

2009

# Homeless Connect Perth

## Evaluation Report

Paul Flatau and Caroline Parkinson



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is the second year that Perth has hosted Homeless Connect. As with the first Homeless Connect event in 2008, we have been asked to complete an evaluation of the event. We would like to acknowledge the collaborative work that went into the production of this report. Firstly, thanks go to the City of Perth and Volunteering WA who provided assistance throughout its preparation. We would especially like to thank Mara Basanovic, Marija Jelavic and Tom Pavlos for all their help and for their comments and suggestions. Secondly, thanks go to the homeless guest and the volunteers and service providers who attended the 2009 Homeless Connect event and provided information for the evaluation.

Paul Flatau and Caroline Parkinson

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## INTRODUCTION

Homeless Connect originated in San Francisco in 2004 and has since spread to over 170 cities throughout the USA, Canada, Puerto Rico and Australia. The inaugural Homeless Connect event in Perth, jointly organised by the City of Perth and Volunteering WA, was held on Wednesday 26 November 2008 at the Citiplace Community Centre, Perth. It proved to be a great success and a rewarding experience for those homeless people and others in need that attended as well as the many service providers and volunteers who assisted on the day. As a consequence of the success of the 2008 event, the decision was made to hold the event again in 2009. The 2009 event, held again at Citiplace Community Centre on Wednesday 25 November 2009 and organized by Volunteering WA and the City of Perth, proved to be just as successful if not more so than that of 2008.

Homeless Connect Perth provides a single point of access to services for those who are homeless and those in significant need that are potentially at risk of homelessness. It is a one-day event intended to connect homeless people with a broad range of services and to provide them with clothing, food and material supports to meet their immediate needs. It brings together government and non-government homelessness, health, education and community agencies, businesses and volunteers to provide guests access to goods and services they may otherwise lack due to their circumstances or simply, in many cases, not know about. It also provides an avenue for homeless people, service providers and the community to network with each other and share common experiences. Moreover, the event raises community awareness, participation and connectivity through volunteering around the issue of homelessness.

Homeless Connect Perth represents the single largest gathering of homeless people in Perth. It therefore provides an excellent opportunity for service providers to meet homeless people and collaboratively work towards meeting their needs.

Perth, like all other major cities, attracts a disproportionate number of homeless persons, particularly rough sleepers. These people sleep in parks and reserves, open spaces and vacant buildings in the inner city area. Consequently, homelessness is an important issue for the capital city. Using information from the 2006 Census and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program estimates, the White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home. A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, estimated that there were 767 rough sleepers on census night in the Perth metropolitan area. In the municipality of the City of Perth, a total of 235 people were estimated to be sleeping rough at the time of the 2006 Census with 111 of those people being in the Perth CBD area.

More broadly, at the time of the 2006 Census, there were 13,391 West Australians who were either without shelter ('primary homelessness'), or living in supported accommodation arrangements, or renting under insecure boarding house arrangements or staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances or relatives because they had nowhere else to live ('secondary' and

'tertiary homelessness'). Many more are in significant need and are at risk of homelessness. It is for all these men, women and children that Homeless Connect Perth has been established.

The issue of homelessness has attracted significant attention in the last two years. There is now more than ever, recognition among Australian governments at all levels that something must be done to address the homelessness problem in Australia. In December 2008, the Australian Government released the White Paper on homelessness *The Road Home*. The Western Australian Government has been working collaboratively with the Australian Government, the housing and homelessness and broader human services sector and with mainstream providers to develop strategies to reduce homelessness under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Dealing with homelessness involves a whole of community approach to reduce and prevent homelessness and minimise the impact of homelessness on families and individuals. The partnerships created between all levels of government, specialist homelessness services, mainstream services and the broader community sector are critical in ensuring an effective Australian response to homelessness.

Homeless Connect Perth represents an important part of this national effort to improve outcomes for homelessness people and those without secure accommodation. Homeless Connect supports the strategic focus of the White Paper and the National Partnership Agreement by providing a platform for an integrated response to homelessness. Homeless Connect Perth brings together, in one spot, a full range of accommodation, health, income support, education and other services that homeless people may not otherwise easily access. It also provides a significant means by which local government, volunteers and mainstream services can play a role in the national response to homelessness.

The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) recognises the importance of implementing Homeless Connect in capital cities and other cities and towns in supporting the Australian Government's strategy to develop more effective ways to reduce homelessness. The national rollout of Homeless Connect across capital cities and regional centres and most particularly in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne is being driven by the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM). The capital city councils will provide support to allow Homeless Connect Australia to evolve into an independent, national organisation, with membership able to be extended to other towns and cities that conduct Homeless Connect events.

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 attracted an estimated 500 homeless people and guests in significant need, and involved 150 volunteers and 200 odd service provider personnel and City of Perth Citiplace Community Centre and Volunteering WA staff.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A list of service providers who attended Homeless Connect Perth is at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 lists those organisation and individuals who made in-kind or cash donations to Homeless Connect.

Sixty one different service provider agencies attended the 2009 Homeless Connect event. The kitchen provided more than 700 meals throughout the day. Over 250 homeless guests attended Central and Swan TAFE and other education-based provider stalls and 200 homeless guests were provided with advice from Transperth. Assistance was given to 46 people in regard to taxation and electoral enrolment issues, 100 guests received haircuts and 110 were provided with personal grooming support from the Body Shop.

As in 2008, a number of specialist homelessness support agencies working with homeless people living in or around the City of Perth such as St Bartholomew's House, the Ruah Centre, Uniting Care West, the Salvation Army Genesis Centre, the Red Cross Soup Patrol, Mercy Reconnect, St Patrick's Community Centre, Manna Industries and Anglicare Youth Services attended Homeless Connect Perth 2009. They provided accommodation, emergency relief, counselling, meal service, outreach and other support services and information to Homeless Connect guests. The Department of Housing conducted Homeswest priority access interviews. There were around 550 recorded instances of support provided by specialist homelessness services on the day.

A feature of the 2009 Homeless Connect event was the significant involvement of agencies providing clinical health services, health promotion, and drug and alcohol and mental health information and advice. For example, the National Dental Foundation saw 55 guests, removed 44 teeth and made arrangements for 28 guests to be provided with further treatment in the future. The Perth Primary Care Network Street Doctor provided 83 health checks and referred 20 guests to other services. The Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc spoke to 55 guests providing information and support for people with a mental illness. In all, there were 433 health-related instances of support recorded for the day.

In addition, a range of other agencies provided services to guests. Centrelink staff provided income support payment advice to over 50 people, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages provided support with personal identification issues and issued 71 Birth Certificates and ORS Employment Solutions assisted 35 guests in relation to job market advice, vocational assessments, and guidance on job searching as well as information regarding employment counselling. Five to six truckloads of donations, including clothing, footwear, blankets, sleeping bags, toiletries, carry bags, accessories, books, toys, sun glasses, sun screen and non perishable food items were distributed free of charge through the Connect Shop.

The response from homeless guests, from volunteers and service provider staff to the day was overwhelmingly positive and has remained so.

This evaluation report documents the operation of Homeless Connect Perth 2009 and assesses the various outputs and outcomes of the event. In addition, the report provides recommendations for the continued improvement of the event and outlines how the event may further link to strategies for improving homeless outcomes in the Perth metropolitan area.

The evaluation report is structured as follows.

Section 2 outlines the history of the Homeless Connect event in Perth and its aims and objectives.

Section 3 provides an overview of the approach taken to the evaluation, details the survey instruments used to gather relevant data and outlines the planning that went into the day.

Section 4 sets out the activities undertaken on the day, provides a snapshot of who attended the Homeless Connect event and the services and goods that were donated and delivered to guests.

In Section 5, we discuss the key outcomes of Homeless Connect Perth for homeless people, for the services who provided information and support to the guests and to the many volunteers who attended and assisted the guests.

The final section sums up and presents a number of key recommendations for the future of Homeless Connect Perth.

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# HOMELESS CONNECT PERTH 2009

## BACKGROUND

The significance of homelessness throughout Australia and its impact on our community together with the success of the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Brisbane Homeless Connect events was the catalyst for both Volunteering WA and the City of Perth to implement the program in Western Australia. Following a presentation by the City of Brisbane, the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors agreed to make Homeless Connect a national project and the City of Perth resolved to fund and implement the inaugural Homeless Connect Perth in 2008.

As outlined in our 2008 Evaluation Report, the City of Perth and Volunteering WA were working initially in parallel to bring Homeless Connect to Perth. Both organisations had heard about the success of the program from their pioneering counterparts in Queensland, the City of Brisbane and Volunteering Qld. Both organisations were looking at the feasibility of running the program in Perth and found strong support in the service sector to implementing the Homeless Connect event in Perth. Eventually, the City of Perth and Volunteering WA converged and combined forces in a partnership to develop the planning infrastructure to run Homeless Connect Perth. The same approach was taken in 2009 to the planning of Homeless Connect Perth 2009.

As set out in the Homeless Connect Perth Charter (see Appendix 3) developed by the 2008 Homeless Connect Perth Reference Group and endorsed by the 2009 Reference Group, the mission of Homeless Connect Perth is to rally support and create lasting solutions for homeless people within Perth. The key listed goals of Homeless Connect are:

1. Improve access to services and housing for homeless persons in Perth.
2. Engage and increase the collaborative involvement of homeless consumers, business, non-profit community, and individual volunteers to work together to create solutions to homelessness.
3. To improve the system of care by creating opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices among Perth's homeless provider community.
4. Leverage private, corporate and foundation money and in-kind support to augment efforts to increase housing options and build service capacity for homeless persons in Perth.

The expected outcomes of Homeless Connect Perth include the provision of short-term and long-term accommodation, medical attention, the provision of mental health, drug and alcohol and other health information and referrals, legal assistance and counselling for homeless people; the opportunity for businesses and residents to provide practical help to homeless people; increased collaboration among service providers to meet the needs of individuals

requiring assistance; social inclusion of those most disadvantaged and engagement of volunteers to facilitate immediate and longer term connectivity between homeless guests and services.

## PLANNING

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 is the result of a collaboration between the City of Perth, Volunteering WA, 61 service providers (up from 52 in the previous year) and around 150 volunteers (the number is capped at 150). The planning and organisation of Homeless Connect 2009 was conducted along similar lines as the 2008 event.

A Homeless Connect Reference Group was established and met on three occasions prior to the event. The Homeless Connect Reference Group comprised the City of Perth, Volunteering WA and service providers within the government and community sectors that provide ongoing support to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness and a representative from the Department for Child Protection. Their expertise was invaluable in ensuring that the event reached and remained relevant to its target group and that issues were dealt with effectively and sensitively. Homeless Connect Reference Group meetings kept service providers up to date on the progress of planning for the event and allowed ideas and suggestions to be shared.

