



Terms of Reference

Eastern Homelessness Service System Alliance (EHSSA)

Melbourne's Inner and Outer East Homelessness Services

2022

The EHSSA acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. We are committed to honouring First Nations Australians unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society. We acknowledge that this land was never ceded and the vast over representation of First Nations people amongst those experiencing homelessness, is a direct and ongoing consequence of colonisation.

Voting Members

Anchor Inc.
Anglicare Eastern
Community Housing (Victoria) Limited
EACH
EDVOS
Family Access Network (FAN)
Kara Family Violence Services
MIND Australia
Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative
Refuge Victoria
The Salvation Army Homeless Services
Uniting Vic Tas
Wellways Australia
Women's Housing Ltd

Advisory Members

The Salvation Army Housing
Community Housing (Victoria) Limited – Transitional Housing Team
Regional Homelessness Network Coordinator
Statewide Children's Resource Program, Regional Representative
Regional Family Violence Principal Strategic Advisor
Department of Families Fairness and Housing

The Eastern Homelessness Service System Alliance

The Eastern Homelessness Service System Alliance (EHSSA) is a partnership of comprising members committed to achieving better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and/or family violence.

The EHSSA brings together the combined knowledge and resources of its members in the spirit of cooperation and shared commitment.

The EHSSA acknowledges the:

- important working partnership between the member agencies in responding to homelessness and family violence.
- importance of the strength of this relationship in ensuring effective responses and best service outcomes for the eastern metropolitan community; and
- respective strengths of all member agencies.

Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference provide a framework to guide the partnership, its relationships and operation.

Vision

All people have a home, that is safe, affordable and are meaningfully connected with their community

Purpose

To provide strategic leadership for homelessness, housing and family violence services in the Inner and Outer Eastern Melbourne area

Values

Client Focus – providing a holistic response that meets the needs of the client

Collaborative relationships – working together in a respective manner to provide enhanced responses to clients

Quality – continual improvement towards providing high standard responses to clients

Innovation – commitment to working towards ‘a better way’ of doing things and encouraging new ideas from clients, those with lived experience and staff at every level

Focus Areas

Building on the EHSSA's previous achievements, the Strategic Plan focuses on four key areas that underpin the objectives of what we want to achieve. These are:

- Voice
- Responsive
- Reform
- Workforce

Objectives

The four objectives represent our efforts to work together in building a responsive service system that meets the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, by embracing innovation and improvement.

1. Build a strong Sector voice

The EHSSA needs to be equipped to advocate on behalf of the region with a well-informed voice. One that is backed by a strong evidence base and supported by a clear communication strategy.

2. Investigate, analyse and respond

The EHSSA will continually analyse the current picture of people impacted by homelessness and investigate better ways to respond to emerging trends in our region. They will develop projects in response to identified gaps and ensure there is accurate and quality data available to do so.

