

CONCURRENT SESSION

C7 COVID case study deep dive



Sydney Rough Sleeping COVID-19 Taskforce

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Overview

- Recap of COVID-19 timeline
- Establishment of an inner-city Sydney Taskforce
- Scaling up of activities
- Flexibility in policy and practice
- Our achievements
- Our lessons learned



COVID-19 outbreak timeline

- December 2019 – first reported infection in Wuhan, China
- 25 January 2020 – first COVID-19 case in NSW
- Early March 2020 – first NSW person-to-person transmission recorded
- 11 March 2020 – COVID-19 declared global pandemic (WHO)

DCJ, Health, Council, local services meet to prepare

- 20 March 2020 – International borders closed
- 21 March 2020 – Sydney lockdown

**334 people sleeping
rough**

– City of Sydney
February 2020 Street
Count

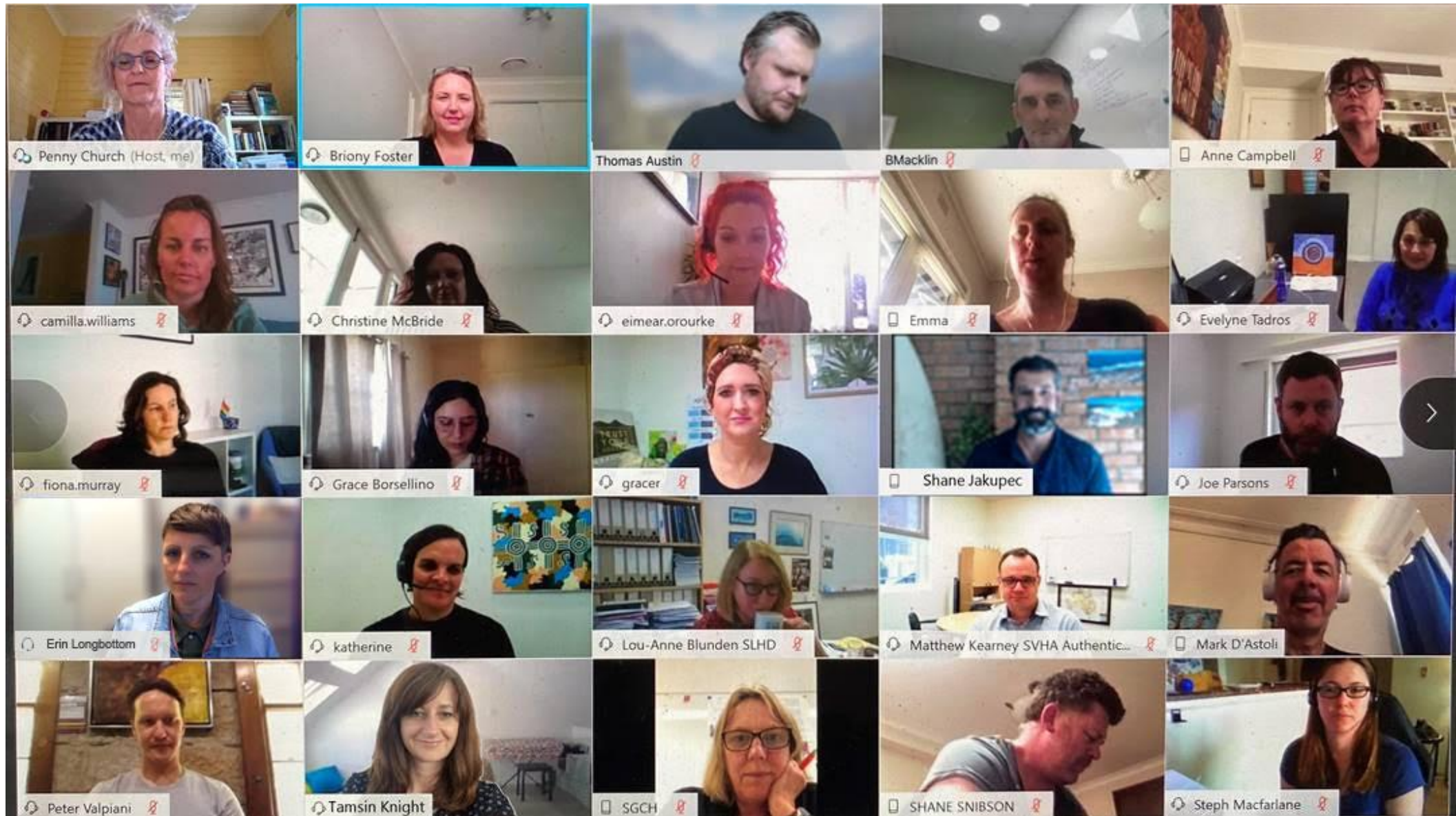
Taskforce established

- 30 March 2020 – Taskforce holds its first meeting
- Taskforce working groups begin to be established
 - *Outreach, Support and Care Coordination*
 - *Aboriginal Homelessness Coordination*
 - *Accommodation Exits Coordination*
 - *Food and Food Security Coordination*
 - *People with Pets*
- 14 April 2020 – Taskforce Accommodation Plan endorsed

Taskforce membership

Taskforce included senior representation:

- Department of Communities and Justice
- 2 Local Health Districts
- St Vincent's Health Network
- Primary Health Network
- Sydney City Council
- NSW Police
- Sector peaks - Homelessness NSW, DVNSW, Yfoundations
- Specialist homelessness services - Neami, SVDP, MA, Salvos, Haymarket, Innari, Wayside, Wesley, Launchpad
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre - voice of people with lived experience of homelessness
- NSW Land and Housing Corporation
- Community housing providers
- End Street Sleeping Collaboration



Activities were quickly scaled up

- Assertive outreach patrols increased
- COVID-19 screening tool
- 380 additional hotel beds
- Care coordination and support
- Specialist Aboriginal support
- Dedicated TA Housing team
- Daily Hotel Pop-ups
- De-concentration of congregate
- Regular, focused communications
- Food support



Support and accommodation responses

- Working group to coordinate people in hotel TA
- Support across multiple sectors to meet immediate increased demand
- Additional resources (support teams, housing team, brokerage)
- New housing pathways through Meanwhile Use
- Hotel Pop-Ups provided a one stop shop



Health Responses

- Intensive health support to people sleeping rough
- Special Health Accommodation
- Outreach COVID-19 testing in hotspots
- COVID-19 education and provision of PPE
- Early, accessible COVID-19 vaccination
- Public Health Unit complex cases teams
- 'Homelessness Swab Squad'



Flexibility to expedite practice

- New guidelines on infection control for SHS
- Recalibration of workforce to support demand
- Temporary extensions and cap waivers for TA
- Temporary waivers of identity, eligibility, assessment requirements
- Together Home Program born from Taskforce discussions on accommodation pathways and needs



Our achievements 1 April – 30 Sept 2020

- Taskforce - 71 members representing 24 agencies
- 350 assertive outreach patrols
- 2,700 people provided TA - 850 people sleeping rough
- 240 people housed long-term with support - 165 sleeping rough
- 82 Hotel Pop-ups
- 1000s of meals prepared and delivered
- No recorded COVID-19 infections
- Planning for potential second wave



Lessons learned

- Collaboration, communication and flexibility were critical
- Taskforce was essential to coordinate responses
- The importance of assertive outreach support
- Aboriginal responses must be led by Aboriginal people
- Including people with lived experience in responses is key
- Improving accommodation standards positively effects wellbeing
- Removing barriers led to positive outcomes
- Technology saves us all time!





Questions