer term solutions).
- Political — Police intervention: jail or emergency accommodation (short term).
- Legal — Police intervention: jail (short term).

In conclusion, the combination of homelessness and public intoxication is one of those genuinely intractable problems that can only be addressed through significant integration and long term intervention at all levels of the system. An issue to overcome here is that there is no integrated formal planning occurring in either a horizontal or vertical direction within the system. In Townsville there appears to be almost sub-conscious co-operation occurring between service providers who clearly have an innate understanding of the need to integrate services to approach public intoxication holistically and from a social perspective. Horizontally, therefore integration is occurring amongst service providers in almost an automatic, organic way rather than through any specific formal planning due to the immediacy of the intervention needed. Vertically, there is a disconnect in that service providers appear to have few means, or power, to influence or initiate any integrated strategic direction to address the combined issues of homelessness and public intoxication.

This was temporarily addressed by the appointment of a government employee as a Public Space Coordinator; however this has subsequently been disbanded. Some of this disconnect is a result of the different lenses through which the actors in the system are viewing the problem.

### Other initiatives and innovations under R2H funding

New initiatives and innovations under R2H funding were hampered from the outset by the lack of resources available for the provision of existing services. The result was that many agencies were not interested in the additional funding from the perspective of providing new services, but in topping up existing ones. A Department of Communities interviewee commented:

*In the process NGOs in the sector were saying all this money's coming in, we don't want new services; give us the money so we can enhance existing services. We don't fund to full cost of service delivery, so NGOs are looking for top-ups.*

This finding was borne out from interviews with service providers. As was the case with public intoxication interventions, funding was often considered as additional resources to existing programs and allowed agencies to purchase new resources such as additional housing, additional case-specific services or hire additional staff:

*The only thing different is that we've probably got a fair bit of brokerage money and that we are able to source crisis accommodation.*

Due to the 'pooling' of funds into existing programs it is difficult to readily identify actual innovations that occurred directly as a result of R2H funding, however, the following are examples of innovations identified:

- Many homeless rely significantly on Centrelink to assist them with completing forms. An arrangement with TAFE has been entered into to provide information on literacy and numeracy courses:
 

*We actually tried to get them [TAFE] to roll out some literacy/numeracy courses but it's not cost effective for them to do that. So the next best thing for them was just to come down, they're going to do some presentations. Hopefully that will engage people in literacy and numeracy from all sorts of different levels where people are completely illiterate or just need to brush up a bit.*
- The Legal Clinic offers advice to those who are homeless and is considered to be successful both in terms of the assistance given to homeless people and the larger pool of legal professionals offering to undertake work in this area. This innovation came about largely as a result of significant lobbying and involvement by the Department of Communities.
- Development of relationships with housing providers to provide an accommodation component to an agency's service.
- Activity Programs that offer meaningful occupation such as the Art Project and the Packing roofing screws. Both of these are innovative in that they utilise a safe space to work, develop a culture of alcohol avoidance in order to work (framed as OH&S requirements) and offer a way to earn money.
- The provision of transition housing that goes beyond bare minimum requirements is a positive innovation brought about through R2H. Sharehouse has utilised R2H funding to purchase further properties to boost its transitional housing for the young. More than this, Sharehouse provides all the necessary furniture, utensils and equipment to live and importantly the education and development of young people so that they can learn to maintain themselves

and the properties they occupy to a sufficient extent to retain future tenancies. Services such as Sharehouse are a critical point in the pathway as they contain educational and quality of life elements essential for providing long term solutions to homelessness through an opportunity to experience a better quality of life.

There was little evidence of innovation in regard to new types of programs integrated across agencies. The finding that new initiatives and innovations did not tend to occur across agencies is also evidenced by the service system maps above that indicate less integration at the planning or resource sharing level than at the information-sharing and referral levels. Additionally, integrative innovations tended to occur at the level of client service, rather than at the program or strategic levels. This therefore translates into innovations across agencies occurring at the individual case level or in sponsoring 'events' within existing programs where the sharing of information (rather than high level planning or resources) was able to make a difference:

*Interagency understandings and drilling down to the individual case basis across agencies is very important. The issues are complex and it is not about just getting people into a SAAP. ... identifying client needs and who is doing what, who is following up, how are they going to share information and how are they going to track people.*

The case coordination group was considered integral to the process of ensuring cases were referred to the right agency. On the establishment of the Hub it is planned to shift the case coordination group to the Hub where it will be monitored and supported.

*... it's about having clients referred to the case coordination group, identifying which organisation would be the best lead agency to case manage that individual and for everybody to have some input in the case management plan for that individual and move the person through it.*

*Well we all have meetings too, with all of those people and the case managers and then at the end of the meeting they wave a red flag at the ones that are really out there and we see what we can do with them.*

*We also lobby, or advocate I suppose is a better word, to housing. We're involved in a CCG or a case coordination group where we meet weekly and housing is a very important part of that and I don't hesitate to mention names.*

The case coordination groups currently offer a means for agencies to connect with government departments, in particular housing. Again, however, the evidence suggests something of a disconnect at the juncture between NGOs and government. A striking feature of the Townsville service system was that some of the agencies interviewed and who participated in the focus group were not familiar with the R2H initiative. Some were not aware that any funding had been made under the initiative and others felt it was too soon to see any real outcomes. The defining line between awareness and lack of awareness appears to be the size of the organisation involved. Care workers within larger organisations had a good understanding of the program and the use of the resulting funds within their organisations. The network maps verify this in that larger, more resourced agencies were better placed to liaise with government in terms of information sharing and, at times, in planning and resource sharing.

## Media and homelessness

In the past, news reports on homelessness in Townsville have focused on the anti-social aspects and behaviours of homeless persons and tended to demonstrate concern with community well-being and safety rather than on the health or social aspects of homeless people. A perusal of the Townsville Bulletin news reports of the last twelve months indicate that the media has begun to adopt a far more social view of the problem and this indicates a shift to a growing concern for those suffering homelessness and how best to address long-term structural issues such as housing non-affordability. These reports may be as much about the changing nature and causes of homelessness as they are about the changing attitudes of individuals. The increasing structural/economic causes of homelessness in Townsville mean that a much wider proportion of the population is now at risk of homelessness.

In the lead up to the March 2008 council elections a report entitled "It's time local government fixed this problem" appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin*. The report demonstrated some understanding of the linkages between homelessness and public intoxication including this comment by mayoral candidate Jenny Stirling:

*Investing in affordable housing now will save the city in the long term because homelessness goes hand in hand with things like drug abuse, broken families and crime.*

In the same report, a FEAT spokesperson commented:

*"We need to form a partnership between the developers, council and welfare organisations like FEAT to ensure more affordable housing is made available."*<sup>88</sup>

The growing number of causes of homelessness in Townsville means a greater need for a diversity of responses and coordination across different service providers, state and local government agencies as well as Commonwealth Government agencies such as Centrelink to ensure that emerging issues are being addressed. *The Australian Newspaper* of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2008 (page 5) highlighted the difficulties for the vulnerable unemployed to maintain shelter when payment cut-off penalties were imposed for breach of Centrelink conditions. In response a Vulnerability Indicator has been introduced that identifies the extent to which welfare recipients will be financially and socially impacted should they suffer loss of income. The introduction of a Vulnerability Indicator recognises the harsh penalties of the lack of adherence of the regulatory requirements in relation to job seeking behaviour.

