



# Housing First Homelessness Advisory Group

## Communique No. 12

### 28 February 2025 Meeting

The Housing First Homelessness Advisory Group met on 28 February 2025. The Advisory Group meeting was chaired by Mike Rowe, Director General, Department of Communities. Mr Rowe opened the meeting, which took place during the caretaker period, by reiterating the relevant protocols including reminding the group that no advice will be published from during Caretaker.

Ms Gayle Mitchell, Acting Executive Director, Office of Homelessness, shared that the Advisory Group's Expression of Interest process to replace three departing members of the Group is progressing. The application period is now closed, and applications are being assessed.

Ms Debra Zanella, CEO of Ruah, and her Team gave a presentation on Ruah's Access and Inclusion Project funded through the Western Australia for Everyone: State Disability Strategy 2020-2030, Innovation Fund Tranche 2. This 12-month pilot project, running through from April 2024 to April 2025, aims to improve service accessibility for individuals with intellectual or cognitive disabilities and communication challenges. The focus is on systemic innovation to make the service system more inclusive and accessible, removing the burden on individuals to navigate a system not built for their needs. Ms Zanella introduced her team from Ruah, Ms Estelle Dogbe, Ms Jennifer Gardner and Ms Lynley Hill who presented their findings and introduced 'Let's Communicate' toolkit, a key outcome of the project.

The Advisory Group welcomed Mr Ben O'Rourke, Executive Director Program Design and Commissioning from Disability Division within the Department of Communities, who provided valuable insights into Disability Division's key focus areas and state level priorities. He emphasised a significant shift towards genuine collaboration to prioritise the leveraging expertise to align and drive national and state reform initiatives. Disability Division acknowledges the importance of lived experience and recognises the need to learn from diverse disability experiences. Understanding the spectrum of disability and its intersection with homelessness is crucial. The current priority is to develop a plan for a desired future state, along with improved NDIS interface and system navigation. Disability Division aims to improve connectivity and build community capacity through shared expertise.

Mr O'Rourke remained with the Advisory Group members for an extended robust discussion on 'Availability and accessibility of disability care services and support for

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people experiencing homelessness’. He reaffirmed Disability Division’s commitment to providing support where possible. The Advisory Group will continue this discussion at the April meeting, welcoming expertise from Ms Kat Johns, CEO People With Disabilities WA.

The April meeting will also welcome Ms Bev Jowle, CEO of Advocare to contribute to a discussion on availability and accessibility of aged care services and supports to people experiencing homelessness; Mr Michael Piu, CEO of St Pat’s and Ms Emma King, CEO, HumanAbility to speak about workforce issues across the care sector; and representatives from Indigo Junction to speak about their Innovative Design Youth Homelessness Project.

Further information about the Advisory Group can be found at

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/housing-first-homelessness-advisory-group> or by emailing the Secretariat at [hfhag@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:hfhag@communities.wa.gov.au).