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

President's Report for MyHome in Canberra AGM 02 December 2021

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.

Firstly thank you to all the Board members for their support and their contributions during the past year. I acknowledge the close links with the Woden Rotary Club, the Woden Valley Uniting Church, Home in Queanbeyan, Woden Community Service and members of the Canberra community for their continued support.

1. The Year in Review

We had numerous meetings with ACT Housing who asked us to do three things:

- Review our Governance Structure,
- Confirm with the Uniting Church the availability of the land and
- Prepare an Indicative Development Plan (IDP)

We engaged K B West to undertake a review of our structure and we strengthened our Board as a result of their report.

We undertook discussions with the Uniting Church Synod and signed an MOU over the use of part of the western end of block, adjacent to Theodore Street in Curtin, for a three-storey building in line with the Curtin Master plan.

To assist the ACT Government with their promise to develop affordable housing we, jointly with the Uniting Church and Community Housing Canberra (CHC), engaged Cox Architects and Purdon Planning to prepare an Indicative Development Plan to show how this could fit on the block as well as MyHome.

As the MyHome residence was to become a three-storey building with an underground carpark the design became more complex than just a two-storey domestic dwelling to one that required Architectural, Structural, Mechanical, Electrical and civil engineering inputs. So a request was put to Government to provide \$1M for the detailed design and investigation in this current year's budget. A timeline was also provided to government on how design and construction could be achieved within this Government's term of office. Unfortunately no funding was allocated in this year's budget.

We were however asked to define further our Cohort of Residents and advise the Minister on how we would fund the ongoing operating costs.

This led to further discussions with service providers in the mental health field who confirmed the need for MyHome and encouraged us to keep going. In particular it became evident that there was a broad spectrum of service providers and that the MyHome model would fit within the range of services required. That is there is not a one size fits all solution.

It also became evident that NDIS funding for people with mental health issues was a complex area. Other agencies have found it can take 12 to 18 months of extensive work to finally attain funding for their individual clients. The MyHome Board saw this as not a deterrent but rather a process that some prospective residents would have to embark on in order to achieve the required level of support.

By partnering with an existing service provider the requirements and processes could be achieved more readily.

A number of fund raising activities had to be cancelled during the uncertainty of Covid 19 and this has meant that some of MyHome's financial resources have had to be used in order to fund our progress.

We are thankful to the Woden Rotary Club who has continued to generously support this project and who have continued to provide funds to MyHome.

The Austrian Ambassador has taken up our cause and has agreed to hold a fund raising event at the Austrian Residence on the 23 February 2022 and has invited ACT politicians, other Ambassadors, Presidents of Rotary Clubs and the My Home Board members to a Friends of the Apple Strudel Function. It is hoped that other Ambassadors will continue to support our cause.

So whilst the return of the Labor Greens government has resulted in a new Parliamentary Agreement which 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"

There is still a long way to go to deliver this project.

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

The MyHome in Canberra (MHC) Board continues to actively work with the ACT government to ensure people with long term mental illness are heard and their concerns addressed. In particular meetings have been held with other service providers such as Catholic Care, Havelock Housing Association, Green Leaf, Woden Community Service, Northside Community Service, Richmond Fellowship, ACT Carers, Haven, Clear Breeze and Home in Queanbeyan all confirm the need for MyHome in the mix for mental support.

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

2. Reviewing options

Whilst we have determined the Cohort for MyHome we will be responsive to the needs of people suffering from an enduring mental illness. We aim to establish a community in the residence and we understand that this will take time. We understand that our model of care will not suit everyone and that it will take 12 to 18 months to establish a safe and caring home for people. We do not intend to reject people on the basis of a lack of NDIS funding. We understand it is a challenge to help those without care support and we would endeavour to help people receive the support they need.

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 the community to establish MyHome in Curtin. Our Indicative Development Plan highlights how the MyHome development can be combined with the Affordable Housing component, in a way which is consistent with the Curtin Group Centre Master Plan. This allows the ACT Government to achieve two stated objectives on the one site should they so desire.

The MyHome development and the Affordable Housing are not co-dependent but each can be developed separately or independent of each other. Initial discussions with, the Curtin Residents Association, has shown good support for the MyHome development.

4. Fund Raising

Fund raising has been put on hold for the greatest part of the year with the Covid19 restrictions. The board felt that it should focus on the other matters, at this stage, rather than fund raising. We are well supported by the Woden Rotary club, and we are grateful for their support. We have had discussions with other Rotary Clubs and Hands Across Canberra to develop our Fund raising capability. This would be much easier once the ACT Government commits funding for MyHome.

5. Web Site

The website has made it much easier for people to navigate and to see what we are doing and how we engage with the community in our activities. I would like to acknowledge the great work done by John Eysers in managing the website.

Conclusion

We have worked tirelessly over the last year to establish our credentials with the other service providers and with Government. We have developed the IDP and financial model of

care and our Cohort of residents. We have engaged with other service providers and have been heartened by their support and encouragement.

We have made considerable progress and we thank the ACT Labor / Greens Government for their support and for their commitment to build MyHome in Curtin. Still, funding has not been forthcoming. We have documents prepared to call for expressions of interest in the detailed design and documentation of the MyHome component. What we need most is that initial financial commitment by the Government to fund the project.

I am sure that, with the ongoing support of Rotary, The Woden Valley Uniting Church, Our other Church neighbours, The Curtin Residents association, 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 your continued support of My Home in Canberra.

Shukry Sahhar

President MyHome in Canberra Inc.