Volunteering WA was responsible for the operational and logistical organisation of Homeless Connect Perth 2009, with several staff members and volunteers working on the planning and production of the event, sourcing additional funding and supporters, and on managing the coordination of volunteers, service providers and donations. Volunteers were sourced to run the day via the Volunteering WA website, Volunteering WA data bases, Universities/TAFEs, churches, and businesses. As in 2008, volunteer recruitment was highly successful with many having to be turned away. In total, 150 volunteers participated in the event with a further 60 assisting with the collection and sorting of donations and supplies in the two months leading up to the day.

Prior to the day, promotional material, posters and flyers were produced and distributed through a large range of services and to homeless people accessing local community centres in Perth. Volunteer training was conducted prior to the event in order to advise volunteers on the running of the day, their primary responsibilities and how to engage with the guests.

The project was subject to one significant setback in the lead up to the day. On the Friday before the event, preliminary testing of the warehouse that was being used to store all donations, including clothes, toiletries, food and supplies, revealed some contamination of asbestos fibres. As a result, all goods in the warehouse had to be quarantined and were made unavailable for distribution and use at the event. As may be expected, this resulted in a huge disruption to the final stages of the management of the event and required a large scale re-sourcing of new donations.

The City of Perth immediately donated additional funds to Homeless Connect for the purposes of purchasing new essentials. Items such as clothes, food, toiletries and event production supplies were bought at discounted cost from retailers, while many church, business and community groups collected new items and donated goods previously destined for other charitable events. This incident required significant rescheduling of timelines, logistics and roles. Staff and volunteers worked throughout the weekend and for long hours on the Monday and Tuesday before the event to ensure all donations and supplies were replaced, transported, sorted and displayed appropriately. The response to this setback was overwhelming and as a result Homeless Connect 2009 did not lack any essentials previously available.

## THE DAY

Homeless Connect Perth was held on Wednesday 25 November 2009 at the Citiplace Community Centre, Perth. The Citiplace Community Centre is located in the Perth CBD above Perth's central train station. While this venue was found to have problems related to significant space and traffic flow issues in the 2008 Evaluation Report, it remains the most suitable venue due to its location and facilities. Not only is it centrally located on most major public transport lines, it also has required facilities including a large kitchen and dining space, office facilities, meeting rooms, hairdressing room and podiatry room. The Community Centre is close to the Citiplace Rest Centre which has shower and toilet facilities.

Services were located both inside the Citiplace Community Centre and on a large grassed area outside in front of the Western Australian Art Gallery, accessed by a 50 metre walkway. This outdoor area included an activity and entertainment zone, a range of services including mobile vans, as well as the large donations tent, the Connect Shop. The cloakroom, which in 2008 was situated in the reception foyer, was this year located within the donations tent. This arrangement worked well, as not only did it reduce congestion and traffic through the indoor foyer area, but there was also significantly more room for guests to store their belongings.

Services inside the Citiplace Community Centre were located on the ground and first floor levels. A particularly popular service was the photography booth, located in the reception foyer. Hairdressers, optometrists, podiatrists, masseurs and doctors all had private rooms from which to practice. As in 2008, a number of service providers were affected by the lack of private rooms to conduct interviews in relation to sensitive issues. This remains an ongoing problem relating to the Citiplace venue.

Services were asked prior to the day who they would like to be located with. Unfortunately, due to the late registration and differing needs of services, it was not possible to group all similar services together or meet all the service providers' requests with respect to location.

In all, 61 services were registered for the 2009 event, an increase from 52 services at the 2008 event.

Volunteer registration took place from 7.30am on the day in the walkway outside the venue. This location was preferable to the registration desk in the venue reception, used in 2008, as it allowed the reception area to be used exclusively to welcome homeless guests and to attend to any needs of service providers. However, it would be advantageous to signpost the registration desk as some volunteers had difficulty locating it. Volunteers and service providers were supplied with information packs and a map of the event which assisted in directing guests to the appropriate services.

In response to Recommendation 3 in the 2008 evaluation report, the launch was scheduled at 8.00am before the official opening of the event. This significantly reduced the congestion previously experienced in that area and eliminated the possibility of guests feeling alienated by official processes. The launch itself was well conducted with Graham Mabury taking on the role of MC and included short speeches by the Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC, Minister for Community Services and Seniors and Volunteering; City of Perth Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi; and Volunteering WA CEO, Mara Basanovic, as well as a performance by Bernard Carney, Musical Director of the Spirits of the Street Choir. The Spirits of the Street Choir performed later at 11.30am.

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 opened its doors at 9.00am, with 40 to 50 guests already waiting outside. The volunteer "Meet and Greet" team welcomed guests upon their arrival, explained the layout and services available and offered them a drink and a muffin. This team was also available to 'buddy' with guests, assisting them throughout the day.

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 was well attended from the start with the donations tent proving popular immediately. By 10.30am, supplies of women's and children's socks were almost exhausted and underwear was running low. The non-perishable food items were also running low. Volunteers stationed on this table reported they had had a large rush early in the morning, with people taking large amounts with them. While this was not unexpected, they felt it was difficult to tell people in need not to take too much. In future years it may be beneficial to limit the amount of items accessible on the tables and instead have them displayed behind, to be restocked when needed.

As the day progressed, guests took advantage of all the different services and the three course lunch on offer and there was significant attendance across the board at almost all the various facilities available.

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## THE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Time and resource limitations means that it is not possible to implement a fully comprehensive evaluation design. However, with the support of those involved in planning the event, the evaluation team were able to develop a strategy to elicit information on the activities that were undertaken on the day and document their effectiveness for guests, for service providers, volunteers and the community more generally without impacting on the delivery of services or interfering with the privacy of guests, service providers and volunteers. Care was taken to avoid intrusiveness and the enjoyment of the day on the part of guests.

An important means for eliciting information for the evaluation was a series of short surveys and feedback forms directed to guests, service providers, and volunteers. Service provider forms also included a tally sheet, used throughout the day, which recorded instances of support, referrals to other agencies and unmet needs. The volunteer and guest feedback forms were anonymous and voluntary.

Regular meetings and contact with those planning the event was undertaken, while on the day itself, the evaluation team made regular visits to service providers and chatted with guests and volunteers to gain a feel for how the day was unfolding.

The survey forms were adapted from those used at Homeless Connect Perth 2008. Modifications were made based on the input of the Homeless Connect Reference Group, which met in the lead-up to the event.

Forms were distributed to service providers during the event set up, and to volunteers over the day. The evaluation team, made up of the researchers and five volunteers, were stationed at two main exit points, one at the entrance/exit to the community centre, and one at the exit point of the donations tent. They administered the relevant survey forms to the guests toward the end of their visit (if possible), or alternatively allowed guests to complete their form themselves depending on their preference. Guests were also provided with phone cards and tins of Christmas biscuits or puddings as a thank you gift for completing the form.

Having two evaluation stations enabled the evaluation team to reach a greater number of guests than in 2008. However, without one clear exit point for guests it remains very difficult to target guests at the time of their exit. As a consequence, many guests who completed the forms indicated they were still looking around. As a result, data collected from this source surrounding the services guests accessed during the event will be incomplete.

Similar to 2008, training sessions were held for volunteers in the week leading up to Homeless Connect. However, the training was augmented in 2009 with the inclusion of an evaluation brief. This was in direct response to feedback from Homeless Connect 2008, in which volunteers stated they were ill prepared for the complications arising from the need for guests to provide

feedback. During the training session, volunteers were run through the three survey forms, their purpose, and their role in encouraging guests to complete the guest survey form.

## CLIENT, SERVICE PROVIDER AND VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

The *Homeless Connect Guest Survey* was intended to elicit information on the profile of attendees as well as information about the services they accessed on the day, how the day benefited them personally, and how it could be improved.

The guest feedback form covered the following topics:

- Sex;
- Age (by category);
- Whether the guest identified as being Indigenous (*first included in 2009*);
- Current accommodation status;<sup>2</sup>
- How the guest found out about Homeless Connect;<sup>3</sup>
- Whether the guest attended Homeless Connect in 2008 (*first included in 2009*);
- Reasons for attending Homeless Connect (*open-ended response question*);
- Different types of services accessed;<sup>4</sup>
- The ways in which Homeless Connect helped guests (*open-ended response question*);
- Because of Homeless Connect, whether guests had accessed new services they did not know about. Which ones. (*open-ended response question*) (*first included in 2009*);
- Because of Homeless Connect, whether guests knew where to find services around Perth. Which services in particular. (*open-ended response question*) (*first included in 2009*);
- How Homeless Connect could be improved (*open-ended response question*);
- Would the guest come again; and,
- Any final comments.

The second instrument used to collect information on the day was the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey*. Each service provider attending Homeless Connect was asked to list the name

<sup>2</sup> Options: (1) Sleeping rough/on the streets/squats; (2) Short-term/emergency accommodation in community/welfare house/hostel/refuge; (3) Boarding/lodging or rooming house; (4) Homestay; (5) Private rental accommodation; (6) Temporarily with family members or friends as have nowhere to stay; (7) Owner-occupied housing; and (8) Other.

<sup>3</sup> Options: (1) Government Department; (2) Community or welfare organisation; (3) Print Advertisement; (4) Newspaper/ Magazine Article (5) Radio; (6) and, Word of Mouth.

<sup>4</sup> Options: (1) Emergency and short-term accommodation assistance for the homeless; (2) Long-term accommodation assistance; (3) Birth Certificates; (4) Casework support; (5) Centrelink; (6) Clothes/Blankets; (7) Counselling; (8) Dental assistance; (9) Drug and Alcohol services (10) Education; (11) Employment assistance (12) Eye care; (13) Financial counseling; (14) Food (Meals/parcel/vouchers); (15) Haircuts; (16) Medical and general health assistance; (17) Laundry; (18) Legal advice; (19) Luggage storage; (20) Massage; (21) Mental health services; (22) Outreach response; (23) Recreation; (24) Showers; (25) Transport assistance; (26) Youth Services; (27) Other.

of the service; the relevant auspicing agency, government department or organisation; the sector they worked in<sup>5</sup>; and the type of services they provided.<sup>6</sup>

Services were also asked whether they attended Homeless Connect Perth 2008 and if so their assessment of how effective the event has been over the two years of its operation and whether they would come again. They were also asked to keep a tally of the number of guests attending their booth, the number of instances of support, referrals to other services and instances of unmet need. Given the high demand placed on many services not all services were able to keep full tallies of instances of support and referrals.