## Discussion and lessons

The findings indicate that Townsville is faced with a growing homelessness problem that is arguably greater than the other two cases presented in this report. Not only do Townsville services respond to the complexities and additional issues brought about by the social disadvantage of a large Indigenous population (in terms of both actual numbers and percentage of population), but also the mining boom has affected Townsville more than most regions in terms of increased housing prices and rentals.

<sup>88</sup> "It's Time Local Government Fixed This Problem", *Townsville Bulletin*, 4 January, 2008

People who would have otherwise been secure in housing are finding themselves in more tenuous circumstances and at high risk of becoming homeless. The findings presented in this case study identify four pathways to homelessness:

- Economic/Structural
- Institutional
- Social Disadvantage
- Health

The study findings show that economic/structural and health issues are well understood. The institutional pathway is relatively new in that it has been largely caused by social security cut-off penalties for non-compliance of Centrelink job search conditions. Likewise, public intoxication has tended to be considered as being caused by health considerations rather than as an issue of social disadvantage. Each pathway is identified from the Townsville case study and each has been addressed to some extent as follows:

**Table 3: Townsville Pathway Responses**

Pathway	Catalyst to shelter vulnerability	Examples of existing or possible responses/ Innovations
Economic/structural	Housing shortages	Landlord recognition as provider to 'vulnerable' tenants and would receive the equivalent of R&D tax deductibility status for investment in social housing,  More motels bought into social housing
	Rent increases housing price increases lack of job opportunities	
Institutional	Centrelink rules	Vulnerability Index
	Eligibility rules	Provision of an address (Hub) Needs rather than Wait List basis
	Wait times for public housing	Homeless and Special Circumstances Court
	Legal system	Training of service providers in the recognition of mental health issues
Social disadvantage	Lack of education	TAFE Course/legal clinic, financial courses Supported Housing [not provided]
	Third generation homelessness	Contract for assembling roofing screws — zero alcohol
	Poverty	
Health	Mental health, substance abuse	Art Program — zero alcohol

Each of these is not 'stand-alone' and individuals may experience a combination of pathways. For many of the homeless in Townsville complex, nested problems that defy single solutions are present. In dealing with the significant, intractable issues in Townsville, the case coordination group was given unanimous support as a vehicle for delivering coordinated and timely responses and alerted intersecting agencies and community groups about individuals at risk. The group was also a vehicle for tracking individuals and ensuring appropriate services were being directed to them.

Innovations under R2H in Townsville have largely been confined to 'small wins' under existing programs rather than any large-scale innovative breakthroughs. The delays in the establishment of the Service Hub has also affected the ability of service providers to coordinate across agencies in regard to case management, and in particular, there have been delays in the coordination of complex needs cases including the combined impact of homelessness and public intoxication.

The most important consideration when interpreting the findings from this case is that the Hub has not yet been established. The difficulties in attracting an organisation willing to take the role on in the first instance and the inability of the temporary Hub operator to garner the necessary resources and support to succeed mean that in going forward, the establishment of the Hub in Townsville may be more problematic than in the Gold Coast and Brisbane cases. Some of the reasons for this are contained in the background information presented at the beginning of this case report. Aspects that may deter the attraction of the necessary resources to Townsville and make its effective establishment difficult include:

- Its relative geographic isolation;
- The rising cost of living;
- Housing shortages;
- The politicisation of homelessness; and
- The willingness of network members to extend significantly beyond information sharing to coordinate or collaborate in terms of planning and resource sharing.

The last of these may, to some extent, be a product of an under-resourced system. The homelessness service system in Townsville evidences a highly active and dedicated group of service providers who are operating at capacity with the resources available.

The effective establishment of the service Hub in Townsville will require far greater resources and effort than in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Its establishment needs to glean substantial collaborative support from both the Department of Communities and the Department of Housing who, at this stage, are critical to the success of any strategic planning and strategic initiatives. In addition, the two departments will have a significant role in building coordinated planning capacity across community groups. Without this the resultant shared resourcing will not occur.

The concerns of existing network members in regard to the entry of new service providers suggests that the choice of provider for the hub will be critical if it is to gain support and be able to instil a sense of greater collaboration between network members.

## Conclusion

The findings from this report suggest that the integration of public intoxication services and homelessness services have been primarily on an ad-hoc basis rather than achieving any high level of integration between the departments and community groups. Those involved at a strategic level identified that integration was occurring at service delivery level and occasionally on other levels, but not in a fully integrated way across vertical and horizontal organisational structures.

While integration has occurred at a case management level, there may be a need to raise the level of integration to the program and strategic levels. Again, as highlighted above, there are decisions to be made in regard to the type of network and Hub model that is most 'fit for purpose' for the unique context of Townsville. There may, for example, be a need for more work between the two sectors that is able to foster genuine involvement of the community sector in planning and decision making.

# CASE STUDY 4 — EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN BRISBANE, GOLD COAST AND TOWNSVILLE

## Introduction

This fourth and final case study examines the operation and impact of early intervention programs initiated under the R2H Strategy. Reflecting the locations of the three previous case studies, this section focuses on the early intervention initiatives in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Townsville.

In essence, homeless early intervention services are implemented to assist in the reduction of the demand on the homelessness service system, particularly through preventative action, diversionary services and early support for clients. The approach includes assisting in maintaining or providing independent accommodation, targeted short-term support, and case management at critical times. There is also intent for early intervention to assist clients to increase their capacity to recognise and deal with issues that put them at risk of homelessness. The provision of such services can occur at various times along a continuum of shelter and tenancy and may occur during deep or sustained crisis or be triggered by a single event that then has knock-on effects that create vulnerable tenancies.

The case study proceeds with a brief review of each of the initiatives, their service approach and key operating principles and impacts. This review is followed by a comparison and analysis of the impact of service approaches and outcomes across the three sites. The case study concludes with lessons and recommendations.

## Greater Brisbane Homeless Early Intervention Services Consortium

This early intervention program emerged from a meeting of community agencies to respond to the opportunity offered by the R2H strategy to locate early intervention workers in 'hot spot' areas across greater Brisbane. The intent was to strategically place a team of five early intervention workers within already well established community organisations. Bringing together this 'chain' of referral points was aimed at enhancing the range, scope and impact of early intervention efforts and in so doing improve the intervention pathway for clients. The difference such an approach could make was reported as "being able to walk alongside a client more practically and for a longer period, mainly aimed at tenancy sustainment, or improvement".