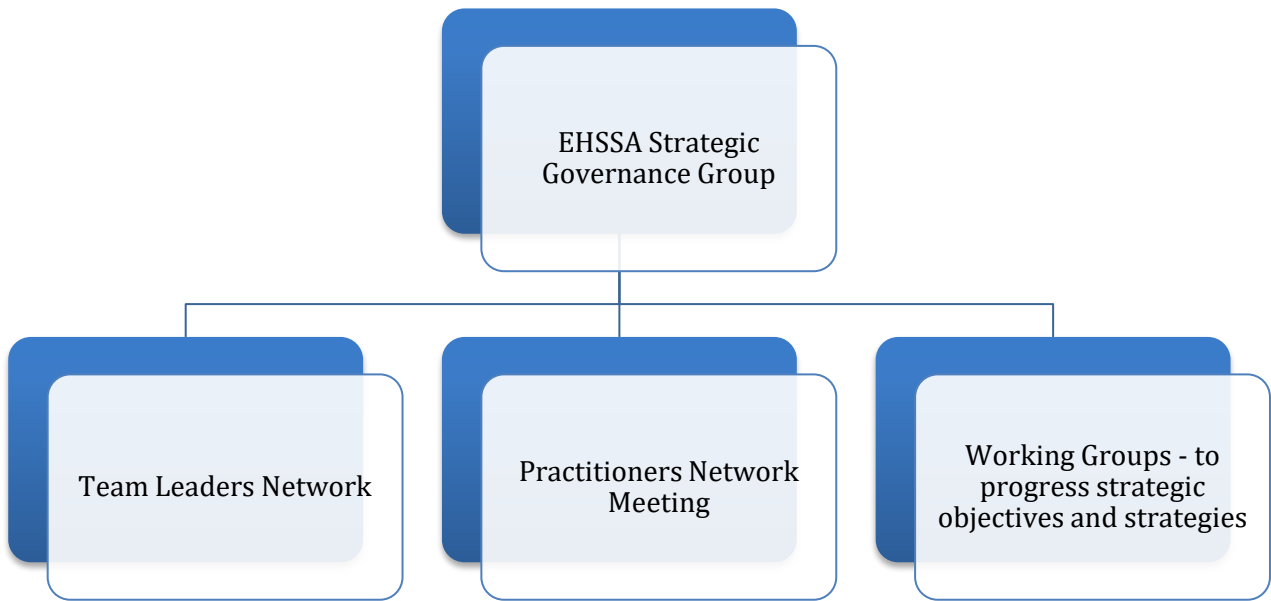
3. Effectively engage in the reform process

To actively lead strategic regional responses. The EHSSA recognises the importance of accessing up to date information regarding reform directions and implementations. With this comes the benefit of sharing resources and expertise amongst the EHSSA and strengthening relationships with other peak bodies and stakeholders.

4. Build a capable, qualified and sustainable workforce

Relates to the focus on building a deeper and wider competence across the regional workforce so as to effectively and consistently respond to those people affected by homelessness. Strategies would concentrate on capacity building, retention and training.

Governance Structure



Working Groups of the EHSSA

At least one member from the Strategic Governance Group will sit on each of the working groups. These members will be responsible for the reporting back to the Governance group on a regular basis as per the agenda.

The number of working groups of the EHSSA will be determined by the Strategic Governance group and will reflect the strategic direction of the Governance group. The working groups will be issue focused, time limited and may develop their own ToR as appropriate.

OUR CLIENT GROUP

Homelessness

The ABS statistical definition states that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not 'roof'lessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements may include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

The definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred around the following elements:

- Adequacy of the dwelling;
- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- control of, and access to space for social relations.

Mackenzie and Chamberlain's (1992) definition includes three categories in recognition of the diversity of homelessness:

- **Primary homelessness** is experienced by people without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings);
- **Secondary homelessness** is experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, "couch surfing");
- **Tertiary homelessness** is experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding housing and caravan parks).

This definition was adopted by the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Homelessness in 2001 and is widely used in the homelessness sector.

Family Violence

Since the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence there has been significant reforms.

Family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person's safety or wellbeing. It includes exposing a child to these behaviours, as well as their effects and impacts. Family violence presents across a spectrum of risk, ranging from subtle exploitation of power imbalances, through to escalating patterns of abuse over time. As described throughout this Foundation Knowledge Guide, family violence is deeply gendered. While people of all genders can be perpetrators or victim survivors of family violence, overwhelmingly, perpetrators are men, who largely perpetrate violence against women (who are their current or former partner) and children.

Family violence can occur in relationships between spouses, domestic or other current or former intimate partner relationships, in other relationships such as parent/carer– child, child–parent/carer, siblings and other relatives, including between adult–adult, extended family members and in-laws, kinship networks and in family-like or carer relationships. There may be more than one person using or experiencing family violence in the family, in a range of different relationship types. The FVPA uses a broad definition of ‘family’ and ‘family-like’ relationships, covering:

- a person who is, or has been, the relevant person’s spouse or domestic partner
- a person who is, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person
- a person who is, or has been, a relative of the relevant person a child who normally or regularly resides with the relevant person or has previously resided with the relevant person on a normal or regular basis
- a child of a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person
- any other person whom the relevant person regards or regarded as being like a family member (for example, a carer).