In addition, the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey* asked service providers:

- To list the three of the most important positive impacts Homeless Connect had for attendees;
- Whether the service achieved its objective/s for Homeless Connect;
- Whether Homeless Connect facilitated a greater cooperation between different sectors in dealing with homeless or at risk of homelessness clients;
- Whether services encountered any problems on the day;
- How Homeless Connect could be improved;
- Thinking beyond Homeless Connect, what was needed to improve outcomes for rough sleepers and homeless people in Perth. What changes in the way services are delivered are required; and,
- Final comments.

The third instrument used to collect data on the operation and effectiveness of the Homeless Connect Perth event was the *Homeless Connect Volunteer Survey*. The form asked volunteers to identify what they aimed to achieve by volunteering for Homeless Connect and whether this was achieved on the day. Volunteers were further asked to assess whether the training they were provided with was adequate and appropriate and to estimate the total number of guests they assisted and the ways they assisted them.

An assessment was sought from volunteers on whether the services available were appropriate for the needs of guests and whether any problems were encountered at Homeless Connect Perth. Their views were also sought on ways in which Homeless Connect Perth may have positive consequences for homeless people both in the short term and in the long term.

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<sup>5</sup> The relevant sectors included Australian Government Department or Agency; WA Government Department or Agency; Non-Government Organisation; Business; Perth City Council; Volunteering WA; and Other.

<sup>6</sup> Service categories included Emergency and short-term accommodation assistance for the homeless; Long-term accommodation assistance; Birth Certificates; Casework support; Centrelink; Clothes/Blankets; Counselling; Dental Assistance; Drug and Alcohol services; Education; Employment assistance; Eye care; Financial counseling; Food (Meals/parcel/vouchers); Haircuts; Medical and general health assistance; Laundry; Legal advice; Luggage storage; Massage; Mental health services; Outreach response; Recreation; Showers; Transport assistance; Youth Services; Massage; Legal support; and Other.

Finally, volunteers were asked whether they had any suggestions for future Homeless Connect events and whether they would come again. A similar question was included in the guest and service provider feedback forms. The overwhelming majority of guests, volunteers and service providers replied in the affirmative.

## SERVICES AND GUESTS

This section of the evaluation report outlines the services that were provided to Homeless Connect Perth 2009 guests and provides a profile of guests that attended the event. The three surveys conducted as part of the evaluation, the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey*, the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey* and the *Homeless Connect Volunteer Survey* provides much of the information on which our profile of services and guests is based. Of the 61 service providers attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009, 41 completed the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey*. Of the estimated 500 guests attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009, 153 completed the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey*. Of the around 150 volunteers, 134 completed the *Homeless Connect Volunteer Survey*.

### SERVICES

Sixty one service providers provided assistance and support to homeless people attending the Homeless Connect Perth 2009 event. They included Commonwealth, State and local Government agencies, community homelessness support and accommodation agencies, community health agencies, legal and health practitioners, businesses, professional associations and education and art groups. The distribution of services was roughly evenly divided between not-for-profit human service organisations, businesses and individuals volunteering their skills and services for the day, and government agencies and departments. The full breakdown of services attending the 2009 event is as follows:

- 23 human service not for profit organisations;
- Four Australian Government, nine State Government agencies and four local government agencies; and,
- 21 businesses and individuals.

Around half of all services attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009 work predominantly with homeless people while another 10 per cent of services work often with homeless people. The remaining 40 per cent of services only seldom work with homeless people.

Accommodation services attending the event included the Department of Housing and inner Perth providers of supported accommodation for homeless single men and women including 55 Central Inc, St Bartholomew's House, UnitingCare West and St Vincent's Passages Resource Centre. Accommodation services were able to offer short-term crisis accommodation to homeless guests. The Department of Housing conducted priority access interviews on the day as well as providing a broad range of other forms of assistance to guests including interviews for wait listing and bond assistance. A range of services participating in the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program also attended the event (City of Belmont, St Bartholomew's House and Care Options).

One gap in terms of service provision at Homeless Connect 2009 was the absence of major long-

term community housing providers. Community housing providers now play a significant role in the social housing sector in Western Australia and will do so even more in the future, particularly as an exit point from homelessness. The absence of long-term community housing providers reduced the options for homeless guests to gain information about accessing long-term housing opportunities and their long-term housing options.<sup>7</sup>

A number of outreach, telephone crisis line and support services for homeless people in Perth attended Homeless Connect Perth 2009 included the Ruah Centre, the UnitingCare West's Tranby Centre, AnglicareWA's Step1 Street Work Program for young homeless people, The Salvation Army's Genesis Centre, Manna Industries, Red Cross Community Services, the Noongar Patrol and St Patrick's Community Centre which services the Fremantle area. These services provided information on accommodation options, provided referrals for support, and informal counselling services.

A large number of health services attended the event including Medicare Australia, National Dental Foundation operating from a mobile dental clinic provided by the State Dental Service, the Perth Primary Care Network-Street Doctor, Inner City Community Mental Health, Mental Illness Fellowship of WA (Inc), Lions Hearing Clinic, Breast Screen WA, Diabetes WA, the Mobile GP, a podiatrist, the WA Optometry Association and FPWA Sexual Health Services. Several drug and alcohol services also attended including the North Metro Community Drug Service and the WA Substance Users' Association.

A key role played by the health services at Homeless Connect 2009 was to provide physical, mental health and drug and alcohol information, referral and treatment. Health-related agencies attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009 also provided a range of direct services including:

- Medicare enrolments, online services and Medicare claims;
- Dental treatment;
- Hearing screenings;
- Vision screening and eye health checks and the provision of glasses that have been donated for the guests who need them;
- Blood pressure clinics, blood sugar-level monitoring, general and mental health clinical care; and,
- Podiatry treatment.

The Lions Hearing Clinics/Ear Science Institute Australia, together with the Lions Help to Hear Foundation provided the Lions Hearing Bus to perform Free Hearing Screenings and provided advice on hearing loss and assistive devices. The Street Doctor provided basic health checks: blood pressure checks, blood glucose levels, and Body Mass Index measurements.

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted however that the timing of the event was unfortunate in that it coincided with the National Housing Conference being held in Melbourne.

One of the features of the day was that the National Dental Foundation was able to provide direct treatment to a large number of homeless guests. The volunteer dental team consisted of two Dentists, an Oral Surgeon and three Dental Nurses, who were kept busy providing some form of treatment to around 55 people.

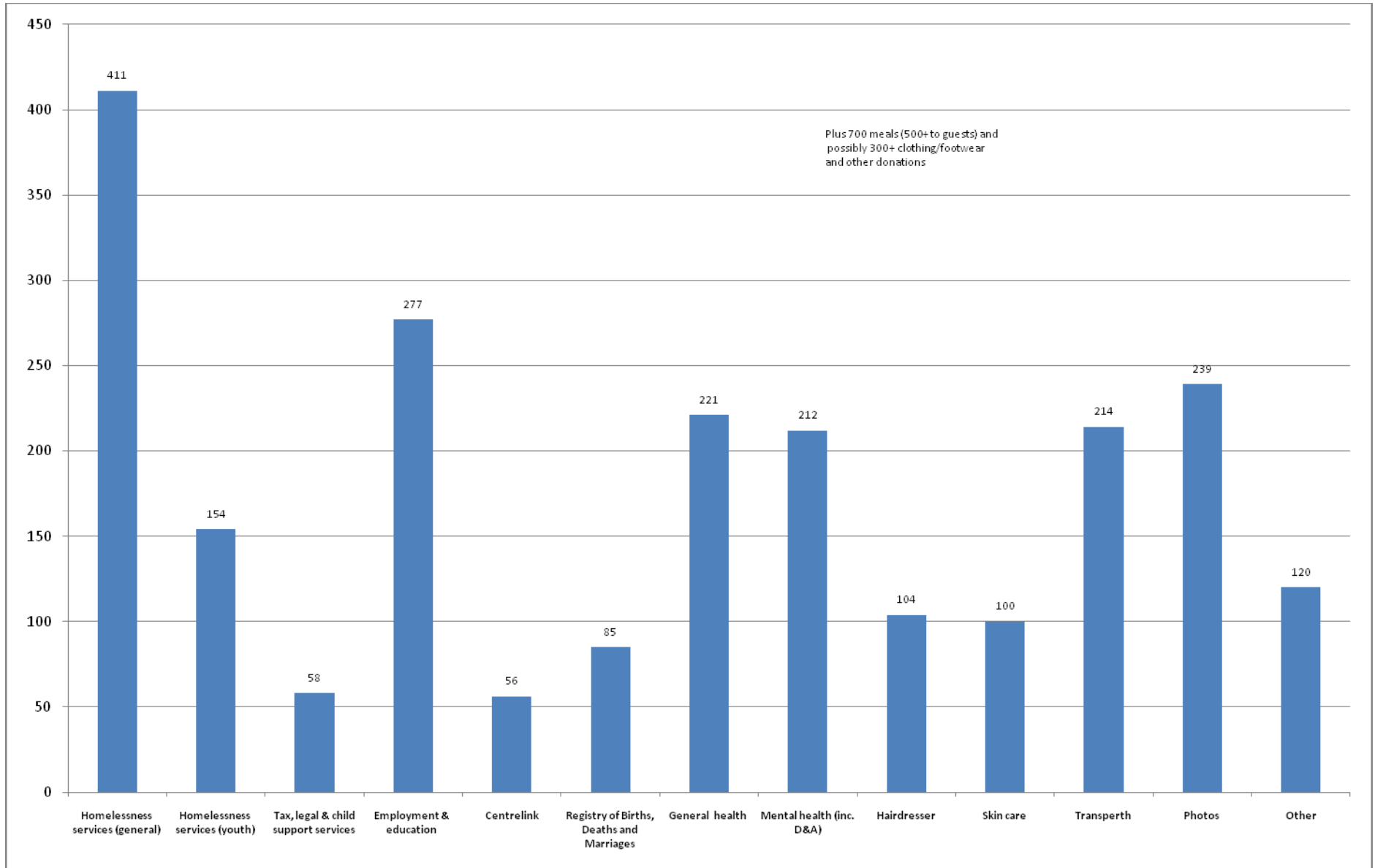
Centrelink provided a large team of support staff for the event and conducted interviews in relation to income support issues affecting homeless guests. These included accommodation-related queries, funds requests, and advice regarding maintaining benefits with no proof of identity and claim inquiries. A number of employment support services also attended the event including The Big Issue and ORS Employment Solutions who offered current job market advice, vocational assessments, and guidance on job searching as well as information regarding employment counselling and other services to 35 guests. These services assisted guests with information about possible career pathways and skills recognition courses. The Big Issue offered guests an opportunity to make money selling The Big Issue magazine and assisted with accommodation and other service referrals to appropriate agencies. There was a significant presence on the day from both Central and Swan TAFE who provided education, training and career advice and information.