The resulting project, the Greater Brisbane Homeless Early Intervention Services Consortium (GBHEISC), is led by Micah Projects in collaboration with five other services, each of which focuses on a specific location and target group as described below<sup>89</sup>.

- Micah Projects employs the Program Coordinator – Homelessness Early Intervention Services and a part-time consortium Administration Officer. Micah Projects Inc also provides direct service delivery through employment of a Homelessness Early Intervention Services (HEIS) Worker focused on residents of boarding houses and residential services in the inner city
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre Inc (NFNC), based in HART 4000, targeting residents of boarding houses and residential services in the inner city;

<sup>89</sup> Operations Manual for the delivery of Homelessness Early Intervention Services in Greater Brisbane

- North East Community Support Group Inc (NECSG), targeting families at risk of homelessness in northern Brisbane suburbs including Chermside and Keperra;
- Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Association Inc (PRNC), targeting families at risk of homelessness including older residents and caravan park residents in Pine Rivers Shire;
- Kyabra Community Association Inc (Kyabra), targeting families at risk of homelessness in Brisbane's south west corridor including Inala and Acacia Ridge; and,
- Bayside Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service Inc (Bayside TAASQ), targeting families, older people and caravan park residents in the bayside areas around Wynnum and the high growth areas of Redlands.

Enacting a consortium model requires strong organisational structures and governance arrangements. The GBHEISC operating structure and governance arrangement reflects the mix of participating agencies, each of which is represented in the organisational model. A Steering Group comprised of a senior officer or management committee member from each agency as well as the HEIS Coordinator and Administrator, guides the development of the service. Although coming together as a consortium, participating agencies remain autonomous. To assist the work of GBHEISC an Operations Manual has been prepared. This manual sets out the service objectives, operating expectations and practices under which both agencies and workers perform their work. As well as these formalised procedures, it is apparent from and interview responses that among consortia members and workers there is a shared set of 'understandings' that provide the foundations of their early intervention work and act as a form of 'institutional' glue around which they coalesce.

### Service approach and key operating principles

As noted above, the GBHEISC has a satellite service mode in which workers are located or embedded within a suite of agencies spread across the greater Brisbane district. The GBHEISC draws on a range of intervention processes to undertake its work. Within this mix are case management, outreach work and education and awareness programs. For the Brisbane project the process of case coordination was achieved through a mix of referral protocols mostly derived through 'agreed understandings' of the nature of the work and available resources. Being located within other services provides for more detailed knowledge of the services and resources available that can be directed toward interventions. The intersection between this embedded knowledge and targeted referrals based on dialogue is explained as follows:

*I think it's the best way of case managing somebody. It means I don't have to do everything. We can make a plan, but out of these six issues that you've got I can certainly deal with one, but for the five other things I can certainly refer you to here for your food, or drug and alcohol here and I think ... that's exactly what works the best.*

Confirming the coordination process of referrals, the Micah representative also confirms that the link with other agencies is through referrals and adds that word of mouth amongst the clients is also involved. They note that: "lots of word of mouth, because .... people often know each other. Word gets around about what's good and not good."

Although there is linkage occurring across consortium member agencies and the broader service system, it would seem that the primary or first point of referral for some early intervention workers is their 'parent consortium set'. That is, there is a reliance on close and known contacts.

*So that's mainly where my referrals come from in and out of my consortium .... So, whatever piece of the pie we need, we might be able to lean on the rest of our consortium to help with.*

It appears that as the GBHEISC has matured, closer relations and interactions across agencies are occurring both within and across the consortia members and the broader service system. This sharing has extended beyond information and referrals to joint working and programming. As a respondent explains:

*They [GBHEISC] have had success with linkages between organisations, and sharing of resources has moved even beyond sharing programs. They have created better links.*

Part of the attribution for this success is because workers have been 'freed up' to do some relationship building as opposed to a traditional SAAP service, delivering a service at their door. This view was highlighted below:

*I think one of the good things about the R2H service is we've moved away from traditional models and freed people up a bit. And I think the relationships did exist, I'm not a believer that we pulled things out of a hat at all, but I think if we do invest in the time and effort to build the relationships we'll get more effective ones.*

As a result of a coordinated case management approach, working together across organisational boundaries, workers are reporting successful outcomes. The most satisfying is that "people have moved onto long term accommodation"

Despite early gains in this area, it was considered that outreach and education/awareness have been less than prominent in the homeless service system. There was strong agreement from all respondents that increasing demands for support including in particular crisis work has taken attention and resources away from this element of the early intervention program.

## **Gold Coast: STARH**

STARH was created on the Gold Coast in order to provide preventative outreach and early intervention. The STARH program stands for 'supporting those at risk of homelessness'. This consortium is comprised of Wesley Mission Brisbane; Beenleigh Adult and Youth Services (BAYS); St Vincent de Paul Society QLD; Blair Athol Accommodation & Support Programme; and the Residential Tenants Association Inc. Together these organisations and others form the Gold Coast Homelessness Network. In this way STARH is both an organisation in its own right and an instrument of the Network. For STARH and the Gold Coast Network, early intervention is perceived as: "trying to prevent people from becoming homeless, regardless of where in the continuum the client may be, including trying to prevent someone from becoming homeless again".

The STARH consortium satellite model came about due to the demands of the decentralised and linear geographic nature of the Gold Coast region. That geography means that there are many discrete and disparate areas and multiple "hotspots" where early intervention issues and homelessness are evident. To address these "hot spots" which occur along the 70km Gold Coast strip, a linear 'satellite' model of early intervention has been enacted. Regarding structural models for early intervention, the Department of Housing on the Gold Coast stated that having the right model and a strong network of people who work well across the network is essential for an effective early intervention program.

## Service approach

Tenancy support, advocacy, counselling and referral services, and development of living skills are amongst the key services provided. Their outreach work is with families, individuals and couples on the Gold Coast who are in tenancies, such as private rental, community housing or community rental schemes such as Gold Coast Housing Company. STARH works with those people or individuals to keep them accommodated. However, as a STARH representative notes at times the early intervention emphasis can be lost to a need to respond to a crisis. “That wasn’t what the aim is but that is one of the problems”. The current housing environment has forced STARH to focus on finding independent housing and working with landlords above other aspects of stemming the tide of the reasons why people are becoming at-risk or developing their capacity to deal with and manage their at-risk situation. The shift in the emphasis of everyone’s work fluctuates rapidly from early intervention to crisis intervention. It appears that the current housing environment frequently shifts the emphasis of work from situational analysis and personal education in early intervention to out-and-out crisis intervention.

