



Draft HASS Accreditation Review Report

Organisation: Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)

Review Date: 27th May 2008



This review was conducted according to requirements of the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) Standards and Accreditation Program.

DISCLAIMER

Accreditation status conferred by the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) Standards and Accreditation Program, including documents prepared in the assessment process, certifies that the participating organisation has met the applicable standards and participates in an ongoing quality improvement program. It does not, however, guarantee the safety, quality or acceptability of a participating organisation or its services or programs, or that legislative and funding are being, or will be, met. Similarly, accreditation does not prevent staff of participating organisations from sometimes making mistakes.

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FOREWORD

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) underpins the QIC Standards and Accreditation Program and the modules of standards. Quality is the result of a way of working rather than a single or set of events such as those leading to accreditation. There is an expectation, therefore, that all organisations will have embedded, or be in the process of embedding quality in their everyday work practices.

Central concepts of continuous quality improvement include:

- the organisation's leaders and management encourage the processes of CQI among individual staff and the organisation as a whole;
- a range of formal and informal mechanisms are used to evaluate and improve current work practices and staff are directly involved in the reflection on the efficacy of their own work and that of the organisation;
- resources are specifically allocated to CQI;
- staff and volunteers are actively acknowledged for initiatives they take in improving services and programs;
- staff are aware of the purposes, components and processes of CQI and the Plan Do Check Act cycle, and have the skills to implement them;
- quality processes are implemented in a systematic way and are evident at all levels of the organisation;
- there is an explicit and implemented process for working cooperatively, sharing and incorporating new knowledge within the organisation.

The QIC standards, the quality concepts listed above and industry wide or sector specific quality improvement themes guide the review team in its assessment of the organisation and its service activities. The team's findings are reported as a summary description of the major issues identified, and specific areas for commendation or improvement.

This report is to be read in conjunction with the QIC Core Standards Accreditation Report provided to the organisation by QICSA after External Review of Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), undertaken on 23 – 25 July 2007.

REVIEW DETAILS

Organisation:	Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO)
Chief Executive Officer:	Antony Calabro
Review contact:	Karen Stace & Robb Ritchens
Number of staff:	5 FTEs
Reviewers:	Review Team Coordinator Gail O'Donnell QICSA VIC
	External Reviewer Linda Ryland QICSA VIC

This review assesses the extent to which the organisation meets the Victorian *Homelessness Assistance Services Standards* (HASS).

Three levels of attainment are used consistently throughout this report to give an overall rating for each standard. The levels of attainment are:

- **Met**
- **Met in Part**
- **Not Met**

In order to meet HASS accreditation requirements, all the Standards must be met.

The purpose of this accreditation review report is record the findings of the external review upon which a recommendation for accreditation is made. It is also prepared to assist ACSO with future planning through identifying organisational strengths and achievements, areas for development and recommendations to support continuous quality improvement.

This report is to be read in conjunction with the QICSA Accreditation Review Report provided to the organisation after external review undertaken on the 23rd-25th July 2007.

INTRODUCTION

Scope of review

The review was confined to McCormack House, a six bed residential house for male offenders with mental health issues. The program is funded by the DHS Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and was also included in the QICSA organisational wide review undertaken in July 2007.

Evidence Trail

This report represents a summary of findings from:

- analysis of HASS Quality Journal;
- direct interviews with the program manager, CEO, staff (2) and consumers (2) at McCormack House
- observations during site visits at McCormack House of fire equipment and safety measures, service and office settings and work practices;
- other documentation including Annual Report, promotional brochures, Quality Work Plan, organisational chart, meeting minutes, policy and procedures

Organisational Context and History

ACSO was established in 1983 and currently operates programs in the areas of transitional support to ex-prisoners, mental health services, disability support services, employment services, alcohol and drug assessment and treatment planning. It provides services in metropolitan Melbourne and regional areas in Victoria.