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Australian Taxation Office, the Child Support Agency, Transperth, a number of legal groups and the Australian Electoral Commission provided a range of specialist services. These included:

- The provision of Birth Certificates and information on how to get Birth Certificates for those from the eastern states and New Zealand and from overseas agencies and embassies;
- A display of Australian Tax Office publications including Tax File Number enquiry forms, e-tax information, the Tax Help Program and guests were able to ask questions with regard to taxation issues;
- Legal counsel;
- Electoral enrolment and advice; and,
- Journey-planning information, Smartrider and travel concession entitlements and the provision of 100 24-hour Smartrider passes.

The Noongar Patrol came in contact with around 110 Indigenous guests, with 26 clients helped at length. Most of those assisted at length were issued with a birth certificate for either themselves or their children. The Noongar Patrol indicated that the main services used by Indigenous guests were Homeswest, the Dentist, the Optometrist, and the Hairdresser.

Figure 1: Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey and Other Sources, Recorded Instances of Support, 2009 Homeless Connect Perth



NB: The above figure excludes estimates of 16 services for which tallies of guests were not provided.

Lifestyle and basic needs-based assistance included the provision of food; skin-care treatments, mini-makeovers, assistance in presentation for interviews from the Body Shop; haircuts from the Citiplace Hairdressers; hot showers; clothes and footwear from the Donation Distribution Shop and Reflexology. The inclusion of a photographer and photo booth proved to be a huge success and welcomed by the guests with 239 photos being taken. The kitchen served over 700 meals. Art and craft activities, relaxation massages, and music also contributed to the event's success.

A full list of agencies that registered before the day is included in Appendix 1 to the report.

Among the 45 providers who completed the relevant section of the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey* or for whom precise counts of guest served are available, a total of 2,251 guest contacts with services were recorded. This figure excludes services not completing the survey or the relevant section of the form or for whom accurate information is not available (16 in total). The two most accessed services on the day were the meals service and the Donations Shop. More than 700 meals were served and the clothing and Donations Shop was busy throughout the day. Including estimates for the meals and clothing and footwear areas and conservatively apportioning estimates of guest contacts for other services suggests that more than 3,300 guest instances of supported occurred for Homeless Connect 2009. This compares with a figure of 2,000 guest contacts estimated for Homeless Connect 2008.

Based on the results of the *Homeless Connect Service Provider Survey*, the median number of guests assisted by services was 32; up on the 20 estimated for 2008. This increase in the median number of guests assisted is consistent with the higher overall numbers of guests attending Homeless Connect in 2009 than in 2008.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of guest contacts for different types of services among 45 providers for whom tallies are available.

The estimates contained in Figure 1 do not include those services for whom no tally of guests assisted is available (14 in total not including the meals service and the Donations Shop services). General homelessness services provided 411 recorded instances of support while youth-based homelessness services assisted 154 guests; the latter figure represented a significant increase on that for 2008. This reflects both the rise in the total number of guests assisted and the younger profile of guests attending Homeless Connect in 2009 as compared with 2008.

Among those providers for whom tallies are available, health services assisted 433 guests almost 100 up on 2008. Around half of these instances of support were provided by mental health and drug and alcohol agencies. There was a very large increase in the number of guests who attended education and employment-related stalls in 2009 over 2008 (277 instances of support). As in 2008, Centrelink and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Citiplace Hairdressers played a critical role at Homeless Connect.

## GUESTS

Determining the exact number of guests who attended Homeless Connect is difficult due to the imperfections in data collection explained previously. A tally of the total number of entrants is not possible given the open layout of the event and the absence of a single entry or exit point.

On the basis of the number of meals prepared and the number of guests and individual stalls, a conservative estimate is that over 500 guests attended the event (an increase on the estimated 350 guests attending the 2008 event). More homeless families attended in 2009 than in 2008. Of those guests attending, 153 were interviewed for the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey*; up on the 132 that were interviewed in 2008. The results presented below are based largely on completed guest surveys.

Two-thirds of guests attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009 attended for the first time in 2009, with a quarter attending in 2008 and the remainder unsure or not providing a response.

### Sex

The majority of guests attending Homeless Connect Perth 2009 were men (67 per cent), who outnumbered women (33 per cent) almost exactly 2:1; the same ratio as for 2008.

Figure 2: Survey of Homeless Guests, Age Distribution, 2009 Homeless Connect Perth

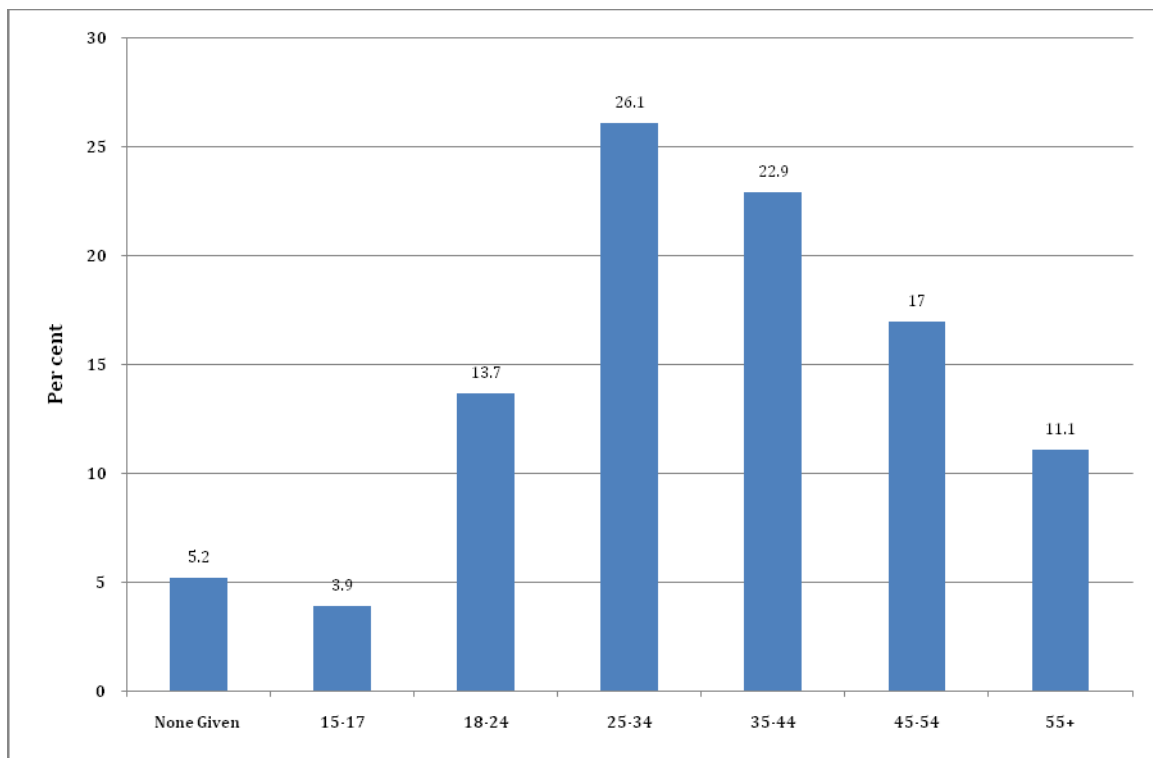
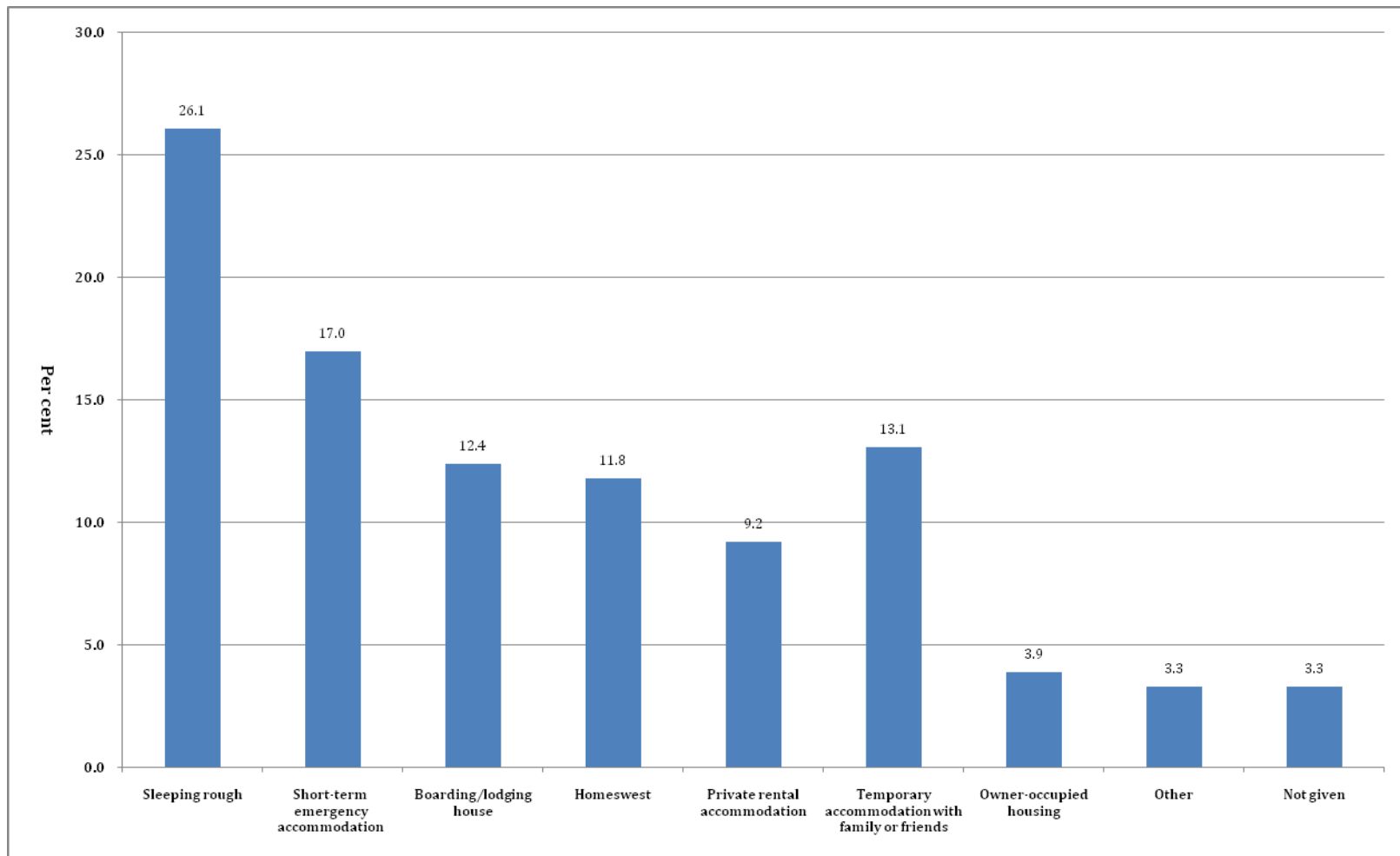


Figure 3: Survey of Homeless Guests, Housing Position of Homeless Guests, Per Cent of Respondents, 2009 Homeless Connect Perth



The relatively high proportion of male guests reflects the fact that a key target group for the event were those living on the streets and sleeping rough; a group which is more male dominated than the broader homelessness population. The broader homeless population includes women escaping domestic violence who are provided with support in women's refuges. They make up a significant proportion of the overall homeless population.

