



A safe, supportive and caring home for people with enduring mental illness

President's Report for AGM of MyHome in Canberra, 24 November 2020

Welcome

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay respects to their elders past and present. I would also like to welcome everyone and thank you for attending. I would also like to thank all the Board members for their support and their contributions during the past year. I would also like to acknowledge the close links with the Woden Rotary Club, the St James Uniting Church, Home in Queanbeyan, Carers ACT, Well Ways and members of the Canberra community for their continued support.

The Year in Review

We are grateful that Dr Mike Kelly has come on board as our new Patron. Mike has already made contact with ACT government ministers and has garnished political support for this project.

We have had a number of changes to the board. We sadly lost one of our early board members with the passing of Murray Haines. Murray was an architect and a strong advocate for tackling the hard cases and his loss last year in September came with great sadness. He prepared the initial concept layout for the residences on the block. John Tucker's health has also meant he has resigned. Charlotte Russell has worked tirelessly as treasurer and Graham Braden as our secretary. Both are retiring from the Board. Finally Lachlan Atyeo and Lisa Kelly have also withdrawn from the Board due to their other commitments.

We have attracted others and I am sure with their help we will take the project to its fruition. It is not fair to ask all board members to run a marathon, but with support, we can run a relay and still ensure we succeed.

The ACT election provided the board the opportunity to connect with candidates from all parties. So we contacted the candidates and were pleased to hear their support for our project. The return of the Labor Greens government has resulted in a new Parliamentary Agreement between Labour and the Greens that states on page 8:

1. The ACT Labor and Greens Government will improve social housing and housing affordability over the next four years as part of the roadmap for increased supply of affordable housing that is outlined in the ACT Housing Strategy, which includes:

i. Working with the land owners and community organisations to deliver the MyHome proposal in Curtin"

What great news!! We are ready to work with the new Government to deliver this project.

1. Re affirming the need for the My Home in Canberra Model of Care

This past year has seen the MyHome in Canberra (MHC) board continue to actively work with the ACT government to ensure people with long term mental illness are heard and their concerns addressed. In particular ACT Housing commissioned the Paxon Group to undertake a study into the models of care that are available for people with an enduring mental illness.

Paxon found that there were a number of different models of care and that the Housing first model provided good outcomes. It identified Haven in Melbourne and Clear breeze in Brisbane as successful models. Unfortunately both examples only support residents who have NDIS packages and, where the number of residents is limited to less than 15. The financial basis was deemed to be too difficult to obtain and so no indication of cost break up was provided.

The Paxon report identified the need for supported care but considered that a 24/7 model was expensive to run. As MHC does not yet have a built accommodation, Paxon examined the Home in Queanbeyan model as the closest model to that proposed by MHC are proposing. Home has 20 residents and does not stipulate residents must have NDIS packages. From a policy perspective Home believes that this limits support for people in need.

Paxon therefore concluded that providing 24/7 support was going to be a high cost and required significant ongoing fund raising or, government support to meet the financial commitments. The Paxon report did not examine what the cost to the health system was by not providing this service. E.G policing, ambulance call outs, hospitalisation, medical consultancies and critical care.

The MHC board felt that a separate consultancy should be commissioned to identify the costs and develop the business Plan model for MHC and so commissioned KB West to working with us to develop the MHC proposal more fully, so as to meet the likely requirements for ACT Government funding and for proceeding to design, building and operation. I have asked Graham to speak about this a little later.

Our goal is to provide a safe and secure home where people can receive support to manage their medication, have someone to share stories with and to support them when they go out into the community. We aim to encourage recovery and autonomy.

2. Reviewing options

We will continue to be flexible in our model of care and work closely with the ACT Housing and Mental Health areas of Government to deliver this project in Curtin. We will continue to work with the Uniting Church to look at siting and development options on the Curtin block and the ongoing care of the residents and buildings.

3. Supporting the ACT Government in meeting its stated aim in the Parliamentary Agreement

The Parliamentary agreement between Labour and the Greens clearly commits these parties in government to work with community and business partners to construct purpose-built accommodation for people experiencing mental health concerns. Covid19 has highlighted mental health as a key factor in this pandemic. Costs for telephone counselling have increased among all providers and suicides have also increased. Loss of income and housing also puts strain on mental wellbeing.

We will work with the ACT Government, and the uniting Church to define the design parameters and work with the planners and Architects to develop a cohesive design for the build form and the business model.

4 Fund Raising

Fund raising has been put on hold for the greatest part of the year with the Covid-19 restrictions. The board felt that it should focus on the other matters, at this stage, rather than fund raising. We plan to hold a wine tasting event once restrictions ease sufficiently. We are well supported by the Woden Rotary club, and we are grateful for their support.

5 New Web Site

The new website has made it much easier for people to navigate the new web site and to see what we are doing and engaging the community in our activities. I would like to acknowledge the hard work done by John Eyers in managing the website.

Conclusion

We continue to review our documentation and our model of care. We are engaging with other service providers and having community consultations.

We have made considerable progress and we thank the ACT Labor / Greens Government for their support and for their commitment to build a MHC in Curtin. Still more work needs to be done. We need to continue to consult and engage effectively with the relevant ACT Ministers, and the Uniting Church, to develop plans, call tenders and see construction completed.

I am sure that, with the ongoing support of Rotary, St James Uniting Church, Our other Church neighbours, The Curtin Residents association, Uniting and the Canberra community we are much closer to achieving our goal of having supported accommodation built for people with an enduring mental illness.

I would like to thank you for attending the AGM and supporting My Home in Canberra.

Shukry Sahhar,
President of MyHome in Canberra Inc.