In the current housing environment people often have to move because people are in the situation where their tenancies have become non-negotiable, and they have to vacate premises. As one interviewee advises regarding the Gold Coast:

*There were a lot of other things happening — a lot of properties being sold on the coast. We even had when the superannuation came and people could put money out of their investments into superannuation last year ... There were a lot of properties [being sold] on the coast, a lot of the aged community were living in those, renting those for maybe 7-10 years and the people sold them and with that, money came in and the sellers were going to develop and rents were going to go up. In terms of affordability [our clients] can’t afford to re-locate, they can’t afford the costs of the removalist because they are living off the bare minimum already. It is huge and it is time consuming.*

Early intervention on the Gold Coast includes recognition from the homelessness service agencies that the Gold Coast needs more ‘at risk’ early intervention services. Financial and legal assistance need enhancement, and the ongoing increase in families ‘at risk’ of becoming homeless suggests there is ongoing need for models similar to the R2H HOST teams to specifically address this issue with families.

For those services that have worked with STARH, issues related to client access and timing in the intervention process remain of concern. As a respondent noted: “but I get the referrals when clients have been given a notice to leave, not prior, so it makes it a little bit hard to hand over to STARH for help”. This quote suggests that the system is working against agencies providing referral to STARH at a more appropriate time than after the client has already been vacated. This observation suggests that the referral system requires other types of referral sources that would be aware of people who are becoming at-risk of homelessness — such as schools, Centrelink, hospitals and prisons. A reconsideration of community links and early warning systems would be a relevant arena for future planning to improve the model.

The Gold Coast region has a number of established networks and forums, which are utilised by members from the early intervention and homelessness sector to collaborate and share information. As a member of the Gold Coast Homelessness Network, STARH is working with the Department of Communities and the Department of Housing to develop protocols and processes to strengthen communication and coordination between local early intervention and homelessness services and other support agencies. Such agencies include mental health services and other government and

non-government bodies that may be needed by clients with complex needs. Supporting and strengthening these networks and partnerships assisted in the development of a more integrated system of service delivery for both early intervention and homeless people with complex needs.

It is contended that STARH's membership of and location within the Gold Coast Homelessness Network provides a strong foundation for the successes achieved by this early intervention initiative. Through the ongoing working relations and 'understandings' developed, higher level integration between network agencies has transpired which allows for more effective and quicker referrals, better understanding of available resources, greater willingness to work together across agency boundaries; all culminating in a stronger service client focus.

### Key operating principles

Across all respondent groups there was a consensus that the STARH early intervention program was working well. Through a range of processes and programs focused at pre-intervention and other critical points of the intervention continuum it is strengthening the homelessness response pathway. This perception of 'success' is borne out in the official service statistics reported upon in the Department of Communities Implementation Evaluation.

The success of the STARH early intervention project is considered to be grounded in a practice approach that has been forged through both its own operating principles and those of the Homelessness Network. The following examples provide insights into some of these principles, the first of which highlights the client-centred emphasis of the working model and being flexible:

*Early intervention for STARH and the Gold Coast has been about the sectors not just focused on themselves, but the client. Yes we need more money to look at crisis, that's obviously an issue. But it's about making sure our clients .... get to that stability along different phases.*

Ongoing meetings, strong communication and information flows have been identified as critical components to successful early intervention work:

*We have two platform workers and they come to meetings. We have a reference group meeting for them... They are forming relationships with real estate agents, with some of the other agencies ... and through this they are actually finding people housing and keeping them stable.*

The inclusion of external agencies in planning and programming processes is also presented as assisting early intervention to become embedded in the work of different agencies.

The Gold Coast's network structure and history of collaboration has been acknowledged as critical to the results secured in this area. The Housing Options Program story is a clear example of early intervention success garnered from sharing information and resources as well as collaboration through expanding and replicating the use of other's successful outcomes.

*So the Gold Coast Consortium had been formed for all service providers and started meeting regularly, including with HOP, and I think it was something we'd started through the sub-committee, through the symposium and with the funding that HOP directly provided; it's for younger people to get them into accommodation.*

As this example demonstrates, interagency linkages and action are most effective when there is an intersection of horizontal and vertical representation.

## Townsville: Red Cross Homelessness Early Intervention Service

The high population growth of the Townsville/Thuringowa district, coupled with a high itinerant population and the mining boom, is placing increasing pressure on the housing and rental market. Indeed, it is currently estimated that approximately 3,000 households within the Townsville Region are in housing stress<sup>90</sup>. The Red Cross, an international NGO, was appointed to develop and operate the homelessness early intervention program for this area. The Red Cross Homelessness Early Intervention Service is built on a philosophy “that by providing clients with specialised interventions they can assist to maintain secure accommodation and reduce the risk of homelessness.”<sup>91</sup> In this early intervention role Red Cross works with clients on a medium to longer term basis on issues such as budgeting, developing more positive relationships with landlords, understanding their rights under the Residential Tenancies legislation, and accessing other support services. In order to meet these service goals a collaborative partnership with Yumba-Meta Housing Association has been established.

### Service model

The Red Cross early intervention service model is primarily office based. They have case managers, and through their partnership with the housing organisation also utilise two workers from there as well as two indigenous case managers.

Unlike the Gold Coast environment which is spread along the coastal strip, or the Brisbane situation which is delineated between inner city and suburbs, the Townsville early intervention environment is small and everyone knows about everyone else in the usual social constructs of smaller towns. While there is a loose network amongst all the homeless organisations the coordination mechanisms appear to have only limited formal protocols through the case coordination group. As the interviewee noted it is about finding out what everyone does and that takes time.

### Key operating principles

Although a long standing NGO, the Red Cross is a relatively new actor in the early intervention program. In the course of implementation, acceptance of the Red Cross role had to be earned through communication and reassurance that helping the early intervention and homeless situation was the goal, not extending the control of an already large organisation. An interviewee clarifies what happened during implementation:

*When the program was first established we weren't accepted at all by the others. The other thing is a lot of the providers of the SAAP services are the small organisations and they kind of resented an organisation the size of Red Cross to be able to access that funding. Through a lot of hard work and that's partly on behalf of the Red Cross ringing here and there, we've been able to break down those barriers.*

Key to gaining acceptance has been a clarification of the role of the service and the commitment to the problem area.

In order to find out information and understanding of the services available, the Red Cross process is by contact, discussion, agreement, or negotiation. As an interviewee noted:

*It's a small town really. And it is good you can say well what do you do, well we do this. So then when you have a client, I know 'other services' do that.*

<sup>90</sup> Qld Shelter NQ Branch (2003) Affordable Housing Needs in the Townsville Region

<sup>91</sup> Australian Red Cross Information Sheet, Homelessness Early Intervention Service

The issue of invitation and inclusion is one which is more critical and less addressed than in Brisbane or the Gold Coast and one that may require attention through the implementation of more formal integration arrangements. The impact for success and assistance to the client of this integration could be critical. To this end, the establishment of the hub may prove beneficial. Other factors that impact thus far on coordination with others for service is being addressed by “setting up interagency meetings, taking the whole team with us, introducing the team and also getting from them what they do as well. It’s a two way thing. [Saying] we want to work with you to support our clients, we don’t want to replace you. The clients are the focus”.