It is perhaps more appropriate to provide one-stop-shop type assistance to women assisted by women's refuges in a separate forum to the general Homeless Connect event. However, the absence of agencies providing accommodation and outreach support to homeless women more generally does represent a gap in the range of services present at Homeless Connect Perth. Other related gaps include children's services and the presence of the Department for Child Protection.

### **Age**

As evident in Figure 2 above, the most common age group of guests was the 25 – 34 age group, who accounted for 26 per cent of guests. This was followed by the 35–44 age group with 22.9 per cent of guests, and the 45-54 age group with 17 per cent of guests. Those 24 and under accounted for 17.8 per cent of guests. The age profile of respondents in 2009 was somewhat younger than in 2008.

### **Indigenous Status**

Of the 153 respondents to the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey*, 15 per cent identified as Aboriginal, 76.5 per cent non-Aboriginal with the remaining 8.5 per cent not providing a response. The Survey may provide an under-representation of Aboriginal attendees as the Noongar Patrol reported that they came in contact with 110 Indigenous guests. The relatively high representation of Aboriginal guests at Homeless Connect Perth reflects the significantly higher representation of Aboriginal people in the homelessness population more broadly.

### **The Accommodation Status of Homeless Guests**

*Homeless Connect Guest Survey* respondents were asked to list their current housing position. The results are presented in Figure 3.

Sleeping rough was the most common accommodation status in the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey* accounting for 26.1 per cent of guests, followed by short-term emergency accommodation options which accounted for 17.0 per cent of guests. These two accommodation positions represented 43.1 per cent of all guests at Homeless Connect.

Interestingly, female respondents were just as likely to be sleeping rough as their male counterparts but less likely to be staying in short-term emergency accommodation. This difference between men and women probably reflects the profile of specialist homelessness agencies working with the City of Perth and Volunteering WA. These agencies are weighted strongly towards Day Centres, which support those sleeping rough whether women or men, and single men's accommodation services.

Those in boarding/lodging or rooming houses accounted for a further 12.4 per cent of guests while

those staying with friends and family because they had nowhere else to stay accounted for 13.1 per cent of guests. Using a broad definition of homelessness, around 70 per cent of guests at Homeless Connect were homeless in one form or another.

The remaining respondents to the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey* were located in Homeswest accommodation (11.8 per cent), private rental accommodation (9.2 per cent), owner-occupied housing (3.9 per cent) and other or no accommodation stated (6.6 per cent). As homelessness represents a pathway into Homeswest accommodation, some of those attending from this tenure position may have been recently homeless and have retained links with those on the street through street networks and attendance at Day Centres.

It was clear from various responses to the survey that several of the respondents were there simply looking around, seeing what was going on and supporting others and this may account for the presence of some of those in owner-occupation and other secure tenure positions.

Overall, the housing profile of guests reflects the profile of street present people and those frequenting day centres. It provides confirmation that the event was effective in reaching its target group.

### ***Sources of Information***

In 2008, the most common means by which guests found out about Homeless Connect was through community or welfare organisations, with around half of all guests hearing about Homeless Connect through these organisations. The simple word-of-mouth channel was the next most popular source of information being cited by a third of guests.

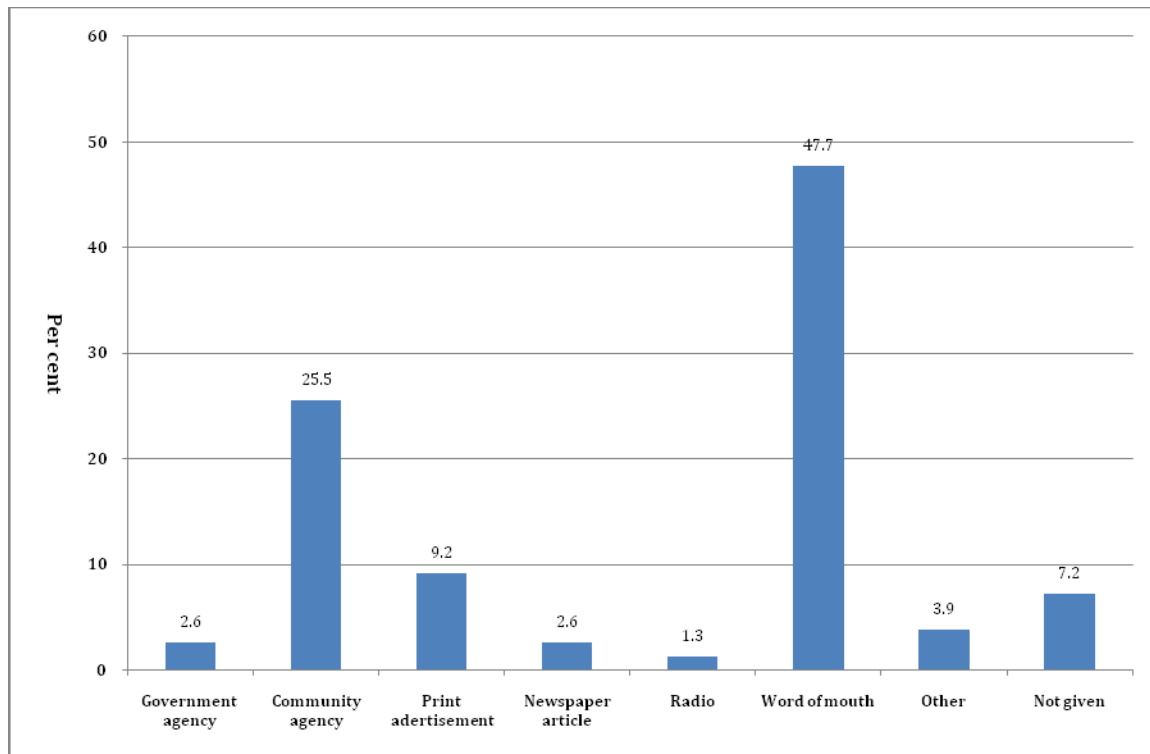
In 2009, these two sources of information were again by far the most important sources of information about Homeless Connect (see Figure 4 above). However, the order of importance was reversed with the word-of-mouth channel now being more important than that of information from community organisations. The popularity of these two sources of information underlines the fact that there is a strong street present network, or culture at work among homeless people.

### ***Types of services accessed***

Figure 5 provides a profile of the number of different types of services accessed by guests. The information presented relates to different types of services rather than to individual services. A guest may have accessed several service providers within a service type and therefore the data must be interpreted as indicative of the most popular types of services, rather than a definitive count of how many services guests accessed. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, there was no clear exit point for the event and guests may not have visited all services at the time of interview.

As evident from the estimates contained in Figure 5, the vast majority of homeless guests had accessed food and beverages and the Donations Shop at the time of interview; close to half had also had a haircut. Around 20 per cent of homeless guests had also visited Centrelink, health services and community and welfare services.

Figure 4: Survey of Homeless Guests, How Guests Found Out About Homeless Connect, Per Cent of Respondents, 2009 Homeless Connect Perth