Determining whether a person is a family member must consider relationships in their entirety. Section 8 of the FVPA provides some guidance on how to determine this.

Levels of family violence are unacceptably high and reporting of family violence has more than doubled over the last 10 years, with women and children of all ages being overwhelming the victims of family violence and sexual assault with men overwhelming the perpetrators.¹

However it is acknowledged that men can and do experience forms of family violence and sexual assault but available data demonstrates that men are far more likely to experience violence at the hands of other men, than in the context of an intimate relationship.²

In 2008 The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force defined family violence as:

‘An issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social and spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.’³

The Dhelk Dja definition of family violence also acknowledges the impact of violence by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal partners, children, young people and extended family on spiritual and cultural rights, which manifests as exclusion or isolation from Aboriginal culture and/ or community. The Dhelk Dja definition includes Elder abuse and the use of lateral violence within Aboriginal communities. It also emphasises the impact of family violence on children. The definition also recognises that the cycle of family violence brings people into contact with many different parts of the service system, and efforts to reduce violence and improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and children must work across family violence services; police, the justice system and the courts; housing and homelessness services; children and family services; child protection and out-of-home care; and health, mental health, and substance abuse.⁴

Practices

The values and priority of the EHSSA are reflected in how members interact with each other to achieve the outcomes determined by the membership. This is demonstrated by the following agreed practices:

¹ Victoria’s Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012 - 2015

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006; Flood, 2006

³ Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families. Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities. 10 year plan. Second Edition. 2008

⁴ Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way - Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families 2018

- i. Consensus Decision Making. (see appendix one)
- ii. Management of Differences. (see appendix two)
- iii. Grievance Resolution (see appendix three)

PROCEDURES

Meetings

Purpose

- provide strategic leadership for homelessness, housing and family violence in the inner and outer Eastern Melbourne areas.
- bring together relevant agencies to achieve an agreed vision and mission
- Build on consistency and quality for service delivery practice amongst member agencies
- Make evidence-based recommendations to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) about responses to service gaps.
- Monitor service provision (via data collection and/or client engagement) through the establishment and feedback of EHSSA working groups for the purposes of identifying gaps and opportunities for enhancement in service provision.

Membership

1. Membership is open to all specialist homelessness funded agencies in Melbourne's Inner and Outer East
2. The most senior person from each agency attends the EHSSA meetings as the primary member and holds the voting rights for that agency.
3. Proxy members are nominated and may attend along with the primary member but do not hold voting rights for their agency if the primary person is also in attendance.
4. Membership encompasses Core members and Advisory members.
 - a. Core members are those that are funded to provide a homelessness response in Melbourne's Inner and Outer East.
 - b. Advisory members include allied services, State-wide or Regional coordinators and representatives of Department of Family Fairness and Housing
5. Member agencies must advise Network Coordinator of any changes to their Membership – primary or proxy.

Structure

The agenda will be structured in the following way:

1. Confirmation of previous meeting's summary
2. Review of action items
3. Agenda items
4. Standing Items
5. Operational issues

Frequency

The EHSSA will meet on a monthly basis. Annual meeting schedules will be distributed to optimise member availability in November each year

Attendance / Quorum

1. All member agencies must nominate a member and a proxy.
2. In the event the member is unable to attend the EHSSA meeting, the nominated proxy will attend. However, both can attend any given meeting with the primary member holding the voting rights.
3. In recognition of the importance of consistent representation at the EHSSA, agencies are only able to nominate one proxy. Member agencies must ensure the proxy is kept informed of matters discussed at the EHSSA. Member and proxy members will both be forwarded any communications relating to EHSSA.
4. Member agencies must provide timely confirmation or apology of their intention to attend the upcoming EHSSA meeting.
5. Member agencies must advise if the proxy will be attending in place of the member.
6. Member agencies are encouraged to have a representative at all EHSSA meetings.
7. Non-attendance by a member organisation will be followed up.
8. The EHSSA quorum is 50% of the voting membership plus one.
9. Where possible, if it is known the meeting quorum will not be met, members will be advised accordingly via email at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The meeting may be cancelled.