An issue for Red Cross was that it was considered by both existing homelessness service providers and potential private sector participants in homelessness initiatives as being a large, international organisation with significant ‘at-call’ resources. Red Cross has been active in approaching real estate agents for assistance in addressing at risk clients; however agents considered that because the Red Cross was involved they would be able to provide the necessary resources:

*I think another outcome that wasn’t anticipated which could reflect in this is the hesitancy of real estate agents and what to do with us. We’ve been to real estate meetings, what we’re trying to press upon them is yes, we are trying to help a client, but we’re helping you too; because the clients are able to stay there. Instead, the message which seems to go across which is probably due to their own ignorance, well if you’re Red Cross you can put the rent in. There’s that sort of stigma attached whenever we’re involved. It is not uncommon for us to have to de-tag.*

The Red Cross early intervention program, by beginning to link with other R2H services in Townville, has not had to source referrals. As the interviewee noted about their relationship with their main referral source, the Department of Housing, that the department was also developing a better understanding of the early intervention resource and its benefits:

*We have a good relationship with them. They’re identifying more in themselves as workers in early intervention, giving more appropriate referrals now for our program. This is really good and that’s come about after time with us ... appropriate referrals are of people behind in their rent, or where they have stabilised the rent with Department of Housing.*

The shift by referring agencies to an early intervention focus is highlighted by the following:

*They will ask their clients if they would like to come to us to help support them to not get back into that situation. We all work on how to help that client understand that if they don’t maintain this, then they’re going to lose this house. It’s about building those relationships with them.*

### Success factors

As a completely new service for the Red Cross, there has been good success in linking the new early intervention service with other Red Cross Services. The interviewee notes that:

*I think it links because we’re already out there in the community. We have been very successful in terms of our other programs for 5 years, same funding body; same kind of guidelines. So we’re already well received for the programs that we are in fact delivering, but again if you’re going into a new target group, you’re starting from the ground up again. Red Cross is still broad in concepts; people still believe we’re blood bank, so it’s breaking down all that. If we go to an interagency visit, I’m not just going to talk about one*

*service. I'm going to talk about everything. Just raising awareness that we are more than a blood bank.*

In addition to increasing awareness, other successes were reported regarding various processes the Red Cross and early intervention have introduced. The case managers' group and the role it has in service coordination is a key example:

*I think it's very good. It's for a lot of agencies to get together and work for a client. That group deals more with the early intervention than the homelessness. My role as the early intervention person is when the group basically amongst themselves talk about a client, who's going to do this and once they're stabilised can you take them. So that's my work in there.*

Townsville case managers have also implemented procedural strategies that they believe assist in their case management assessment. Where resources are short, gathering information efficiently may in fact benefit from procedures such as the formal and holistic assessment of clients to identify issues and propose action over and above just that of early intervention.

As with the Gold Coast Network, the Red Cross experience commends early intervention linkage with both the larger homelessness network and amongst those providing early intervention services at the ground level. Linkage, communication, efficient and helpful interaction with finding and assisting clients, and resource sharing become critical elements in an arena that is struggling often to service the numbers of clients in need, and preparing for the future increases in people with such needs.

In terms of outcomes for Red Cross clients, they are seeing differences in people being able to get themselves more settled at the point of a crisis such that early intervention enables the service to keep them where they are. The Red Cross reports positively that:

*Absolutely, the case managers advocate for clients, it's the practical stuff, getting them to appointments, supporting them through what a tenancy agreement is and supporting them through, it really goes back to basics, with practical support and skills. That's what the case managers do and what we holistically believe empowers people.*

One area that Townsville, amongst the others to varying degrees, finds of extreme importance as a service is in the arena of educating the community. In addition to educating the Real Estate industry, there is the client re-educating and life re-design that is also critical. The real estate early intervention situation is presented below:

*Some of the cases were where people were sliding into crisis and to the point where they were being evicted in 4 hours. We have been able to on occasion, to negotiate with Real Estate to give us some time to work with those clients. Some Real Estates are great, some not. Just to see that they have come to us, we are going to stay in there and help them, just some time to deal with critical issues. How it's come to this and how we can make it better. Some allow us to do that, others no and when it sort of slips into that stage, there's not a lot we can do.*

In addition, Townsville, (and the Gold Coast as well) found a great deal of misunderstanding and resistance from the Real Estate and property developer community. Ignorance was a key issue which the Gold Coast addressed with considerable efforts at re-education and relationship building through educational seminars and one on one conversation, using contacts through the Department of Communities. This points to a larger issue that was identified across all case studies in regard to both early intervention and homelessness services more generally. The private sector has not been

significantly engaged and it is clear, from the success in garnering legal assistance in Townsville, that successful private sector engagement requires formal and concerted brokering through vertical integration with government departments. The Townsville situation was described as:

*There's a lot of discrimination against people's socio-economic standing and there's also a lot of discrimination against race, and single mums, which has been a huge eye opener for me. That's an indication of the way that this town is at the moment. There is a lot of large money in this town, with defence and mining, and there are a lot of families that are just struggling, so real estates do have the ability to be picky.*

In an environment where the rental market is difficult, two other issues also present to the Red Cross early intervention service. The first is that housing is too expensive and families cannot afford the type of housing appropriate for children. Red Cross notes that the other trend is a growing number of seniors at risk of homelessness.

### Summation

Given the structural development and history of the three sites, their implementation also provides additional insights into issues that arise in developing a new program and a new structure within a pre-existing service environment and earlier government policies and program implementations. Communication and formalised structures for meeting and discussing early intervention services and needs appears to be a key element of success, or delayed success, in each site.

Overall, in the three sites there was recognition that for early intervention it is critical for all services to work together. It is the agency and service links that are essential and that means what is available as a resource, and not thinking that it is just one organisation or agency or service, "it's not just you". The best recognition to occur for early intervention work is awareness of the whole spectrum of services and clients and the larger social difficulties of addressing at-risk people in society.

## Innovations

### Brisbane

Brisbane innovations that provide solutions to early intervention cases are many. There are examples such as facilitating interagency coordination through memoranda of understanding, joint strategic planning, information sessions, joint funding submissions and regular partnership meetings, and outreach work in particular neighbourhoods and localities where more people are at risk of homelessness; using brokerage funding to assist clients to establish themselves in new accommodation; working closely with 'first-to-know' agencies, which alert the early intervention service to people at risk of becoming homeless; and outreach work in particular neighbourhoods and localities where more people are at risk of homelessness or are already homeless.

This innovation culture was transferred to the suburbs of Brisbane. In Wynnum, Micah Projects linked early intervention services by setting up a conceptual framework group. The purpose of this group was the development of some common understanding of early intervention and how it might be operationalised in the field. The intention of the initiative was to actively inform about early intervention, establish some agreed guidelines which, in turn, could be used to inform government policy and expectations. A grant was also sought to work on issues of public advocacy, mental health, and disability issues that can lead to homelessness. All of this activity led to wider discussion and wider recognition of the issues as well as a more targeted approach to service provision: "It's an early

intervention response in that we're being more thorough in identifying and then directing them to a service".