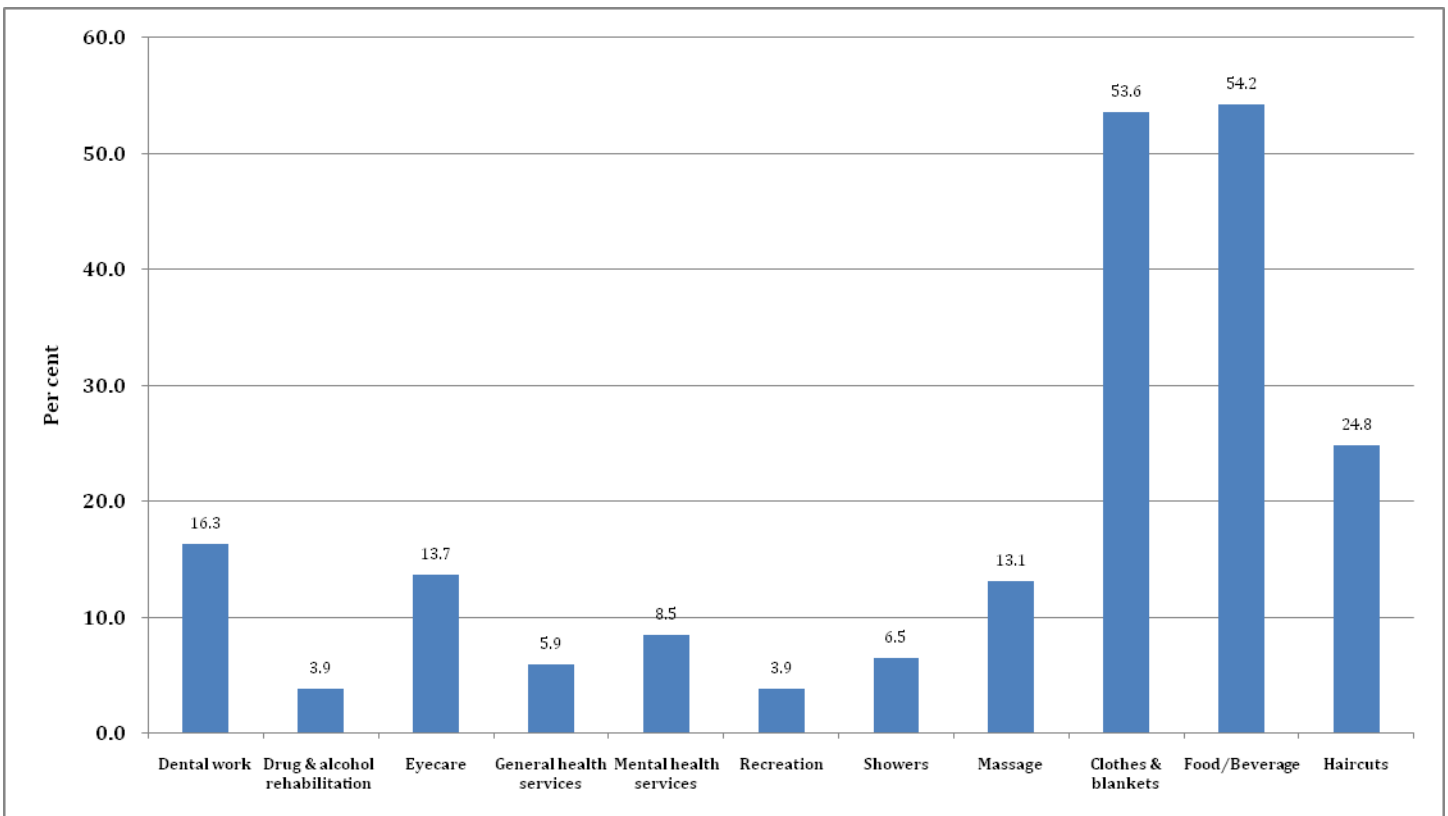
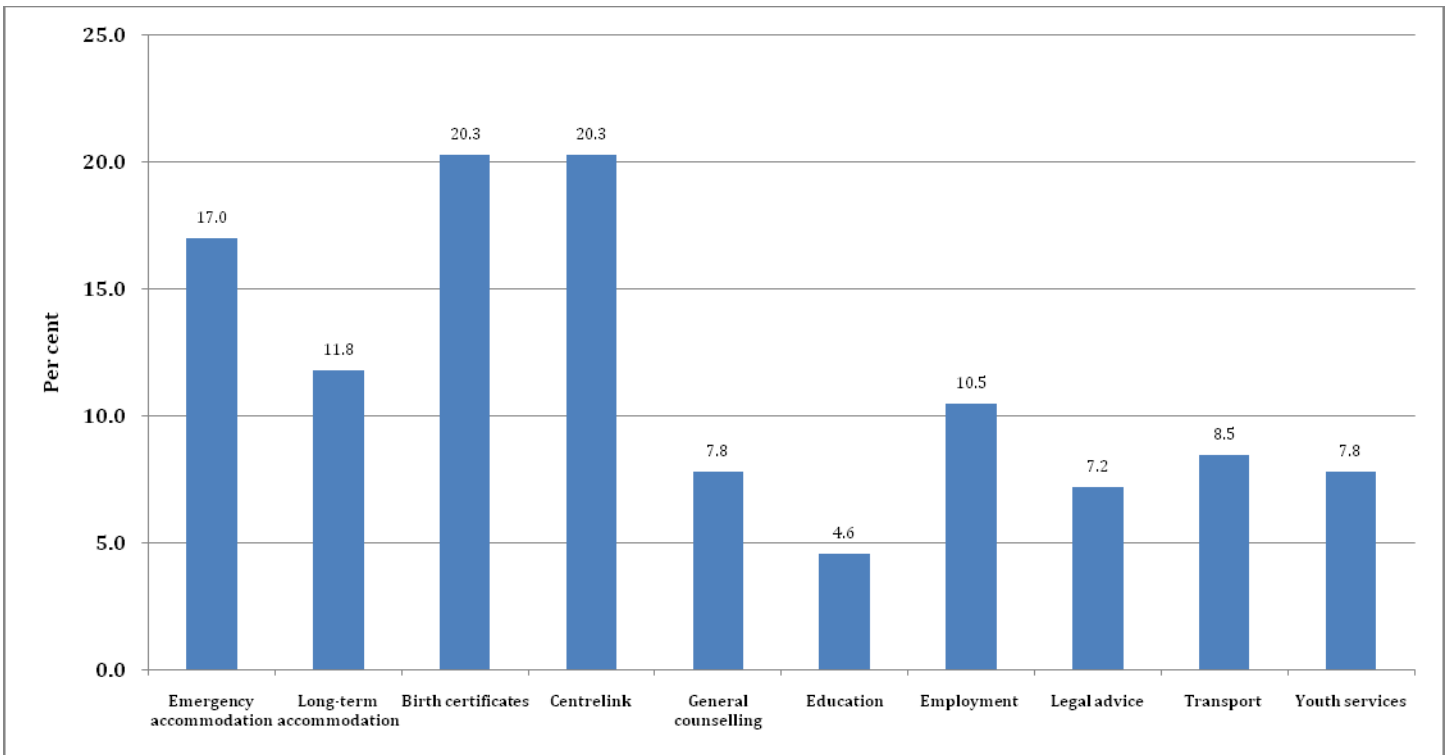
### Reasons for attending Homeless Connect

When asked via an open-ended question why they came to the Homeless Connect event respondents to the *Homeless Connect Guest Survey* provided a variety of answers. The following are a sample of such responses:

- 'I wanted help with health problems. Friendship'
- 'I thought I would find something I need'
- 'For something to eat, a bit of chat, and a good atmosphere'
- 'Because last year was helpful'
- 'Because of manic depression, I find it hard to get motivated, and wanted help to get my life sorted out. I want to feel like a whole person again.'
- 'Everything. Homeswest, shoes, clothes, lunch'
- 'For help with bills, new Medicare card, Homeswest transfer, Birth Certificate, food and Centrelink'
- 'Good fun day'
- 'To find accommodation'
- 'To get my birth certificate'
- 'Short of food'

- 'To get some clothes, food, and information on services to help me'.

Figure 5: Survey of Homeless Guests, Per Cent of Respondents Using Services, 2009 Homeless Connect Perth



## VOLUNTEERS

One of the most pleasing aspects of Homeless Connect was the large number of people who volunteered to assist before and on the day. As in 2008, 150 volunteers assisted in the Homeless Connect Perth event with a number turned away because of the overwhelming response to the event. Two-thirds completed the volunteer survey. Over half were new volunteers in 2009 and almost all indicated that they would love to return for Homeless Connect 2010.

The reasons volunteers gave for volunteering were to assist homeless people, make a difference to someone's life, help those in need, be useful and cheerful, connect with people and to services and to learn about homelessness. Some volunteers spoke of fulfilling a desire to serve the community or giving back to the community; others of reconnecting with a sector they used to work in. Still others of understanding more about homelessness and being part of a solution to homelessness and what a volunteer means.

All volunteers registered for the event and undertook training prior to Homeless Connect as a precondition for their involvement. Evidence from the *Volunteer Evaluation Survey* indicates that the vast majority of volunteers were happy with the training provided. Several volunteers commented that the training could have been more specific on individual duties; what to do in the specific tasks assigned. Others commented that they needed more information on what the various services did and what they could achieve for homeless people as that would have enabled them to provide richer information to the guests.

Volunteers worked in all sorts of capacities on the day. Some worked in a meet and greet capacity, others showed guests where services were, linking them to appropriate agencies. In some cases where guests warmed to a one-on-one contact or needed that form of assistance, volunteers stayed with their guests throughout the day. Other volunteers supported service providers. Some volunteers assisted a small number of guests intensively, other assisted many guests. Those that assisted a small number of guests intensively worked with 2-10 guests.

Many volunteers worked directly in a range of activities on the day including assisting in the donations tent, with preparing food, in clean-ups, with showers, giving free hugs, scheduling services, in the cloakroom and helping the evaluation team with undertaking surveys of guests.

Volunteers overwhelmingly indicated that the services provided met the needs of their guests. Gaps identified included services for women, children and youth; financial counselling with respect to budgeting; a shortage of shoes; inability to access the hairdressers due to high demand; and crisis accommodation for families as the services focused on single men. Some volunteers felt that some guests were unclear about all that was going on and available to them.

Conservatively, the total volunteer time provided for Homeless Connect 2009 was 2,328 hours which equates in dollar terms to \$56,082 (calculated at an average of \$24.09/hour<sup>8</sup> the level of median full-time earnings of employees in Australia).

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<sup>8</sup> See Ironmonger, D. (2009), *The Economic Value of Volunteering in Western Australia*, Report to the Department for Communities, Western Australia.

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# HOMELESS CONNECT PERTH OUTCOMES

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 provided significant benefits both to homeless people and to volunteers and services that assisted on the day. This chapter outlines the key outcomes from the event.

## GENERAL OUTCOMES

All services providing feedback reported that they met their objectives for the day and that they would be coming back to support future Homeless Connect events. Around 90 per cent of service providers indicated that greater networking and cooperation was brought about by the event. One-third of agencies reported problems of one kind or another on the day and these are discussed further in the issues section below.

The key outcomes reported by services were that Homeless Connect Perth 2009:

- Provided a central point for service delivery;
- Enabled access and referrals to a range of services homeless people may not always have been aware of or been in contact with;
- Empowered homeless people with information and options to enable them to deal more effectively with issues facing them;
- Provided a non-judgemental environment for homeless guests;
- Treated homeless people with the same respect and offered them the same services offered to everyone else;
- Improved networking and learning opportunities for services;
- Led to improved housing, health and well-being outcomes for homeless people as a result of the direct provision of services on the day; and,
- Resulted in a sense of belonging for homeless people, social interaction, and a friendly, accepting and supportive atmosphere.

*Homeless Connect Guest Survey* respondents provided strong positive feedback on Homeless Connect Perth 2009. As one commented: "Hopefully, I will not come again. Very helpful people, good to see. Thank you for all the help, God bless." Other comments included:

- "It was great, thank you to everyone, especially the volunteers".
- "The volunteers and services available are awesome. Buddies take you to different services, not just pointing. Free hugs, smiling faces, cup of coffee."
- "It was good to know that there are people who care about us on the streets".
- "Thank you for your time and helping the streeties".
- "Satisfied - excellent! Everyone works very hard. Thank you!".

The comments of guests also confirm that the day produced tangible benefits for them. Examples include:

- “Referred me to employment services. Free clothing, signed up with Homeswest.”
- “Thanks for everything. I can get my teeth fixed and a skin problem I was worried about treated.”
- “Provided food, etc. Sorted out rent-assistance form at Centrelink group, etc”.

Around 70 per cent of guests indicated that they had improved knowledge of where to find services in Perth because of Homeless Connect.

Volunteers spoke of the fact that the guests felt that the day met the short-term needs of guests and provided a platform for long-term solutions to their housing and other problems. They indicated that the guests felt a sense of belonging and of being connected.

## HOUSING

One of the most tangible benefits Homeless Connect provided was access to both immediate crisis accommodation and long-term housing options. Uniting Care West, St Bartholomew’s and 55 Central undertook on-the-spot assessments for crisis accommodation and where necessary subsequent follow-up interviews which resulted in around 10 to 15 eligible guests being accommodated at their services. A number of guests also indicated that they would be touching base with homelessness services following the event to help them find a place to live. Uniting Care West provided sleeping bags, blankets and mosquito nets for those sleeping rough.

