



**Home in  
Queanbeyan**

Patron: The Hon Sir William Deane

## **FACT SHEET: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### Introduction

HOME in Queanbeyan Incorporated (HOME) is an Incorporated Association and a Charitable Institution established by Father Peter Day and a group of Queanbeyan and Canberra people to achieve the following Vision

*To create a safe supportive home for those who have been forgotten and abandoned by the community at large: a place where the chronically mentally ill – and those incapable of living independently – can live with the dignity and love they deserve.*

The patron of HOME is former Governor General of Australia and High Court Justice, the Hon. Sir William Deane.

There are a series of objectives reinforcing the above vision, and these can be viewed on the HOME Inc website at [www.homeinqueanbeyan.org](http://www.homeinqueanbeyan.org).

After about 18 months of investigations and discussions, HOME Inc has identified a site – the old Anglican Church hall site on the corner of Rutledge and Crawford Streets Queanbeyan for the construction of HOME. The Anglican Church of Queanbeyan has agreed to offer the site to HOME on a long term basis, and as a result HOME Inc has prepared some concept plans for development of the site.

Prior to lodging any plans with Queanbeyan City Council for consideration, HOME Inc is consulting with neighbours and other groups with a specific interest in HOME. This Fact Sheet has been prepared to assist that consultation process, and provide some responses to questions that may arise.

### What is mental illness?

Mental illness is a medically diagnosable illness or disorder which is defined as a significant impairment of a person's thinking, emotions and relational abilities for which medical and psychological intervention is available.

## What is homelessness?

*Primary Homelessness:* people without any form of accommodation, i.e. people who live on the streets.

*Secondary:* people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (ie emergency accommodation, boarding houses and shelters, temporarily staying at family and friends places).

*Tertiary:* people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis.

*For me, homelessness is when your family and friends can't be sure where to find you. Destitute homelessness is when nobody goes looking for you.*

**M. McGirr, A Home Away from Home, The Big Issue. Vol. 214**

## What is HOME?

HOME will provide 24 hour care for up to 20 people with mental illness who are without proper shelter, care, love and support; or may be in need of short term respite care.

As the plans will show, HOME will resemble a townhouse style development to be built adjacent to the existing church hall, providing 20 attractively designed one bedroom units with en-suites - catering for medium and long term residents and 2 respite residents.

The existing hall will be retained and refitted to serve as the communal spaces and administrative section of HOME.

The existing dwelling on the site may be used as the caretaker's residence or may be redeveloped as part of the residential accommodation.

It is important to note that HOME will not be an "institution" – it is specifically designed to be "home" to its residents, some of who are already in the regional community but who struggle to live independently. The residents will be free to come and go from their units just as do the great majority of the community, but they will have the additional benefit of 24 hour support by appropriately qualified people to help them in their daily lives.

## Why is there a need for HOME?

At the time of the last Census (2001), there were at least 206 members of the Queanbeyan community who were homeless. Based on our own more recent research, between 50-100 of these homeless people have long-term mental illness or a related disorder.

The picture emerging is that at the very least 25 people with roots in the Queanbeyan community would be significantly helped by HOME. Further, it is thought there would be dozens of others who would enjoy support and assistance through HOME'S respite and out reach care.

Simply put, HOME is needed because very sick people are living unsupported lives in our community, often stripped of the dignity that is the right of us all. Further, even with the establishment of HOME, there will still be a significant unmet need, such is the enormity of the prevailing mental health crisis.

By providing intensive 24 hour care and support, HOME will make a dramatic impact on the quality of people's lives. This means that people who would otherwise remain abandoned and unseen, will be supported to live active and fulfilling lives in the community.

In doing so, HOME is also

- seeking to educate the community about the plight of its most vulnerable; and
- encouraging the community to take responsibility – to share its abundant gifts and resources so that things might change.

A detailed research paper on the need for HOME is accessible on the HOME website referred to above.

### Why has HOME Inc selected this site?

HOME Inc was initially looking at a location near George Forbes House (Erin Street) Queanbeyan, but this has proved to be difficult to access due to a number of reasons and is no longer the preferred site.

