

MEDIA RELEASE

3 AUGUST 2016 – IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Homelessness and mental health sectors come together for further reform

Across Australia the fastest growing client group accessing specialist homelessness services are people with identified mental health issues.

In South Australia they represented 29 per cent of the clientele in 2014-15, with family violence and housing issues being the main reasons people with mental health issues seek assistance.

The Don Dunstan Foundation is conducting the third Addressing Homelessness Conference, in partnership with the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning and the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia as part of the annual National Homeless Prevention Week.

The conference theme is **Home is where the heart is – Building hope for mental health and recovery** and brings together 250 delegates from across the homelessness and mental health sectors – government, community and not-for-profit service providers, policy makers and academics, to forge innovative models and practice.

The Conference will be officially opened by the **Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion and Minister for Housing, the Hon Zoe Bettison**, with the opening address given by **the new South Australian Commissioner for Mental Health, Chris Burns CSC**.

The two international keynote speakers are **Rosanne Haggerty President and CEO of Community Solutions (USA)** and **Mike Slade, Professor of Mental Health Recovery and Social Inclusion, University of Nottingham (UK)**. Both are recognised world leaders in developing and implementing innovative support services for those experiencing both homelessness and mental health issues. They will bring a global perspective of the challenges and opportunities.

Dr Debbie Faulker, Acting Director of the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Development (CHURP), will present the 2016 Homelessness Update, which provides an overview of developments in the sector.

Dr Faulkner said the latest data available (2014-15) shows that in comparison to the national situation, South Australia appears to be much more responsive in meeting an identified housing need than is the case nationally: emergency accommodation at 71.3% ;(nationally 65.1%) medium term transitional housing at 52.7% (nationally 34.6%) and in providing more long term options 33.2% (nationally 5.5%).

Don Dunstan Foundation Executive Director, Donna Harden said locally and globally there are examples of progressive and successful programs and experiences that we can learn from.

“Clearly though, here in South Australia there are still vulnerable people falling through the gaps and we need to determine how we can do better,” she said.

“The Foundation’s strength lies in its ability to raise awareness of social issues, such as homelessness, as well as facilitate and act as an agent for positive change.

“The Don Dunstan Foundation continues the great work of its namesake by providing a catalyst for reform - sparking debate, encouraging cooperation and most importantly, challenging the norms,” Ms Harden said.

Geoff Harris, Executive Director, MHCSA said “With the newly appointed Mental Health Commissioner responsible for developing the next 5 year plan for mental health in South Australia there is no better time to be talking about the importance of access to appropriate housing for people with mental illness”.

“The mental health system is also facing the challenge of how to manage the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Our research has identified that of the almost 7000 people currently receiving community-based rehabilitation only 1500 are likely to be eligible for the NDIS. If this is not addressed in the transition, this could see nearly 5500 people with severe mental illness at risk” said Mr Harris.

Other speakers at the conference include:

- **Emeritus Professor Chris Chamberlain**, RMIT University, Melb
- **Geoff Harris, Executive Director**, Mental Health Coalition of South Australia
- **Mr David Butt**, CE National Mental Health Commission
- **The Rev’d Peter Sandeman**, CEO Anglicare SA, (Expert Panel Chair)
- **Ross Womersley**, SACOSS (Chair for discussion session - Recommendations for South Australia)
- **Olive Bennell**, Manager Community Integration Partnerships, Community and Housing, AnglicareSA

The Don Dunstan Foundation’s conference, ***Addressing Homelessness: Home is where the heart is: Building hope for mental health and recovery*** will take place on Thursday, 4 August 2016 from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM (AEST), Panorama Rooms 1, 2 and 3, at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

ENDS

For more information contact:

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Donna Harden, Executive Director, Dunstan Foundation on 8313 6247 or donna.harden@adelaide.edu.au

INTERVIEWS:

Mike Slade:

- Press call – Thursday 4 August, 2.30pm to 3.00 pm – Foyer, Panorama Rooms, Adelaide Convention Centre

Rosanne Haggerty:

- by prior arrangement, 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm – Foyer, Panorama Rooms, Adelaide Convention Centre
- Please contact Lisa Radetti 0407 716 911 to arrange interviews with other conference speakers.

Media Invitation

Media are invited to attend this event.

RSVP IS ESSENTIAL by 5 pm am Wednesday 3 August

WHERE: Panorama Rooms 1,2 & 3, Adelaide Convention Centre

WHEN: Thursday 4 August 2016, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

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