The West Australian Department of Housing conducted 19 priority housing interviews with guests; the majority of whom were rough sleepers. The Department had around 40 guest contacts in all. Applying for public housing through the Department of Housing can be difficult for homeless clients as the need for repeat visits and a valid mailing address can create barriers. Illiteracy and reading difficulties can also create problems when filling in housing applications. Department of Housing staff provided on-the-spot assistance to the guests and undertook informal interviews giving guests an immediate avenue to apply for priority housing.

Guests were provided with an experienced Department of Housing officer to assist in obtaining detailed housing assessments for priority assistance, information for bond assistance to access the private rental market and information on housing eligibility for public housing. Guests seeking immediate housing were referred to services which provide crisis accommodation.

Information about the Department of Housing services was also provided to people from other Government agencies and service providers.

For the Department of Housing staff that attended Homeless Connect 2009, the day provided an opportunity to retouch with the client base and to network with other service providers. Attending staff came from Cannington, Fremantle, Midland, Kwinana, Mirrabooka and Perth offices. The Department of Housing reported that individual booths were provided to give the guests privacy during the priority housing interviews. However, the more secluded location,

away from the centre of activities, meant that fewer guests actually accessed the service in 2009 as compared with 2008.

## DONATIONS

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 received very significant in-kind and cash contributions from the Perth community.

The Bell-Vista Group of Companies, Millers Foods, Mondo Butchers, Carl Torre & Sons Butchers, Beaumonde Catering and Foodbank all contributed significantly in terms of food with a number of these businesses also having made significant donations in 2008. Millers Foods donated 25kg of flour, 5kg of sugar and muffin mix for 400 muffins together with 600 bread rolls. Beaumonde Catering provided support to the event by providing 400 homemade muffins and 400 biscuits. The Bell Vista Group of companies supplied 15 kgs of onions, 15 heads of celery, 100 kg potatoes (peeled), 100kg pumpkin (peeled), 30 kg carrots, eight cartons each of mixed fresh fruit (oranges, apples, pears, bananas) for fruit bowls, four cartons of apples to use for the apple crumble for dessert and two pallets of apples. Torre & Sons Butchers donated 40kg of prime roasting beef. Foodbank donated 30 cartons of non perishable food items and P & N Beverages provided eight cartons of water for volunteers.

New clothes were also donated including from Bandyup Women's Prison who donated ladies underwear, track pants, and hair scrunchies and Myer Perth who donated 8 cartons of men and boys' boxer briefs. Betts and Betts donated footwear and Perth Expo Hire provided dress racks and mirrors. Manna Industries provided 400 toiletry packs.

Other donations came from Hair Smart who provided shampoos and conditioners, Perth Audio Visual who provided all sound equipment, staging and technical staff at no cost for the event, OptiCentre and the Optometrists Association provided prescription glasses and the Sharper Pencil provided artwork for promotional material. The Big Picture Factory provided photography and supplied a printer for printing at the photo booth while Lumiere Photographics provided free photography.

Telstra donated 500 Phone cards, while Transperth provided Smartcards for guests and Cabcharge Australia donated taxi vouchers for dental appointments. Performers provided entertainment free of charge through the day. Scotch College sent 20 students to work as volunteers to assist with the setting up.

Significant cash contributions were made by OPTUS, Caron MacNeill Quiz Night, the Department for Communities, the Department of Sport and Recreation, BGC, ARG, Community Sector Banking, and Booragoon Primary School.

Guests indicated on their feedback forms that they had greatly benefited from access to a good meal on the day and to clothing and other goods. One guest commented 'I can't afford to buy new clothes or shoes and toiletries cost a small fortune. A saying 'clothes make a man' stands in

this case. I just got brand new outfits and this is boosting my self esteem and confidence. Thank you.'

## EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

There was a significantly larger role played by education, training and employment agencies at Homeless Connect Perth 2009 as compared with 2008.

Both Central and Swan TAFE attended the 2009 event and saw a large number of guests on the day providing course advice, career guidance, training advice, and recognition of prior learning. They reported that many guests showed interest in improving their training pathways.

Central TAFE saw over 50 guests who enquired in relation to the different types of courses that Central TAFE offers. Ten guests filled out and returned a query form prepared by Central TAFE supplying their contact numbers for follow-up by Central TAFE. The study area that guests showed particular interest in was General Education (CGEA) studies that offer Literacy and Numeracy for adult learners, as well as any courses that offered free training. The two courses most people showed an interest in were CGEA courses being run by Central TAFE in 2010 within a practical and community context. These two courses are:

- Certificate I New Opportunities for Women (NOW) course through an Organic Fruit Box Project at City Farm;
- Men's Shed project at City Farm based on the Certificate I Gaining Access to Training & Employment (GATE) course Preliminary follow-up has resulted in several expressions of interest towards enrolment in these courses which start in February 2010.

ORS Employment Solutions and atWork Australia also attended Homeless Connect 2009. These organisations help job seekers, including those with physical disabilities, injuries, and mental health issues find the 'right' job. In addition they provide current job market advice, vocational assessments, advice on job searching and marketing.

On the day, Centrelink staff had over 50 recorded contacts with homeless guests. As in 2008, Centrelink was linked to its own data systems, staff were able to deal directly with outstanding and new issues affecting individual guests. These issues ranged from changes of address, form lodgement, banking difficulties, job network member appointments, job capacity assessment appointments and any issues affecting payments. The latter included, for example, information Centrelink had requested from individual guests and interviews they may not have attended.

In addition to sorting through income support issues, guests were provided with information on job opportunities and access to training and support.

## HEALTH

Health services were able to provide on-the-spot free care for guests including dental work, eyesight and hearing tests, blood pressure clinics, blood sugar monitoring, podiatry services and

Medicare enrolments and Medicare claims. Information was supplied in relation to mental health and drug and alcohol issues and rehabilitation options.

An issue raised in the 2008 Homeless Connect evaluation was that there were significant dental needs in the homeless population and that the provision of services in this area would provide significant benefits for homeless guests attending Homeless Connect. This certainly proved to be the case with the direct provision of dental treatment; the same was also true of podiatry services. The State Dental Health Service kindly donated a mobile dental clinic for the National Dental Foundation to operate from.

The National Dental Foundation advised that many of those that the team saw were in dire need of dental care and had been living with infections and pain due to lack of dental treatment resulting from a lack of access to funds and services for this treatment. In some cases, the Foundation noted, patients whose dental needs are not services end up in the Emergency Departments of the public hospitals and require extended hospitalization to clear up infections.

There where 44 teeth removed on the day and those affected will now hopefully be pain free with their general health improving as the infections clear up. The National Dental Foundation advised that an estimated \$7,500 worth of treatment was provided on the day. Follow-up appointments were arranged for 28 patients on the Foundation's Dental Rescue Day, the following Saturday. On Dental Rescue Day, private dental clinics open their premises for use by the Foundation to provide no cost treatment. The value of these appointments was \$6,480. In addition, 27 other people from Homeless Connect not able to be seen on the day were offered appointments at various private clinics on the Saturday. Cab Charge Australia donated vouchers to help patients get to the clinics and TransPerth provided vouchers for travel.

As in 2008, The Perth Primary Care Network, which runs the Street Doctor service, had doctors and nurses providing homeless people with confidential and private clinical care in relation to immediate health needs as did the Mobile GP service. There was also excellent representation at Homeless Connect 2009 of mental health and drug and alcohol services including Mental Illness Fellowship of WA (Inc), North Metro Community Drug Service, the Western Australian Substance User Association, and Inner Health City Mental Health.

## IDENTIFICATION, LEGAL ISSUES AND ELECTORAL ENROLMENT

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages was able to provide guests with information and birth certificates on the day, providing 71 birth certificates. The ability to issue birth certificates on the day is of particular benefit to the homeless who often lack an address with which to receive items such as these through the post.

Outstanding legal issues and lack of understanding and expert advice on these issues can create obstacles to access to services for homeless people who may choose to withdraw and seek invisibility rather than access services and risk being traced. Homeless Connect provided discreet advice and assistance with legal matters.

Identification can also be a major barrier for homeless people when attempting to access services. Many agencies require multiple forms of identification including passports, birth certificates, driver's licences and credit cards, all or some of which may not be held by homeless people. The provision of birth certificates at Homeless Connect Perth provides one primary form of identification which can then facilitate the securing of other forms of identification.

The Australian Electoral Commission provided information on electoral enrolment, voting and assist people within completing electoral enrolment forms.

## ONE-STOP SHOP ACCESS TO SERVICES AND NETWORKING

Guests consistently referred to the benefit of having multiple services located in one area. Some guests indicated that they knew most of the services. However, other guests indicated that they learnt a lot about the services that were available; as one guest commented: "Enlightened me on what's available, help-wise".

Services are scattered throughout the city and often keep similar opening hours, meaning that clients needing to access more than one service are forced to travel distances in a designated timeframe. While this may not present problems to some, a lack of money, and transport, especially when services are located away from public transport routes, creates difficulties.

Networking between service providers was one of the key benefits of the day. The Homeless Connect 'one stop shop' model provided an opportunity for service providers to initiate face-to-face contact with each other, raising awareness of what other services are available to their clients and creating professional links for future cooperation.

Homeless Connect enables service providers to establish avenues of information sharing in order to help address these issues unique to homeless clients. However, continued contact between service providers is required to maintain and develop these relationships so that genuine partnerships across service providers can be sustained.

## SELF-ESTEEM AND A SENSE OF WELL-BEING

Homeless Connect 2009 had a range of different services which aimed to build the immediate self-esteem of guests. They included a hairdresser, the Body Shop; hot showers; clothing and footwear from the Connect Shop and reflexology, therapeutic art and craft activities, relaxation massages and music participation opportunities.

The Body Shop provided personal grooming and skin-care advice and handed out sample products. As they indicated they 'completed the 'look' after the clients visited the hairdresser'.

Contributing to guests' well-being was one of the aims of Homeless Connect and one of the major benefits guests were able to take away from the day. The responses from guests, service providers and volunteers was overwhelmingly positive with comments such as 'It has given me hope. I met some absolutely fabulous, friendly people. I had a lovely meal and enjoyment.'

Another guest commented 'I look and feel great'.

The day succeeded in creating a connection between homeless guests and the rest of the community which is vital in empowering the homeless and reducing or dispelling feelings of social isolation. The enhanced sense of well-being was felt not only by the homeless guests, but by volunteers and service providers.

## ISSUES

As in 2008, the most common issue raised by service providers related to the suitability of the venue; around one third of services surveyed highlighting it. A lack of space was the main concern with several service providers noting that guests felt uncomfortable with the services being located so close to each other.

A second concern was with the lack of privacy associated with the absence of private rooms, which impacts on the ability of services to conduct confidential interviews and guests' willingness to engage in confidential discussions with service providers for fear of being overheard. Services commented about the desirability of having a venue where all services are under one roof.

