



YOUTH ISSUE – BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

DATE: 24/11/16

FROM: Mary Cunningham

TOPIC: HOUSING FOR HOMELESSNESS

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. Share this brief with Department of Housing and Community Development in the context of their current review and future plans for homelessness and housing in the Northern Territory.
2. Consider the viability of existing hotels to take part in the program.
3. Assist with progressing a trial model of the most viable program.

BACKGROUND

The topic I am focusing on is homelessness in the Northern Territory. I would like to see a sustainable alternative to the services that are currently being provided. I have chosen this topic due to my own personal experience with this issue. I believe it is an issue we should not have in the 21st century. The target group consists of young people in the Northern Territory who are facing homelessness.

There are many reasons why people become homeless. This can include unemployment, lack of affordable housing, mental illness, family breakdown; domestic violence and, drug and alcohol abuse. People can experience homelessness as an isolated event, for long periods of time or in cycles which are difficult to break from. Homelessness causes social exclusion and further disadvantage. NT Shelter. 2016. *Housing Issues*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://ntshelter.org.au/housing-issues/>. [Accessed 18 November 2016].

The ABS definition of homelessness counts people as homeless if they are: in improvised dwellings or sleeping out; in supported accommodation; temporarily staying with other households; in boarding houses; in other temporary lodging; or in 'severely' crowded dwellings. The ABS defines severe crowding as when a dwelling requires 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there.

While my proposal is only in the early stages, I hope to start a discussion on ways to achieve a financially sustainable business model that can be utilised to give individuals facing homelessness a hand up instead of a hand out.

DISCUSSION

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of homelessness in the country with 15 times the national average. 10% of all people sleeping rough in the NT are under the age of 18. The proposal I would like to put forward could be the beginning of a valuable initiative/venture that could minimise homelessness. It could also help stop the current cycle of homelessness that has developed within our community. I believe a sustainable service could be created that gives individuals that need the housing and employment a



chance to train, work and live at a hotel. Employment pathways could include hospitality, administration, housekeeping or tourism. Trainees could then branch out into other services and organizations that work within the partnership.

Ideally the program would be a self-sustaining viable option to addressing homelessness and it could also benefit the tourism industry in the Territory. It could ultimately reduce financial strain on existing NTG funded programs. I would like it to be a system where community services can refer individuals who are ready to work for this program.

Many stakeholders can be involved in this program in a variety of ways, from implementation of programs, administration assistance, research assistance, to the referral processes. Stakeholders could include organisations such as YMCA, YWCA, Anglicare, Salvation Army and many more, ideally anybody that current works with individuals facing difficulties with homelessness in any manner.

I have various ideas for the logistics that would assist to develop and calculate costs of the model, including:

- Location and design
- Timeframes of individual services
- Training provided
- Living allowances
- Additional support once completed services

The hotel could be run as a business and as such guests can pay to stay just as any other hotel. This will create revenue to cover overheads and staff costs, give back to the community and the opportunity to open services elsewhere.

I have met with various stakeholders including the YWCA, YMCA and Adina Vibe Hotel and discussed my ideas with individuals from various fields. I have received suggestions on what could be incorporated into my idea. Ideas such as utilising a brand name restaurant to rent out the space will bring loyal clients to the hotel. Additionally, there could be an opportunity to have a brand name gym based in the hotel, where guests can utilise the gym for free, but the public can also gain access via a monthly membership.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

To conclude I request the consideration of this proposal for the Northern Territory. I would like to connect with Department of Housing and Community Development in the context of their review of homelessness services and housing services in the Northern Territory. I believe that creating a model that utilises a hotel style training facility to assist homeless individuals or creating an initiative of already based hotels to take part in a similar program.

MARY CUNNINGHAM