

## Mental Health and Homelessness Symposium Tasmania 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011 Interim Report

Tasmania's inaugural Mental Health and Homelessness Symposium was a huge success. Approximately 200 delegates attended the two day stimulating event. People came from both the housing and mental health sectors and a large proportion were members from the community who identified as having a lived experience of mental illness and/or homelessness, and family members.

Delegates were given 'food for thought' by the inspirational guest speakers. Simon Tatz, Director of Communications, Mental Health Council of Australia, gave an overview of policy in the areas of mental health and homelessness at both the national and state levels. Shannon Gooley, NSW Health, outlined the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI). This is a highly successful, evidenced based and evaluated model of supported housing for people experiencing mental illness and at risk of homelessness.

Michael Perusco, CEO Sacred Heart Mission and Sharlene Green from St Luke's Bendigo, outlined two innovated supported housing models located in Victoria for people living with a mental illness and at risk of homelessness.

The audience was privileged to hear people's stories, whereby people with a lived experience of mental illness and homelessness told of their experience and gave suggestions on 'how we can do it better' in Tasmania.

Rebecca Lewis, Communications Officer Multicultural Mental Health Australia, reminded delegates how we can engage more effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse Australians experiencing a mental illness and homelessness.

Felicity Reynolds, CEO Mercy Foundation, said that we can end chronic homelessness in Tasmania, it is achievable.

Stuart Bakewell, Area Manager, and Paul Johnson, Peer Worker, from St Mungo's London outlined the awesome service which has been in operation since 1969. Stuart gave a synopsis of the services and Paul shared his personal journey with the audience.

The themes that emerged from the two days include the importance of building relationships; gathering data; believe in the process; and the take home message is **"It is challenging however not difficult"**.