Some services indicated that better signage was required to indicate where service providers were located. They noted that visitors seemed to have trouble finding certain service providers. The event was advertised through a variety of means but some services and guests commented that more needed to be done in this area. However, given the number of guests and services attending it would appear that the event is close to capacity and that an increase in the number of guests would lead to significant issues with overcrowding and unmet need.

Prior to the day, services were asked to state who they wished to be placed next to at the event. However, not all services appeared happy with the final configuration of services.

The issue of the appropriate venue is a difficult one. Citiplace Community Centre provides a number of fundamental advantages for an event like Homeless Connect including the fact that facilities for meals, showers and haircuts are available in the one spot and run by the City of Perth. The location is also close to open areas in front of the Art Gallery. This area was used particularly well on the day for a range of activities such as the donation tent, the Connect Shop, entertainment and a range of health and youth services.

A number of services suggested that the Homeless Connect Perth be held during Homeless Persons Week.

Both guests and services commented that they felt that a significant number of people had homes to go to, and were not the 'genuine homeless'. It is true that not all attending are rough sleepers. However, the majority of guests fall into various categories of primary, secondary and tertiary homeless or would be assessed as being in significant need. As indicated in the analysis of the accommodation status of clients, the single largest group of guests were rough sleepers

with those in crisis supported accommodation and other forms of secondary and tertiary homelessness making up the second largest group. There are guests in public housing and some also in private rental housing but those in such accommodation states have often come from homelessness and are often at risk of homelessness and it is this group who maintain links with those on the streets and attended Homeless Connect.

Volunteers and service providers felt that additional information needed to be supplied to volunteers in respect to the forms of assistance provided by service providers and what they did or could do for homeless people. The volunteers had difficulties 'not knowing specifically what each service provider provided' and felt that 'having the "Service Provider Guides" available prior to the day would've been helpful'. This would enhance the ability of volunteers to effectively match guests' needs with services available. Achieving this end was of course made very difficult by the late entrance into the planning process of service providers and the short planning window for the event.

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## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Homeless Connect Perth 2009 proved to be a very successful event. The event was effective in reaching its homeless target group. It exceeded expectations in terms of the number of guests, service providers and volunteers attending and in the total number of services provided on the day to guests. The level of giving by businesses and individuals was exceptional.

Most importantly, Homeless Connect Perth produced significant outcomes for the homeless of Perth. The immediate needs of Homeless guests were met, they enjoyed the day immensely, and many were able to access accommodation and health services and resolve income support and other issues.

A particular vote of thanks goes to the City of Perth and Volunteering WA for continuing to put on Homeless Connect, the services that assist with planning the event and attending on the day and the many volunteers whose work makes the day possible. The collaborative planning of the event and the pivotal role of volunteers are particularly strong features of Homeless Connect Perth.

Services and guests find the one-stop service model of Homeless Connect to be enormously beneficial.

The overwhelming view of guests, volunteers and service providers was that the event be held again. Some felt that the event should be held on a more regular basis, but organisers would need to consider aspects such as the long-term sustainability of the event and its funding if it were held more than once a year and the capacity of some resource-stretched, not-for-profit service providers to participate. However, smaller events in other centres based on the Homeless Connect model remain an option. There is also a need to develop an on-going Homelessness Information Centre in the City of Perth, a permanent “One Stop Shop” with outreach and case management facilities.

There is also an ongoing need to develop forums and spaces where specialist homelessness services and mainstream health, income support and education, training and employment organisations can meet to examine how to provide integrated service responses to the homeless within the City of Perth.

There remain concerns with the Citiplace venue from the point of view of space limitations, the inability to provide privacy for all guests and issues with not having all services under the one roof. However, no alternative central location suggests itself at the present time.

A very broad group of agencies attend Homeless Connect ensuring that the needs of homeless people are well addressed on the day. However, certain gaps in service delivery are evident. These include long-term community housing providers, services assisting homeless families,

services providing support to homeless women, children's services and Department for Child Protection services.

The opportunity exists for the State Government, the City of Perth, Volunteering WA, specialist homelessness services, mainstream health, drug and alcohol, family, employment and training, legal and income support services and business groups to work collaboratively to facilitate and further develop a whole of community response to homelessness. Such a collaborative approach may involve a role for the State Government along with the City of Perth and Volunteering WA in the planning and conduct of Homeless Connect Perth 2010. Representation from local government on the new Western Australian Council on Homelessness would be a positive step forward as would be the planning of a workshop that would have the objective of fostering collaboration, coordination and innovation of services to meet the needs of homeless persons in the City of Perth, and the establishment of a "One Stop Shop" providing information on services that are available for homeless people together with outreach and case management facilities.

**Recommendation 1:** *The collaborative model of joint planning of the event involving the City of Perth, Volunteering WA and service providers should be maintained for 2010 with the significant role played by volunteers and community donations continued. The State Government could be invited to partner in the planning and implementation of Homeless Connect Perth 2010. The event should continue on an annual basis with consideration being given to holding the event on a more regular basis.*

**Recommendation 2:** *That the City of Perth and Volunteering WA together with the various stakeholders and service providers consider options to expand the one-stop-shop nature of Homeless Connect, including the establishment of a one-stop Homelessness Information Centre in a central location in the City.*

**Recommendation 3:** *That specialist homelessness and mainstream service providers organise regular forums to examine and discuss issues surrounding joined up delivery of services to homeless people and the development of partnerships across the housing, income support, mental and physical health, drug and alcohol services, employment services and education/training domains.*

**Recommendation 4:** *That Homeless Connect encourage the attendance at the event of services currently not well-represented including long-term community housing providers, services assisting homeless families, services providing support to women, children's services and Department for Child Protection services.*

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## APPENDIX 1 SERVICE PROVIDERS

A wide range of service providers attended Homeless Connect Perth, numbering over 60 in total. They are as listed below.

### Emergency and Long-term Accommodation (4)

Department of Housing

55 Central Inc

St Bartholomew's House

UnitingCare West (also Homelessness Outreach/Support)

### Homelessness Outreach/Support (12)

Anglicare WA – Men's Time

Anglicare WA - Step1 Street Work Program

Centrelink

Connect Group Support Groups

Manna Industries

Noongar Patrol Outreach System

Passages Resource Centre (also Accommodation)

Red Cross Community Services

Ruah Community Services Ruah Centre

Samaritans Crisis Line

St Patrick's Community Centre

The Salvation Army – Genesis Day Centre

### Taxation and Legal (4)

Australian Taxation Office

Consumer Credit Legal Service

Gosnells Community Legal Service

JS Brar & Co

### Health (15)

Breast Screen WA

Diabetes WA

Inner City Community Mental Health

Lions Hearing Clinic

Medicare Australia

Mental Illness Fellowship

Mobile GP

National Dental Foundation

North Metro Community Drug Service

Perth Primary Care Network - Street Doctor  
Podiatrist  
State Health Dental Service  
WA Optometry Association  
WASUA - WA Substance Users' Association  
Youth Link

Education and Employment (6)

atWork Australia  
Central TAFE  
ORS Employment Solutions  
PEP Community Services  
Swan TAFE  
The Big Issue

Lifestyle (14)

Art and Crafts Therapy x 2  
Citiplace Hairdressers  
Citiplace Rest Centre  
Department of Sport and Recreation  
Integrated Living Massage  
Music participation x 2  
Photography Booth  
Reflexology x 2  
Relaxation Massage x 2  
The Body Shop

Other (6)

Australian Electoral Commission  
Care Options Inc (aged care) – City of Belmont & St Bartholemew's  
Child Support Agency  
Citiplace Community Centre  
Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages  
Transperth

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## APPENDIX 2 DONATIONS AND SUPPORTERS

Homeless Connect Perth would not have been made possible without the assistance of the diverse group of supporters who donated financial and in kind support. Both the number and range of supporters who provided assistance to Homeless Connect increased in 2009. These are listed below.

Allied Pickfords

ARG

Australian Taxation Office

Bandyup Women's Prison

Beaumonde Catering

Bell-Vista Group of Companies

Betts Group

BGC

Cabcharge Australia

Caron MacNeill

Citiplace Community Centre

Citiplace Rest Centre

Community Sector Banking

Department for Communities

Department for Sport and Recreation

Foodbank

Graham Mabury

Jason Barnes Event Logistics

John Ilian – The Sharper Pencil

Lumiere Photographics

Manna Industries

Millers Foods

Myer Perth

OptiCentre

Optometrists Association of WA

Optus

P & N Beverages

Perth Audio Visual

Perth Expo Hire

Reece's Hire & Structures

Scotch College

Spirit of the Streets Choir

Telstra

The Big Picture Factory

Torre Butchers  
Transperth  
Visy Packaging  
Woolworths

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## APPENDIX 3 HOMELESS CONNECT PERTH CHARTER

The following Homeless Connect Charter was developed by the 2008 Homeless Connect Reference Group.

### MISSION

The mission of Homeless Connect Perth is to rally support and create lasting solutions for homeless people within Perth.

### THE GOALS OF HOMELESS CONNECT

1. Improve access to services and housing for homeless persons in Perth.
2. Engage and increase the collaborative involvement of homeless consumers, business, non-profit community, and individual volunteers to work together to create solutions to homelessness.
3. To improve the system of care by creating opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices among Perth's homeless provider community.
4. Leverage private, corporate and foundation money and in-kind support to augment efforts to increase housing options and build service capacity for homeless persons in Perth.

### THE OBJECTIVES OF HOMELESS CONNECT PERTH ARE TO:-

1. Consolidate available services and connect homeless individuals to benefits, care, counselling and other services which can assist in immediate and practical ways and can lead to pathways to shelters, social/affordable housing and self sufficiency.
2. Demonstrate civic leadership by bringing together a community coalition of government, business, not-for-profit and non government organisations to homeless people.
3. Better connect the various services in the homelessness sector with each other.
4. Raise awareness and inform the broader community of homeless issues.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES INCLUDE:-

1. Immediate results for homeless people including accommodation, medical attention, legal assistance and counselling.
2. An opportunity for businesses and residents to provide practical help to homeless people.
3. An opportunity for service providers to collaborate around the needs of actual individuals requiring assistance.
4. Social inclusion of those most disadvantaged.
5. Engagement of volunteers.

**THE PROJECT HAS BOTH SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM BENEFITS:-**

1. Connecting homeless people to the benefits and services that they immediately need.
2. Offering pathways to housing options and self-sufficiency.
3. Bringing Perth's fragmented access to homelessness services together in one spot and delivering seamless solutions.
4. Better understanding of homelessness issues in the wider community.
5. Facilitating opportunities for reconnections between homeless people and their community.