McCormack House was established in 1987 to provide short term (up to three months) accommodation for men exiting prison or a similar facility. ASCO strives to provide a safe service and supportive environment that assists successful transition back into the general community. The Forensic Outreach Mental Health program supports residents of McCormack House to achieve this transition.

Section summaries

Section 1. Upholding and Promoting Rights

All standards in this section were MET.

Section 2. Access to Support for People Experiencing Homelessness

All standards in this section were MET

Section 3. Direct Service Delivery and Case Management

All standards in this section were MET

Section 4. Direct Service to Specific Groups

All standards in this section were MET

Section 5. Working with the Community

All sections in this section were MET

Overall summary

McCormack House is providing a supportive and safe environment to enable residents to transition into the general community. The program is well integrated into the Specialist Services program of ASCO and intensive support is provided by residential and outreach staff.

ASCO is commended for their rights based approach to service delivery and their commitment to working towards positive outcomes for a highly marginalised target group. Areas for improvement include a strengthening of consumer participation, more formalised evaluation of client and program outcomes and a stronger focus on meeting the needs of clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These areas were highlighted in the review undertaken in July 2007 and a well represented in the 2007-2010 Quality Work Plan. (QWP) There was evidence at review that significant progress had been made in implementing the QWP.

Accreditation Status

The Accreditation Review Report of ASCO will be presented to QIC with a recommendation for accreditation.

Acknowledgements

The review team would like to thank Karen Stace and Robb Ritchens for their hospitality and presentation of evidence for review.

LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT FOR EACH STANDARD – HASS STANDARDS

Homelessness Assistance Service Standards

SECTION 1 – Upholding and Promoting Rights

HASS 1.1	Rights based approach	This standard was MET
HASS 1.2	Consumer participation	This standard was MET
HASS 1.3	Complaints and appeals	This standard was MET
HASS 1.4	Privacy and confidentiality	This standard was MET

SECTION 2 – Access to Support for People Experiencing Homelessness

HASS 2.1	Access to the homelessness system	This standard was MET
HASS 2.2	Initial assessment	This standard was MET
HASS 2.3	Effective referrals	This standard was MET

SECTION 3 – Direct Service Delivery and Case Management

HASS 3.1	Providing equitable access to support services	This standard was MET
HASS 3.2	Engagement, assessment and case planning	This standard was MET
HASS 3.3	Responsive Support	This standard was MET
HASS 3.4	Exit planning and case closure	This standard was MET
HASS 3.5	Documenting case work	This standard was MET

SECTION 4 - Direct Service to Specific Groups

HASS 4.1	Supporting parents and accompanying children	This standard was NOT APPLICABLE
HASS 4.2	Supporting young people	This standard was NOT APPLICABLE
HASS 4.3	Supporting women, children and other people experiencing family/domestic violence	This standard was NOT APPLICABLE
HASS 4.4	Providing culturally competent services	This standard was MET
HASS 4.5	Providing advocacy services	This standard was NOT APPLICABLE

SECTION 5 - Working with the Community

HASS 5.1	Building partnerships and integrated networks	This standard was MET
HASS 5.2	Advocacy and community education	This standard was MET

REPORT OF REVIEW FINDINGS BY SECTION AND STANDARD

HASS SECTION 1 UPHOLDING AND PROMOTING RIGHTS

HASS 1.1

Rights based approach - People' rights are upheld in all aspects of the organisation's work

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Client handbook outlining rights and responsibilities is provided on intake
- Staff Code of Ethics and Conduct supports consumer rights
- Strong embedded practice of a rights based approach evident through staff and consumer interviews
- Declaration of understanding document clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of both consumers and staff

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 1.1:

- Investigate the employment of a client feedback/participation officer
- Review the client handbook for McCormack House to ensure it is more accessible to clients with limited numeracy and literacy skills

HASS 1.2

Consumer Participation - Consumers contribute to determining the way the organisation provides services