The cumulative benefit of this creative response to the definitional deficit was the building of new and the strengthening of existing networks. As a result of this work it was stated that: "... the whole early intervention network across Brisbane has been raised on what we did".

The impact of this 'out of the box thinking' in terms of conceptual development and advocacy is set out below:

*So innovatively we were actually informing government of what their thoughts were about early intervention. We also managed to pull together some work on impaired decision making to try and cut across the mental health issues and disability issues and people who kept coming back for the services.*

Reframing early intervention through inclusive participation of all parties has provided Brisbane with a project that advanced both the non government and government sectors' understanding of early intervention issues and meanings. At a more on-site level, Brisbane early intervention innovations include the Micah van for transport and improved, safer, access to and for clients; outreach teams to identify needs and direct clients to services; use of brokerage expenditure tied to case management plans thus providing accountability processes; and use of external community resources. The following quotation verifies these observations and highlights the impact of this innovation on the service system:

*The one lifeline is the Micah van. In so many ways [we] would be stuck without that resource. It's for anyone in a public space after hours with any issues; they will go and check on people. If it's safer for someone to stay in the Royal Brisbane Hospital, they will do [take them there], and that is not funded, and we could use more of them.*

The flexibility of the brokerage funds and the creative applications of these to match client needs were also presented as a further example of client level innovation for early intervention work. This improvisation was considered particularly important given the limited funds available through the brokerage allocations.

*It didn't have to be spent on only one thing; you could buy in specialist services. The additional beauty of that brokerage is that it had to be attached to a Case Plan.*

More closely linking brokerage with a case plan allowed for additional innovations such as help with transport and moving assistance. For all three sites in this case study, transport was a commonly identified problem. Interviewees commented that "transport is a big issue for people, accessing things. When they move into a long term place, stuff like furniture can be supplied or we can refer on to other places that we know would". These innovative and even entrepreneurial activities were further extended into community engagement such as active resourcing outside the agencies.

All of these innovations are addressing how to become resource rich and enhance understanding in the community of the benefits of early intervention processes and help.

## Gold Coast

As the Gold Coast also advises, “the innovations that we have, we made here ourselves.” Innovations identified also included new approaches for young people, particularly in using a strengths-based approach to help empower clients to resolve their difficulties and provide more lasting results, to continue to provide follow-up and monitoring clients’ tenancies for varying periods of time, and outreach work in particular neighbourhoods and localities where more people are at risk of homelessness or are already homeless.

The Gold Coast’s innovations also centred on the development of definitions and practices that distinguished between young people already on their own and those still linked in some manner to their families. The respondents noted that, without differentiated intervention approach they were unable to move beyond basic assistance to secure housing. In this way the innovative effort of early intervention workers in this district was centred very much on creating new ways of working with clients to improve their outcomes. The most prominent innovation apparent in the Gold Coast area is the level of experimentation on new ways of working together. The network approach to practice, planning and resourcing underpins much of the creativity of service approach occurring within this area.

## Townsville

Breaking into an existing service system required that the Red Cross adopt an innovative approach based on steady engagement, building relationships and through the strategic use of brokerage funds to bridge service gaps. The unique approach adopted by Red Cross include: facilitating interagency coordination (a new experience in Townsville Red Cross), using brokerage funding to assist clients to establish themselves in new accommodation, including clients with higher support needs and using a strengths-based approach to help empower clients to resolve their difficulties and provide more lasting results.

## Overall innovation in the three sites

The following statement seems to encapsulate the operating principles for early intervention workers in the homelessness area: “if we weren’t innovative we wouldn’t exist”. Innovative approaches are typically based on the early intervention programs’ commitment to bettering service to their clients, even in the face of doing something that is new, not always clearly defined, and in need of development and redesign as the service goes about implementing. The emergent nature of the role is encapsulated below:

*I think the early intervention project in itself is innovative, and .... it does work, because you do see outcomes that are sustainable for people and that turnaround from crisis, housing crisis, boarding house crisis ... proving that [there is better] support with that little bit of extra time and a little extra capability to do outside the normal square.*

Innovations identified by the early intervention services as enhancing support for clients cover three arenas — early identification, service promotion and interagency coordination, and improved operating methods and tools. The case study interviews have found the following details regarding these three arenas of innovation that have been found to be successful. They are:

### **Early identification of clients — people at risk of homelessness**

- Working closely with ‘first-to-know’ agencies, which alert the early intervention service to people at risk of becoming homeless; and
- Outreach work and having this occur in particular neighbourhoods and localities where more people are at risk of homelessness or are already homeless.

### **Service promotion and interagency coordination**

- Regular promotion of the early intervention service;
- Through memoranda of understanding, joint strategic planning, information sessions, joint funding submissions and regular partnership meetings; and
- Community education sessions with rental property managers, the REIQ forum and real Estate agencies on homelessness risks in the community.

### **Operating methods and tools**

- Developing a package containing general information for all early intervention service clients;
- Using brokerage funding to assist clients to establish themselves in new accommodation, including clients with higher support needs;
- Using a strengths-based approach to help empower clients to resolve their difficulties and provide more lasting results ; and
- Continuing to provide follow-up and monitoring clients’ tenancies for varying period of time, especially the tenancies of clients with higher needs.

### **Other specific innovations in the three sites include:**

- A homelessness early intervention conceptual framework working group (Brisbane);
- An Intensive Family Support – Under 8’s Program (Townsville);
- Renewed efforts to engage local doctors and dentists in accepting early intervention patients (Gold Coast);
- Projects and forums increasing a culture of inquiry, learning and collaboration amongst early intervention,
- Rent It To Keep it program on sustaining tenancies that teach the basics of how to rent a house (Townsville);
- Cross-cultural promotional materials where appropriate (Brisbane); developing links with local governments and MPs (Brisbane); and
- Budgeting and sharing costs of staff training and workshops and group workshops with clients (Gold Coast).

Innovations need to be presented and set out for replication and use elsewhere. Capturing successful innovations allows others to learn and make use of these as a bricolage of ‘tools that are at hand’. Increased innovation and entrepreneurial strategies by very involved and bright service workers does not alleviate the fact that resources are less than the need. Referral sources that in fact locate at-risk early intervention families and individuals much earlier might be better interacted with at the interface with banks, churches, schools, and the real estate agents. Whether or not reducing referral sources is used as a way to reduce client access and pathways, or instead as better and more efficient and appropriate means to learn of clients that fit neatly into early intervention classifications, raises philosophical and definitional issues about the intent and purpose of early intervention and R2H.