Voting rights

EHSSA will operate primarily by seeking consensus from the member agencies. Voting rights have been established in the event consensus cannot be reached.

1. Each organisation will hold one vote.
2. Memberships that are region-wide resources, such as the Homelessness Network Coordinator; the Children's Resource Program Coordinator; and the Family Violence Principal Strategic Advisor will be advisory only (i.e. not hold voting rights). These memberships will inform and provide expert advice to the EHSSA.
3. If proxy members are present at meetings where voting is required, the proxy will be required to vote on behalf of their representation. Voting will not be deferred for primary members to be present.
4. If a member agency is not represented for 3 or more consecutive meetings, the agency will be advised that they are now a non-voting member. The agency may reapply for voting membership through the EHSSA.

Chair and Minute taker

The role of Chair and minute taker of the EHSSA meetings will be shared by a Governance Group Member and the Homelessness Networker Coordinator

Guest speakers

A guest speaker may be invited to address an issue of relevance to the EHSSA.

Communication

Meeting Agenda

The agenda will be set by the Network Coordinator and sent out 1 week prior to the meeting.

Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting will be distributed no later than 10 working days after the meeting.

Meeting Agenda Items

Any items which the membership would like to add to the agenda must reach the Chair and/or Homelessness Networker Coordinator 7 days prior to the meeting. Any items received after that time will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Working Groups

Where required, member agencies will be invited to participate in working groups to inform and progress the strategic direction of the EHSSA.

Appendix One

Consensus Decision Making.

Policy:

Consensus Decision Making (CDM) process is selected as a useful decision-making process to build partnerships and goodwill and is utilised for the following reasons:

- Consensus is for people who are genuinely trying to work together, typically based on some shared interest, purpose or calling; OK if some interests are divergent, as long as sufficient joint interests are present
- Search together for the best solution for the group: it's "us against the problem" we are trying to solve rather than "us against each other"
- Recognize that no decision-making system gets everyone their first choice all the time
- What's the creative way to address all the needs present, rather than lowest common denominator
- Skills necessary for consensus are also necessary for good relationships
- Share, question, and learn from each other's experience and thinking

By definition, CDM is a cooperative process in which group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole.

The benefits in using CDM are:

- High quality decisions
- Builds connection among members
- More effective implementation
- Share common ground
- Us against the problem

Procedure:

1 Presentation of an issue or proposal at the meeting

The member presenting the issue/proposal is responsible for describing its history, the goal of the discussion, and why it matters to the work of the EHSSA. All members have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and gather further input.

2 Test of Consensus

The Chair will manage the test of consensus by checking - does the proposal work for the group? Have all concerns been resolved? Are particular sector representatives in agreement? A statement is proposed by the Chair in the form of a motion to which the member may decide whether or not they agree.

For example, the statement may sound something like this – *"The EHSSA endorse the proposal to hold an annual membership forum"*

3 Making the Decision

The options for members when making a decision about the issue/proposal are:

- a. Yes = Agreement – no remaining unresolved concerns, not the same as 100% unanimous but can be anywhere between ‘it’s fabulous’ – ‘can live with it now’
- b. Yes with reservations
 - Non-support ("I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along.")
 - Reservations ('I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it.")
 - Standing aside with support, let the group proceed ("I personally can't do this, but I will not stop others from doing it. ")
- c. No with Workable Concerns – send to committee for modification or hold over for next meeting (time to think, research, refine)

4 Recording the CDM decision

All CDM decisions are to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and distributed to members.

If someone has selected option C (No with workable concerns), then their name and the reasons for their decision must be recorded in the minutes.

Appendix Two.

Management of Differences (MoD).

Policy:

It is expected that every effort will be made to resolve any matters of disagreement between participants by an informal process.