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Strong commitment to empowering consumers to lead in the development of their individual program plans
- Willingness to trial and reflect on the effectiveness of piloted consumer participation strategies
- Residents actively participate in regular house meetings at McCormack House
- Consumer feedback to key workers is encouraged both directly and anonymously
- Levels of consumer participation are monitored through review of incident reports, staff meetings and staff supervision

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
At review in July 2007 it was noted by the review team that a variety of consumer participation strategies had been trialed with mixed success.	Utilise the Consumer Participation Kit resource developed by Homeground to assist in the strengthening of consumer participation
The review team noted that the appointment of a project officer with a consumer participation portfolio responsibility had just occurred	Monitor the effectiveness of this portfolio in guiding, integrating and strengthening consumer participation across the organisation
The Consumer Action Group-Specialist Services is in the early stages of development	Further the development of the Consumer Action Group- Specialist Services and evaluate its effectiveness
The Client Participation policy is due for review in August 2008	Include consumers in the review of this policy. This could be a job for the Consumer Action Group

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 1.2:

- Implement the mechanisms outlined in the 2007-2010 quality work plan to improve consumer participation in the decision making of the organisation at all levels including governance

HASS 1.3

Complaints and appeals - Complaints and appeals are addressed promptly, respectfully and fairly without compromising services to the person complaining or appealing.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Consumers demonstrated a clear understanding of the grievance process at interview
- Strong staff commitment to receiving and acting on consumer complaints
- Complaints process documentation is provided to consumers on intake in the Specialist Services information brochure and McCormack House handbook

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
The review team in July 2007 identified that complaints and compliments were not recorded, analysed, reviewed centrally or reported to the Council. A number of planned improvements are currently being implemented to improve this system	Continue to implement the planned improvements identified in the QWP namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a central complaints register • Quarterly analysis by Executive

	Team <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual report to Council and inclusion in Annual Report
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There were no Quality Journal recommendations for this standard.

HASS 1.4**Privacy and confidentiality - Privacy and confidentiality is respected and maintained****This standard was MET****Key strengths relating to this standard:**

- Privacy and confidentiality are well understood and practiced across the organisation
- Well documented policy and procedures guide practice
- The Document of Understanding confirms clients' rights to privacy
- Recent review of on call procedures which introduced the use of a locked bag to store client information more securely

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 1.4:

- Review and redraft ACSO Information and Health Records Privacy Policy and records management procedures in line with Australian standards

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HASS SECTION 2 ACCESS TO SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

HASS 2.1

Access to the homelessness service system - People are actively assisted to access the most appropriate service within the homelessness service system.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Consumers are supported to access homelessness services through information provision and effective partnering with other housing providers
- Comprehensive induction program and internal secondment opportunities support staff knowledge and awareness of ACSO services and the broader service sector
- Recent purchase of Community Service Information Directory for staff use when seeking services for their clients
- Key initiative in 2006-2009 Strategic plan is to improve ASCO's response to homelessness through stronger networking and partnership development

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 2.1:

- Continue to lobby appropriate departments such as the Department of Justice and DHS to increase housing options to our client group
- Continue to develop relationships with services such as Homeground

HASS 2.2

Initial Assessment - Each person approaching the organisation is provided with a timely, quality response in which his or her immediate needs are addressed and an appropriate service is identified.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Assessment and referral processes are in place and have been recently reviewed to ensure consistency of application
- Recruitment procedures support the employment of appropriately qualified staff
- Professional development and regular supervision for staff supports effective practice in the identification of client needs through assessment

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
An assessment checklist which is signed by both the worker and client has been recently introduced and is to be placed on the client	Audit for compliance in using the assessment checklist at the next client file audit

file	
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The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 2.2:

- Increase consumer involvement in review of assessment processes

HASS 2.3

Effective referrals - People seeking assistance are effectively referred to the most appropriate service that can meet their needs.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Ongoing training and regular supervision of staff support effective referral knowledge and skills
- Networks and formal protocols support timely and appropriate referral to appropriate services
- Use of the Community Service Information Directory to enhance staff's knowledge of referral options