Indeed, the issue of what is early intervention and how early is early may be of interest to those who fund these initiatives; however the early intervention definition of 'early' is not a distinction made by the clients. These are critical services at all junctures of the homelessness pathway and to embed them in the homelessness service system may require greater involvement by government in educating service providers to the benefits to be attained.

## Impact Outcomes

Despite challenges faced by early intervention services in assisting their broad client base, the services reported considerable success in helping clients to avoid homelessness or find more secure accommodation, as well as successes in accessing some types of support services for clients and organising particular types of training for staff<sup>92</sup>. All projects considered they have been successful in delivering a range of services to help avoid homelessness and in finding secure accommodation.

The role and impact of the early intervention services has been confirmed in the network analysis findings. This data highlighted the central role of STARH and the Red Cross program across all variables but especially for the information sharing and referral. Network analysis data for GBHEISC was not available as this satellite program largely operated outside of the inner city Brisbane boundary of the study for this site.

Furthermore, the early intervention services have also been found to be active in terms of inter-agency coordination. The Gold Coast and Townsville projects both reported a noticeable increase in the strength and value of cross-agency working as a consequence of their early intervention activities and planning. While for the Gold Coast the practice of inter-agency working was well embedded, similar outcomes was the result of sustained interaction effort. Brisbane, on the other hand, reported a somewhat less than satisfactory progress toward inter-agency coordination. This was attributed, in part, to the range of individualized services offered as part of the early intervention program and the spread of the initiatives across a number of locations not previously well linked.

Overall, the early intervention services noted that increased demands on staff time and high levels of effort involved in case coordination were impacting on service. Due to the time shortages commonly experienced by case workers in many agencies, the early intervention services identified ongoing risks for interagency relationships to become locked in a process of circular referrals, because each agency is only able to provide a minimal level of information or assistance to a client. The service providers' impressions are that this circular referral process appears to be occurring more often for some client groups than others — especially for the emerging client groups who are older clients and pensioners, immigrants without access to social security, an increasing numbers of evicted tenants, families, and 'couch surfing' youth.

The early intervention services were successful in improving the housing circumstances of many of their case-managed clients, however, because the early intervention services aim to address people's needs before they become homeless, helping anyone sustain their existing housing tenure can be understood as a success. While the intention is to intervene before homelessness occurs, some clients become homeless before accessing early intervention services. With assistance from the early intervention services, clients moved away from more temporary forms of accommodation, including

<sup>92</sup> Some early intervention services recorded particular types of successes as well as challenges for the same aspect of service implementation.

short-term crisis accommodation services and boarding houses. According to the HTF Policy Platform report and the Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake<sup>93</sup>:

*The proportion of case-managed clients in short-term crisis accommodation was reduced from 10% to no clients with the assistance of the Gold Coast service, from 2.5% to no clients for the Townsville service, and was stabilised by the Brisbane service (2% before and after assistance). The proportion of clients in boarding houses also declined — from 12% to 8.5% for the Brisbane service and from 5% to no clients for the Townsville service. But the most notable declines were in the numbers of clients in private rental accommodation after assistance from early intervention services in South-East Queensland — from 38% to 29% in Brisbane and from 70% to 50% in the Gold Coast<sup>94</sup>.*

The report indicates success in keeping people from becoming high-risk tenants. The levels of housing crisis in the private rental market, and increases in rents and low vacancy rates are still very real and increasing. The services, as successful as they are, still have difficulty in helping clients to remain in private rental accommodation. Given current economic realities and the likelihood of further unemployment, the issue of housing availability is likely to increase, along with other very confronting early intervention issues

As the mining boom and other economic activities change in Townsville there has been a decrease away from affordable public housing. Townsville early intervention client numbers reflect an increased volume of clients being referred to the early intervention service. In addition, there is an influx of Indigenous family members staying with the authorised tenants, and overcrowding then occurs. Rental arrears and poor care of premises also occur because of an inability to manage daily living without support.

## The inhibitors

The early intervention services have experienced a range of challenges in implementing helping clients find housing due to the limited availability of affordable accommodation, in communication regarding availability, and in over-crowding; the Gold Coast noted for example that:

*There is recognition from the service agencies that the Gold Coast needs 'at risk' early intervention services. Financial and legal assistance need enhancement, and the ongoing increase in families 'at risk' of becoming homeless suggests there is ongoing needs for models similar to the R2H HOST team to specifically address this issue with families in a time when housing costs and shortages and economic stress are very high.*

As also reported by the Gold Coast Homelessness Network/Hub Consortium, the lack of funding and resources impact on practices that are core and that early intervention and innovative interventions generally are the first area to go when there are resource or funding constraints. Being able to intervene in the early intervention homelessness cycle by all agencies and services is seen as critical and yet there is operationally a focus on activities in the guidelines of funding which confine the non-early-intervention services to homelessness, rather than allow for innovation and early intervention activities.

For the Red Cross in Townsville, the situation is overcrowding and communication issues regarding availability of homes. An interviewee reports:

93 Homelessness Task Force, HTF Policy Platform 2007 and Department of Communities, Service Integration Stocktake, Senior Officer's Group on Homelessness Response, February 2008, Report coordinated by Catherine Baldwin, Principal Policy Advisor, Housing Policy and Strategy, Qld Department of Housing

94 The Gold Coast percentage may be over-stated, due to the small number of clients involved.

*Over-crowding is a current issue at the moment and that's only going to increase. We've worked with families where there have been three families in a house. There are three separate issues. We got the families we're trying to help access, unfortunately in the past they've been people that haven't got visas, and the people in the house are at risk of losing the house. Indigenous families find it particularly hard because of cultural extended families and they ask them to not be there. There are a lot of issues around that. We're anticipating that we're going to be facing it in the next year. There are also 50 odd houses vacant and we don't know why, so we need to research that one.*

In Brisbane, areas needing changing due to their inhibiting the early intervention process and success included confused funding and better links with large government agencies such as Centrelink. They note that funding by Government is confusing:

*We'd have a stronger focus if R2H was funded in parts of a region and not across regions. The other area that's not working very well is the Commonwealth funded Reconnect services. Partly because they're not funded in every region and that it's strictly Commonwealth funded. Funding is via the state department, so its two different arrangements; it's two different systems.*

Outreach work is identified as a key intervention strategy for homelessness services and in particular early intervention services. For all services, the ability to undertake outreach work was restricted by the high level of presenting and crisis demands.

Brisbane also suggests challenges and disablers; including confusion regarding 1) what is and isn't considered to be early intervention as opposed to post-crisis support; 2) better targeting of workers; 3) worker location; 4) limited brokerage funding; 5) different support services for families in their location area; 6) improving family functionality through having more staff.

The message from Brisbane is that stopping homelessness before it starts requires a package of services and funding. For most of their clients their diagnosis and treatment regimes are critical to having the clients stay housed and not become homeless. Equal in importance and related to success is early intervention located outside of the city, particularly if families can be helped to become connected with the community.