The Anglican church hall site is very well located for HOME for the following reasons:

- ✚ It is very handy to the CBD and all the CBD services – most HOME residents will not have cars.
- ✚ It is land zoned for community purposes, with a history of community activity;
- ✚ It is flat and easy to build on;
- ✚ It is an appropriate location for a community service of this type.

From a town planning perspective, issues of parking, access, noise etc can be well handled with good design.

### Who will the residents be?

Residents of HOME will be both male and female adults, most likely in the age range of 40 to 70 years, although there will, from time to time, also be adults from other age groups.

Residents will be people who, due to their illness, need support to live with the dignity and care that is the right of us all.

Some will be residents for a short term while we assist them to get their lives back on track, while others will need ongoing medium and long-term care.

HOME will not be a refuge, nor will it be providing crisis/emergency or hostel accommodation.

### How will residents be selected?

HOME Inc intends to establish a tenancy committee comprised of HOME Inc members and representatives from other health service providers in Queanbeyan. This committee will establish the "ground rules" for tenants (addressing such things as a rent, behaviour and so on).

Residents will be required to enter into a tenancy agreement, probably with a probation period.

Who will manage HOME and what support will HOME give to its residents?

HOME Inc will be responsible for management. At this point, the proposed staffing of HOME will be as shown below:

- Manager
- 2 live-in caretakers
- 2 support workers
- 2 shift workers
- A team of volunteers

This team, along with the already strong links we have with government and community agencies, will support residents, when appropriate, to find work, pursue hobbies/exercise and enjoy an active, fulfilling community life.

How will HOME Inc be accountable to both its residents and the community at large?

HOME is an Incorporated Association. To this end, it is bound by NSW laws covering such not-for-profit bodies. It is run by a Board of local people with a variety of backgrounds including local clergy, a person with a PhD in mental health research, a solicitor, an accountant, a mental health advocate, business people and other community representatives.

HOME is a registered member of the Mental Health Coordinating Council (NSW).

Further, as a place offering supported accommodation and other related services, HOME will pursue accreditation under the *Australian Health and Community Services Accreditation Scheme*.

Is congregating 20 people a good idea, and are residents likely to present a danger to the community, especially children?

Nearly all of the likely residents of HOME are already living, mostly anonymously, within our community: some on the streets; while others are bouncing between refuges, hospitals, hostels, squats, or struggling to keep their heads above water in public housing. In most cases, their suffering is done in silence because the community is not aware of who they are, or where they are. They have literally been forgotten - left isolated and unseen.

HOME intends to change this by providing an environment in which residents' needs are attended to daily; an environment that, with professional and community support, will encourage residents to look out for each other and become active participants in their (and our) community. Simply put, people need people.

Further, most of HOME'S residents are likely to be people who regularly visit the neighbouring *St Benedict's Community Day Centre* (directly opposite Isabella Street School).

St Benedict's has been operating as a Community Day Centre for 7 years – for almost 15 years previous to that, it provided emergency overnight accommodation for homeless men.

St Benedict's provides care, support, meals and advocacy for those in our community who struggle with illness, addiction, trauma and other associated issues.

During its nearly twenty years of operation, St Benedict's has become a highly respected service provider within the community. It is known as a place of care and safety and, to our knowledge, there have been no significant incidents that would cause concern to parents at the school or to other nearby neighbours.

Indeed, it is intended that St Benedict's will eventually co-locate with HOME to ensure the continuation of existing care, expertise and community support.

What safeguards will there be against anti-social behaviour by the residents?

First and foremost, the HOME staff will be appropriately qualified and experienced to manage HOME.

As noted before, there will be a tenancy committee set up comprising members of HOME Inc and other service providers to screen prospective residents. People with severe drug or alcohol problems will not be admitted.

HOME'S 24 hour support presence will significantly minimise the risk of anti-social behaviour - and manage such behaviour should any arise. In this regard, HOME will offer better surety than most other residential housing facilities (including private) in which there is no supervision.

Meanwhile, if there was to be an issue, support staff and residents would take the same action as any other citizen e.g. call upon the NSW Police.

HOME will also be networked into existing mental health services for daily support to residents.

