



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

## **President's Report for MyHome in Canberra AGM 21 November 2024**

On behalf of the Committee I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to welcome everyone and thank you for attending.

I would like to thank the Committee members for their support and their contributions during the past year. In particular I would like to thank Matt Jackson for his time and contributions to the work of the Committee. Matt developed our communications strategy and helped guide us through some of the regulations that impact the work we undertake. Now Matt has to cut back his work load, and so I acknowledge the contribution he has made and wish him well in his retirement. There is a possibility that Matt may be able to help with the evaluation of our model of care in the future.

I acknowledge our close links with Wesley Mission, the Woden Valley Uniting Church, the Murrumbidgee Rotary Club, HOME in Queanbeyan, Woden Community Service and members of the Canberra community, and thank them all for their continued support.

### **The Year in Review**

We are now close to having MyHome in Canberra actually built, as part of a combined development with affordable rental housing on the block here in Curtin provided by the Woden Valley Uniting Church. We saw the Lease Purpose clause for the block changed to allow affordable housing on the site if supported housing was also included. We had numerous meetings with ACT politicians and were heartened by Wesley Mission's leadership in discussions with officials about financial support for both the My Home and the affordable rental housing components.

We understand that Wesley Mission and the ACT Government have reached agreement on ongoing funding for the affordable rental housing component, although that awaits final formal agreement. The ACT Government has provided funding for preliminary design work to commence on the MyHome residences. Separately, Wesley Mission has obtained approval from the Commonwealth for finance from the Housing Australia Future Fund , but with formal agreement some months off.

As for the MyHome component, the ACT Government has now provided finance for preliminary design work, and we expect a decision in the next few months on funding for further design and building costs. We members of the MyHome committee have had meetings with Stephen Miners, the ACT Government's Coordinator-General for Housing, and his colleagues in August 2023, and with the Minister for Mental Health, Emma Davidson, and her advisers in March 2024. We have also talked frequently with Wesley Mission's project team with the aim of ensuring that we agree fully on both the building designs and the model of care for MyHome.

Wesley Mission has commissioned the local firm AMC Architecture to develop preliminary plans for the combined development, to allow more robust costings and to discuss these plans with the community. Wesley has also commissioned a local firm, Communication Link, to engage the community in the overall concept. A first pop-up information display was scheduled for today, 21 November, in the Curtin shops, with a second pop-up display to be held there on 28 November. A letter drop is proposed for the whole of the Curtin suburb, and a community consultation meeting is scheduled for 4 December: those wishing to attend need to register through the [website](#) providing public information about the proposed development.

### **Looking Ahead**

The recent review of NDIS showed that for people suffering an enduring mental illness, establishing eligibility and obtaining support is a complex and difficult process. People service agencies have advised us it can take 12 to 18 months for an individual to be finally accepted into the scheme. This is likely to have an impact on what services NDIS provides for the MyHome residents and may increase the cost of care for them. We are fortunate that Wesley Mission's people have extensive experience in care for people with mental illnesses and will bring it to the operation of MyHome. MyHome's goal is a safe and secure home and a community established 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.

We have been fortunate to have received several significant donations from individuals to encourage us to keep going. We have also received funds from the Murrumbidgee Rotary Club for our future work. One early use of these funds may be to help prospective residents who are not on NDIS to undertake the examinations and reviews required for them to become eligible.

The combined development of MyHome and affordable rental housing will be carried out as a single project and thereby deliver significant cost savings. The MyHome component will be smaller in size and located in the western part of the site, in order to be consistent with the Curtin Centre Master Plan and its restriction on building height in that part of the site to 3 storeys. Entrances to both MyHome and the affordable rental housing will be on Martin Street.

We look forward to continuing in the year ahead to work in partnership with Wesley Mission to establish MyHome as part of its Curtin development and to plan how MyHome will be operated. We hope that the ACT Government will decide very soon to commit to funding the construction phase. Knowing that construction is soon to be underway will make our fund-raising for the operation of MyHome much easier.

I am sure that through partnership with Wesley Mission and with support from Rotary, the Woden Valley Uniting Church and our other Church neighbours, the Curtin Residents Association and the Canberra community, we are very close 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.**