## Summary

Overall, challenges that face all three sites include case management and data collection systems, crisis response pulling the early intervention program toward homelessness issues, liaison improvement with 'first-to-know' services, defining what early intervention actually is, medical appointment and attendance assistance, funding of set-up costs for early intervention clients moving into new housing, and collaborative case management strategy creation. Challenges outside of service delivery include misunderstandings about what is meant by early intervention, Boarding House closures, brokerage availability, changing client needs in the current economic climate, varying levels of linkage and difficulty with relationship building with other agencies.

For the three sites, Townsville Red Cross, BHEISC, and STARH Gold Coast, the case study reflects both service and client diversity even while based within the same funding and guidelines structure. A major reason for people needing early intervention services is a housing and economic crisis, exacerbated by individual issues related to unemployment, abuse, family disruption, domestic violence, mental health, general health, drugs and alcohol. The structure of early intervention services in each site varies between large geographic coverage and urban/suburban differences.

Issues found in each site reflected varying historical confluences of organisations and power structures, as well as either different client bases by agency. Nonetheless, the diversity has provided an incentive in each site to aim for success in providing for the at-risk and early intervention client. As noted, what has created some issues for all three sites is the definition of crisis and thus the crisis impact on tenancy. The spillover between early intervention and SAAP required services can potentially lead to organisational pressures and confusion, as well as territorial responsibility clashes that are unhelpful to client services delivery in some of the sites, or amongst some of the members of the R2H services and consortiums.

There is no doubt that the early intervention agencies in this case study all make every effort to address homelessness. That they are able or not to reach all of these elements at a high level needs to be understood in light of the challenges, outcomes, geographic locations and their Consortium creation and history. At play also are value systems of the individuals participating in service delivery regarding how organisations can cooperate, coordinate and collaborate. All sites stated that service to the client was their primary purpose. Nonetheless they each succeed based on challenges that require great innovative energy and commitment from all involved.

It is outcomes, such as described here — engagement, interaction, linkages, support across services — that point toward a fuller understanding of what lessons may be learned from this set of early intervention case studies.

## Lessons and Recommendations

There is considerable variance amongst these three early intervention sites and programs. The differences are in part geographic and in part historical. There is also variance due to the understanding of definitions of early intervention.

Examples of key mechanisms and processes that have been implemented by early intervention services to support interagency coordination in the three case study sites include:

- Developing strong working relationships with both the tenancy advice and advocacy services and with real estate agents;
- Regular interagency meetings with key service delivery partners;
- Working with the Department of Housing, police liaison officers, Department of Communities, Local Councils, and the Department of Health;
- A reconsideration of community links and early warning systems would be a relevant arena for future planning to improve the model.

Real Estate agents have an important role as potential ‘early detectors’ of housing vulnerability. In recognition of this function, a series of community education sessions with rental property managers, the REIQ Forum and Real Estate agencies were undertaken to inform them of warning signs and the actions that could be taken early on to sustain the tenancy. The following statement provides a view of the process and the issues (such as funding, misinformation, and employment) that arise in addressing approaches and engagement with real estate agencies, which can often be a hostile situation. Providing clarity of the services of the early intervention satellite operations, also provides the realtors with knowledge about whom to contact early-on when there are tenancy issues.

*[We] talked to them about the continuum of homelessness from early intervention to when people end up homeless. We talked to property development officers and tried to educate them a little bit about when there could be interventions and what programs could perhaps help and how people become homeless because I don't think they have an idea of how it can happen to anybody. They don't always see that.*

Greater engagement with the private sector, including Real estate agents, presents as a clear strategy for future work of early intervention workers and services.

In all three of these settings, the larger element impacting on implementation and interaction along the 3C's continuum is affected by the service structure including whether it is embedded in a particular larger agency, operates as stand-alone and interactive with the other entire R2H network, or linked with a SAAP Network. In the case of the three early intervention case studies presented here, all have at the very least made great efforts to extend their boundaries and extend the understanding of early intervention amongst the other agencies, NGOs, and service providers, as well as extend the understanding amongst the communities and amongst the clients. The other area which makes for variance and functionality is the degree of the presence of flexibility in designing and using strategies and interventions. Successful initiatives are based on the existence of interaction and sharing of ideas, discussions, meetings, cross-agency case management, and generally strong communication actions taken by the agencies and workers in early intervention and the R2H environment. These approaches could form the basis of an education package that may be implemented over wider groups in the homelessness system.

There is great importance in building a better knowledge base of good practice within early intervention and R2H. It is essential that the lessons from these initiatives studied in this early intervention examination are disseminated broadly. Understanding what is best, what is needed, and in each site what could be used from elsewhere is critical. The findings indicate that early intervention services need to find ways to promote their existence to the not yet homeless. Initially it may involve finding new sites for promoting services and for new networks through agencies such as schools, doctors, surgeries, Centrelink, agencies that distribute emergency relief, real estate agencies and other housing providers that are more likely to know about people with issues before services agencies know of them. It is recommended that workshops that share insights and initiatives be held across early intervention services. An early intervention website, funded by government and managed by joint government and non-government team, would provide timely and relevant support for those on the ground.

The services of this case study also report a shortage of transitional accommodation with risks that clients leaving short-term supported accommodation will continue to circulate around the system in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, and Townsville, and that lack of or loss of support services to solve the reasons for being 'at risk' must be addressed in order to stop the 'churn' of clients cyclically through the service system. Urgent attention must be directed to finding new and innovative ways to increase the stock of available accommodation particularly at the transitional and sustained levels of the homelessness intervention pathway.

The lack of agreed and commonly applied understanding of the term early intervention is undermining the ability of workers to act in a targeted manner. Moreover, without a strong definition and agreed understanding of early intervention workers are likely to become re-engaged in crisis and point of contact services at the detriment to prevention. The work undertaken by the sector in this regard through workshops and dialogue should be extended to provide for a comprehensive definition and practice foci for early intervention.

In relation to the definitional deficit the study also highlights the frustrations of general homelessness service providers who are engaged in early intervention activities but have not had this worked acknowledged.

## Conclusions

Early intervention has emerged as a catalyst for action that has not formally been in the 'homelessness problem space'. The three case study sites have all reported successful outcomes based on the application of early intervention initiatives. Through their involvement in a wide range of programs, service and support initiatives the early intervention program is assisting to shore up many of the gaps in the intervention continuum. However, when homelessness early intervention work is not strongly anchored to this ethos, workers can be drawn off to the work of host agencies or to a crisis focus. Early intervention work was often entwined within the broad spectrum of work being undertaken by agencies; therefore the special program status of early intervention was not always recognised, or was seen as a lack of acknowledgement for existing work.

Early intervention remains a slippery concept resulting in a variety of applications at different stages of the intervention continuum. The findings highlight that the non government sector is not only working to secure an agreed understanding and practice for early intervention, but is pushing the concept beyond the traditional application of sustaining vulnerable housing to building a set of support services around individuals and families at all points of the homelessness intervention pathway.