For further information contact Fr Peter Day: **0407 914 341**

Dear Resident,

**Re. Home in Queanbeyan**

I was hoping to meet with you face-to-face to discuss ***Home in Queanbeyan Incorporated (HOME)***: a community initiative seeking to provide 24 hour supported accommodation for people who cannot live independently due to mental illness.

In the meantime, please find enclosed an information/fact sheet concerning the proposal to build HOME on the block of land situated at the corner of Rutledge and Crawford Sts, Queanbeyan.

The site is owned by the local Anglican Church which has approved the leasing of it for the purposes and use of HOME.

We are very conscious that, for HOME to be successful, it needs widespread community support and approval. Critical to this is community consultation. We value your input and hope the attached addresses any issues/concerns you may have.

As I alluded to earlier, I would prefer to meet with you personally to discuss this further. If you have time, please feel free to call me call me on: 0407 914 341 to either chat about HOME by phone or to arrange a convenient time to meet.

Kind regards,

**Fr Peter Day**  
**Co-chair**

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

**Queanbeyan Business Council  
Mr Bill Baker**

**Queanbeyan Public School  
President Principal – Mr Mark Pritchard**

### **Crawford St (Business & non-residential)**

**Cuddly Bears, Uniting Church, Macedonian Orthodox Church**

**Masonic Temple (*only meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month*)**

**Wendy Mason-Cox Optometrist, Codarra Advanced Systems, Auswide Projects, Hair Flair**

**H & R Block, Ross Thomas & Com Pty Ltd Accountancy, Bluman Books/Music**

**Queanbeyan Physiotherapy Centre, NSW Department of Community Services**

**Department of Environment & Climate Change**

### **Crawford Street (Residential)**

**283(B), 279, 281, 283, 286A, 286, 288, 290, 292**

### **Rutledge Street (Residential)**

**Douros Centre units, 3, 9 (empty)**

### **Rutledge St (Businesses)**

**Nash Accounting, Munjuwa Queanbeyan Aboriginal Corporation**

#### ***Rutledge Plaza***

**Ian McNamee and Partners**

**Jack Herrald Solicitor**

**Joseph Da Cruz Dental**

**Symbion-Laverty Pathology**

**Rutledge Plaza Medical Centre**

**Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, NSW Parks & Wildlife Service,**

### **Isabella St (Residential)**

**2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 34, 36, Units 1-20/38, 40, 42**

### **Church Lane (Residential)**

**3, 5, 7**

### **Lowe St**

**74, 76, 78 and 80**

Members of the HOME Inc Board personally door-knocked each of the Businesses and residents listed above. Each was given a copy of the attached Fact Sheet and all, barring a small number of businesses and non-residential sites, were seen face-to-face.

Generally, the feedback was very positive. There were, however, concerns from a small number of people generally as summarised below:

### **ISSUES RAISED**

### **HOME INC'S RESPONSE**

Negative impact on property value

HOME contacted a local Real Estate Agent who indicated that HOME'S presence would probably not affect property values but the pool of interested buyers would probably decrease.

Anti-social behaviour

HOME will not be a refuge, nor will it be providing crisis accommodation. It will be a residential facility: a safe place that offers supportive care to its residents in order that they might live active and fulfilling lives within the local community. Further, HOME will have strict rules concerning substance abuse - overseen by a 24 hour presence of staff and volunteers.

Safety of children

It is well known that people with chronic mental illness are themselves some of the most vulnerable members of society. So, in fact, it is they who need protection from outside influences rather than vice versa. Further, given HOME will be providing 24 hour care and support, residents' (and community) behaviour will be closely monitored.

Meanwhile, St Benedict's Community Day Centre which provides support for people battling addiction, illness, and homelessness has been operating opposite the Isabella Primary School (and 100 metres from proposed site for HOME) without any negative impact or community disruption for 7 years.

One nearby resident, while supportive of the concept and need for HOME, was quite concerned about HOME being located at the proposed site. HOME representatives engaged in significant dialogue (both verbally and in writing) with the concerned family. For privacy reasons it is not appropriate to include the full details of those discussion herein, but suffice to say that in the end the parties essentially agreed to disagree. The concerned resident has provided details of the issues raised to other stakeholders and decision makers.