

## **Resources lacking in new Housing Accord**

The NSW Department of Housing staged a series of NGO consultation forums during December 2005 about a new collaboration between state government departments. The Housing and Human Services Accord (the Accord) is an agreement between the government human service agencies and establishes a framework for partnerships to provide housing, health, employment and other social support services. It aims to help people who are tenants of social housing receive other support services they require.

Under the Accord, people who are “shared clients” of Human Service Government agencies will receive coordinated housing and support services. The Accord also plans to provide an opportunity for partners to develop Shared Access arrangements, so that support agencies can nominate clients with complex needs for housing.

MHCC attended one of these forums at which NGO representatives gave their comments and views on this agreement. While MHCC supports the central aim of the Accord to improve partnerships and interagency responses to assist housing clients, a lack of funding to drive this initiative is an obvious issue of concern. With NGOs already overworked it is unclear how services can be improved without extra resources being provided.

The Accord will become operational through a set of ‘schedules’, which will be bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements to deliver services and support to particular client groups in particular ways. The Department advises that the Accord itself does not impose a requirement on individual NGOs to participate yet NGOs at the consultation expressed concern that marginalisation may occur for those choosing not to enter agreements.

Other schedules under the Accord will include the already operational Joint Guarantee of Service (JGOS) and the Housing and Support Initiative (HASI). It is expected that JGOS will be strengthened under this new agreement.

The Department promises ongoing consultation with the wider community including informal consumer input. The Department will issue a response from the consultations in early 2006. For more information on the Accord visit: [www.housing.nsw.gov.au](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au).

**320 words**