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
Data about referral patterns and outcomes of referrals are not well captured, recorded or evaluated	Record referral patterns and review the outcomes of these for service planning and evaluation

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 2.3:

- Document referral processes for clients exiting McCormack House in a planned way

HASS SECTION 3 DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERY AND CASE MANAGEMENT

HASS 3.1

Providing equitable access to support services - People are provided with fair, equitable and transparent access to support.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Organisational commitment to providing supportive access in a non judgmental and respectful manner to all clients
- Access systems, including clear eligibility criteria, are in place to support timely and transparent access
- Well developed relationships with key referral agencies supports early assessment and the beginning of case planning
- Central location which is close to public transport and other aligned services
- Relocation plans include consideration of access issues for target group
- Specialist Services operates a 24 hour on call service which supports residents of McCormack House when house staff are not on duty

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 3.1:

- Ongoing participation in Mental Health Week
- Continue to investigate a new premises for McCormack House

HASS 3.2

Engagement, assessment and case planning - Each consumer has the opportunity to actively participate in an assessment and planning process that is strengths-based and emphasises long term solutions.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Staff from within the organisation are recruited to work at McCormack House to bring a diverse skill mix to the area
- Case planning is undertaken within a strengths based framework with a focus on effective transitioning into the general community that includes both short and long term goals
- Individual Program Plans (IPP) are reviewed regularly and cover key behavioural risk issues including risk mitigation strategies
- Recent review of case planning processes with Specialist services staff to identify gaps and develop a new template

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
The CQI activity which involved the review and amendment of the individual planning template should be subject to ongoing evaluation/review	Continue regular client file audits to evaluate compliance and the effectiveness of the new individual planning template

HASS 3.3

Responsive support - Each person receives appropriate support to achieve the goals of the case plan they have negotiated with the service.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Key support worker model in place
- Strong formal and informal staff supervision processes enhance the sharing of knowledge and skills
- Responsive, Individual Program Plans are developed for all clients and regularly reviewed
- Use of emergency identification card with ACSO contact details to support responsiveness in emergency situations

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

HASS 3.4

Exit planning and case closure - Each person is supported in developing a plan for exiting the service.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Exit planning is undertaken early as McCormack House provides only short term accommodation
- Clients are assisted in finding appropriate housing and often provided with 'start up' donated furniture
- Client linked to a Specialist Services outreach worker to support transition
- Implementation of the Step Up model pilot with Active Housing. This was funded by ASCO in response to the difficulty of finding suitable housing for clients exiting McCormack House.
- Re-entry to McCormack House is possible and clients are supported by outreach workers to return

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
The Step Up model was found to be an effective model for supporting ASCO's client group	Explore the Step Up model with other housing providers and potential funding bodies

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 3.4:

- Incorporate an exit strategy into the IPP that covers accommodation support as well as outreach support

HASS 3.5

Documenting case work - All key information about individuals and each stage of service delivery are implemented.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Client file audits are undertaken on a regular basis and actions implemented
- Documented program guidelines support practice

No specific recommendations were identified by the review team

HASS SECTION 4 DIRECT SERVICE TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

HASS 4.1

Supporting parents and accompanying children - Parents or carers are assisted in supporting children and young people in their care so that each child's needs are identified and met and their rights are respected.

This standard was NOT APPLICABLE

McCormack House does not accept men with accompanying children.

HASS 4.2

Supporting young people - Young people are provided with support that is sensitive and responsive to their individual needs.

This standard was NOT APPLICABLE

McCormack House does not provide support to people under the age of 18

HASS 4.3

Supporting women, children and other people experiencing family/domestic violence - Women, children and other people experiencing family/domestic violence are provided with services that are sensitive and responsive to the diversity of their needs.

This standard was NOT APPLICABLE

McCormack House does not accept female clients and does not specifically provide services to adult male clients who are experiencing family violence. If this issue was identified in assessment the client would be supported through their ACSO support worker or through referral to a more appropriate service provider.

