

YARRA DRUG & HEALTH FORUM PRESENTATION OCTOBER 5 2009

Key Points:

- Thank YDHF for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to explain our process, projects and strategies.
- OoH cannot evict any tenant without reason or due regard to RTA. The decision for eviction rests with VCAT based on presentation of OoH's case. A determination is made by the member of VCAT.
- Defendants are given information regarding NJC and options for advice and support from SHASP and NJC.
- Agencies supporting defendant are open to present their case to VCAT as has been the case to date in some instances.
- A presentation was given to the same forum in 2008 prior to the introduction of the Safety Security Enhancement Project (SSEP) (Pilots) and comments were taken onboard to refine the communication and implements of the SSEP.
- SSEP is now rolled out to all high rise towers in City of Yarra and is referred to as the Safety Blitz. This project well received by the vast majority of residents and agencies but as expected not received positively by those involved in illegal activities.
- Office of Housing is not in the business of evicting residents but providing sustainable housing options for all its clients.
- Support provided directly through OoH funded Social Housing Advocacy Program funded by OoH and other health and well being agencies funded by DHS or other government programs.
- The Illicit Drugs Project has been collaboration between, Victoria Police and OoH in response to the most significant issue identified by residents living in public housing.
- Minister for Housing has given very clear public support and endorsement that there will be "zero" tolerable to drug dealing in public housing
- It's important the agencies and workers act responsibly in understanding that misinformation to our resident population is irresponsible as many are struggling with complex life issues and suggestions such as "drug users": are being evicted is being irresponsible. Instead, an open invitation has been and continues to be on the table for agencies to work with OoH in developing effective support to residents dependent on drugs and alcohol to help them sustain their tenancies and be good neighbours.
- **Case Study:** A resident who has been stood over by users for years. His current support is expected from an agency represented in the room. There is no support plan, the tenants does not have electricity and his flat is used as an injecting room. My officers attended several call after hours due to the nuisance created by this tenant and visitors when the jump in baths and leave taps running with water leaking down to bottom floor through electrical fittings. When this was raised with the agency, it appears that his support has been failing for years. To make things worse the case worker had gone on leave without assigning the case to another worker. OoH's role is one of the landlord not support work however; OoH has taken the lead role in trying to sustain this tenancy and to make sure that appropriate supports are in place.
- OoH remains open to work with agencies but its priority is to make its housing safer for all residents.
- An open invitation remains with YDHF members and agencies to observe safety blitz and to attend onsite after hours nuisance and antisocial incidents to get a better understanding of the impact drug dealers in local communities.
- OoH will continue to work with Security Guards, CCO Service, residents and support agencies in improving safety and security for all residents.
- As a housing manager, I have a responsibility to ensure that our laundries are not used for injecting drugs, housing is used for manufacturing or storing illicit drugs and that our residents' rights to peaceful enjoyment of their private and common space is compromised by uninvited visitors or neighbours conducting illegal activities.
- OoH has met with NJC Client Services staff to explore options for improved access to information and support by support agencies.