Differences and grievances are to be addressed within the EHSSA, through the Chair, except where the difference or grievance is with the Chair (see below point 5).

Procedure:

1. Clarify the issue

The process is informal and is not intended for a grievance issue with an individual, but rather a process for clarifying and understanding a systemic or service issue in a respectful way with the aim of resolution. MoD meetings are based on a spirit of building and strengthening partnerships and spirit of good will.

If it is a grievance issue with an individual/group, then a Grievance Resolution process is more appropriate.

2. Manage a discussion

The Chair is responsible for facilitating the discussion.

3. Plan for action

The aim of the MoD process is to reach agreement on decisions and actions. All parties must work toward developing a course of action together to resolve the matter. If a decision is not reached and/or there are time constraints, the Chair will make recommendations for the next course of action.

4. Recording the MoD decision

A minute taker will be provided for transparency and accountability

5. Difference or Grievance with Chair

Differences or Grievances with the Chair will be addressed in writing to the Governance Group. The difference or grievance should contain the following information:

1. the decision or action that the member does not agree with;
2. the basis on which the decision/action is wrong or unfair; and
3. the proposed resolution that the member is seeking.

The Governance Group will seek to resolve differences in an open, transparent and equitable manner.

The Governance Group, with two or three other members of the EHSSA will convene as an advisory committee. The advisory committee will facilitate the grievance process and make the final decision

Appendix Three.

Grievance Resolution.

Policy:

A person or agency against whom a grievance is articulated is entitled to hear and respond to the substance of the grievance.

There are 2 options available for how to manage the Grievance Resolution process:

1. Informal procedure
2. Formal procedure

Where the parties to any grievance agree that the resolved issue could be used to inform practice and understanding, they may, by agreement between themselves and with the Chair or negotiator, report directly to the EHSSA or other relevant groups after resolution is reached.

Procedure:

1 Informal Grievance.

The informal procedure for the resolution of differences can be achieved by members discussing their concerns with the Chair in order to reach a mutual understanding or solution.

It is instituted by a member through a verbal request to the Chair.

This informal process should observe the principles of equity and openness, allowing both parties the opportunity to explain their position and listen to the views of the other party.

The grievance should only be discussed by the parties involved with the Chair or other relevant negotiator. The substance of a grievance should be regarded as private and confidential unless it has implications for the safety or legality of another.

Where there are implications for others the Chair or negotiator will have responsibility for informing them.

Where a matter cannot be resolved through the informal process or the matter is of such a serious nature that the informal process is not appropriate, the formal grievance procedure will be followed.

2 Formal Grievance.

To invoke a formal grievance the member must provide the details of the grievance in writing to the Chair within 15 days of the grievance arising.

The formal grievance should contain the following information:

1. the decision or action that the member does not agree with;

2. the basis on which the decision/action is wrong or unfair; and
3. the proposed resolution that the member is seeking.

Where there are implications for others the Chair or negotiator will have responsibility for informing them.

The Chair will convene the meeting as soon as practical or within two weeks and may agree to seek mediation from such a person to which both parties agree.

Two or three other members of the EHSSA may be asked to form an advisory group. The substance of a grievance should be regarded as private and confidential unless it has implications for the safety or legality of another.

The formal procedure will seek to resolve the grievance in an open, transparent and equitable manner.

3 Grievance with the Chair.

Grievances with the Chair will be addressed in writing to the Governance Group within 15 days of the grievance arising.

The grievance should contain the following information:

- a. the decision or action that the member does not agree with;
- b. the basis on which the decision/action is wrong or unfair; and
- c. the proposed resolution that the member is seeking.

The Governance Group with two or three other members of the EHSSA will convene as an advisory committee.

Where there are implications for others the committee will have responsibility for informing them.

The advisory committee will facilitate the grievance process and make the final decision.

The Advisory Committee will seek to resolve differences in an open, transparent and equitable manner.

The grievance will only be discussed by the parties involved. The substance of a grievance should be regarded as private and confidential unless it has implications for the safety or legality of another.