HASS 4.4

Providing culturally competent services - Each person receives a service that is sensitive to and respectful of their culture and language, including the importance of preserving significant networks and relationships.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Staff have undertaken cultural awareness training

- Links have been established with Action on Disability in Ethnic Communities (ADEC), local Aboriginal Services and the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit
- Code of Ethics and Conduct guides staff practice

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
<p>The review team in July 2007 identified that links with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and indigenous communities were not evident across all program areas.</p> <p>The team also noted that while the operational plan identified the need to monitor emerging client groups this was not reflected in program planning.</p> <p>A number of planned improvements are currently being implemented to improve this system</p>	<p>Continue to implement the planned improvements identified in the QWP namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audit of the unmet needs of CALD groups currently accessing and likely to utilise services • Document and evaluate our current response to these groups and their supports including staff skills, promotional material, policies and identify gaps • Use audit information to inform strategic, operational and program planning • Conduct audit to measure effectiveness of strategies implemented

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 4.4:

- Implement the process outlined in the QWP to improve our overall provision of culturally responsive and appropriate services

HASS 4.5

Providing advocacy services - Each person receives the most appropriate advocacy service response, including assistance to sustain housing tenancies or support opportunities.

This standard was NOT APPLICABLE

This standard is only relevant for organisations that deliver specialist advocacy services

HASS SECTION 5 WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

HASS 5.1

Building partnerships and integrated networks - The organisation works to build strong partnerships and integrated networks to better support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or family violence.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- Strategic plan has accommodation as a key focus and ACSO is actively pursuing partners to enhance accommodation options for their client group.
- Routine monitoring of the impact of the current rental market and public housing availability on housing stock is occurring
- Partnership framework has been developed since last review to guide partnership development and work is underway to develop a legal agreement to support partnership/consortium approaches to service delivery
- 2007-2008 operational plan includes exploring options for a new McCormick House with Active Housing and DHS
- Successful submission to deliver Link Out program since last review. This program provides transitional housing support for males exiting prison with complex needs for a 12 month period post release
- Recently attended the Homelessness Conference in Adelaide seeking to make networks to enhance provision of accommodation

<u>Issues identified or opportunities for improvement</u>	<u>Recommendations for CQI</u>
A Partnership Framework which includes evaluation has been developed following recommendations by the review team in July 2007	Evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership framework which will be piloted with the Link Out program
	Continue to implement the planned improvements identified in the QWP namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop central register for documenting all agreements, relationships, partnerships, memberships of peak bodies, networks including key contacts and add to intranet • Utilise information collected by Communication and Stakeholder Management team to audit all current relationships

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit register regularly
While ACSO does not provide services for young people or victims of family violence there is obvious connections and synergies with those services that are	Build and maintain relationships with the broader homelessness service system, including peak bodies, so services can be integrated and effective for clients

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 5.1:

- Implement the actions identified in the QWP to improve our practice on building partnerships and integrated networks

HASS 5.2

Advocacy and community education - The organisation advocates broadly for the needs of all people experiencing housing difficulties, including those people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness or family violence.

This standard was MET

Key strengths relating to this standard:

- 2006-2009 Strategic Plan identifies increasing the knowledge of the broader community and seeking to influence policy and decision makers as key activities
- Recent involvement in the development of the Homelessness paper through the recruitment of clients to participate in the consumer consultation and providing a venue for the forum
- Advocacy occurs at both an individual and broader group level through involvement in Mental Health Week and the Annual Art Show
- ASCO's 2007 Annual report received runner up in the Price Waterhouse Coopers Transparency awards and provides clear and comprehensive community information about their programs and services

The review team endorses the continuous quality improvement (CQI) opportunities identified in respect of Standard 5.2:

- Continue to lobby government departments regarding appropriate options for clients

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
QWP	Quality Work Plan

DRAFT