

Domestic Squalor/ Hoarding Information Package

A Guide to assist residents with identifying and dealing with
Domestic Squalor/Hoarding in the Blue Mountains



Produced by: Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Working Party

January 2019

Dear Resident,

Dealing with Domestic Squalor/Hoarding in the Blue Mountains

The issue of Domestic Squalor and Hoarding is a complex and difficult one not only for the person living in these conditions but also for their family, friends and neighbours.

This package provides a comprehensive listing of agency/s that are involved in assisting a person who is living in, or who is in danger of living in domestic squalor/hoarding.

In order to assist the person's family, friends and neighbours alike who are unsure about what constitutes domestic squalor/hoarding, a definition and a living conditions rating scale is provided. This scale will greatly help in initially assessing a person's living conditions.

Whilst this package is a good starting point to identify squalor and hoarding and the relevant agency/s to contact, it should not be referred to in isolation as personalities, perceptions, and levels of acceptance of family members, friends and/ or neighbours living in severe domestic squalor/hoarding can vary significantly. It is imperative that you are flexible in your approach and show cultural sensitivity in each situation.

If you have any queries regarding the package, please contact the Aged and Disability Services Development Officer at the Blue Mountains City Council on 4780 5546.

Cover photo kindly provided by Susan Graham, Catholic Community Services, October 2008

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | 4 |
| Definition of Squalor and Hoarding | 5 |
| Factors that Contribute to Severe Domestic Squalor and/or Hoarding | 5 |
| Case Study to assist a family identify squalor/hoarding | 6 |
| Suggested Steps to assist a Family member/ friend Living in squalor and/or hoarding | 8 |
| Assessing Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Rating Scales | 9 |
| Clutter/Hoarding Inventory Scale | 13 |
| Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom | 16 |
| Suggested contact list to address impacts of squalor/hoarding on the individual's health and wellbeing | 17 |
| Impact of Squalor/Hoarding on the Family and/or Local Community | 18 |
| What Organisations can do to Assist | 19 |
| Financial Advisory Services/Assistance Support | 28 |
| Acronyms & Useful Website Contacts/References | 32 |

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Blue Mountains Aged Care Assessment Team - Lawson Community Health Centre

Blue Mountains City Council

DARE - Disability Support Service

Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative

Katoomba Community Mental Health Services

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Wentworth Community Housing

Special appreciation goes to Blue Mountains City Council's Aged and Disability Services Development Officer for taking leadership in the coordination and development of this package.



Definition of Squalor and Hoarding

Dictionary definitions of a squalid dwelling or place (as opposed to clothing or appearance) refer to somewhere that is filthy, unclean or foul through neglect. With the exception of some very extreme examples, whether someone lives in 'squalor' is subjective and influenced by the attitude, exposure to the unclean environment and personal living conditions of the person making the assessment.

Some environments, furthermore, such as those that are cluttered and inaccessible may be more likely to be labelled as 'squalid' even though they may be no dirtier than other places where there is less property and possessions.

Adapted from published criteria:

Macmillan D, Sahw P. Senile breakdown in standards of personal and environmental cleanliness. *BMJ* 1966:1032-37.
Clark AN, Maniker GD, Gray I. Diogenes syndrome: a clinical study of gross neglect in old age. *Lancet* 1975: 366-68.

Definitions of hoarding and cluttering involve excessive collection of items (which appear to have little or no value) and a failure to remove or discard them. This often means that the environment in which they are being kept becomes so cluttered that it can no longer be used for the purpose for which it was designed.

Adapted from Catholic Community Services Squalor and Hoarding Tool Kit, 2013.

Factors that Contribute to Severe Domestic Squalor and/or Hoarding

Severe domestic squalor and hoarding can occur in a number of circumstances and situations. It affects a range of households and age groups; both younger and older people as well as couples. The list of circumstances is endless, however evidence suggests that half to two-thirds of all persons living in severe domestic squalor/hoarding suffer from dementia or alcohol-related brain damage, or mental health issues such as schizophrenia and depression. There are also associated factors including domestic violence, economic and cultural poverty, diverse cultural values and beliefs and war or other trauma.

Studies have also shown moderate to high rates of medical problems for people who live in conditions of severe domestic squalor, particularly in relation to mobility, continence, sensory impairment (especially visual) and nutritional deficiencies such as diabetes, obesity, etc.

A recent study conducted in November 2008 by the University of Sydney found that at least one in 1,000 NSW people are living in severe domestic squalor.

However since numerous cases of severe domestic squalor are never referred to medical services, the actual incidence is likely to be considerably higher.

Source: Northern Sydney Severe Domestic Squalor Working Party Information Pack August 2005, First Edition

Case Study

Mr A is a 70 year old man who lives alone in his own home. He was referred to mental health services by his neighbour, who was concerned that he was in a severe state of self-neglect, and that his mental and physical health were declining. The neighbour reported seeing Mr A talking to himself, and that he was becoming increasingly pale and losing weight. His house was extremely neglected and dilapidated. There were several holes in the roof, no glass in the windows, no electricity and no water.

Mental Health Services visited his home on several occasions but Mr A was never at home or refused to answer the door. He did not respond to written requests to see him sent by mail. He was not known to have any living friends or relatives. Mental Health records confirmed Mr A had been admitted to hospital 30 years ago with schizophrenia, but was not known to have had any contact since this incidence. Mr A was known to the local Council, who had received complaints in relation to the neglected state of the property and that the yard and garden were overgrown. The Council had cleared the yard on several occasions after his failure to respond to compulsory orders under the Local Government Act. Mr A's rates were in arrears, but he made payments from time to time and last visited the Council Offices several months before this incidence. Otherwise Mr A is not known to have caused any problems and is not known to be a danger to himself or others. An important question to be addressed from the outset is whether or not Mr A has the capacity to decide if he needs to receive further medical treatment (e.g. medications, hospitalisation, or investigations) and remain in his current accommodation. He needs to be able to understand the options available to him and the potential benefits and risks associated with each of these decisions.

Cleaning is often difficult to organise and to pay for. If Mr A's living conditions are extreme and there are concerns about exposure to human waste, body fluids, excretions and an infection risk, "forensic cleaning" may be required. The Council may be able to provide contact details for local cleaning services and assist with the removal of property and rubbish. In milder cases, with less infectious risk, particularly if Mr A were voluntarily accepting assistance, some services may undertake some of the cleaning themselves. A small amount of funding is available from various organisations that come under the Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC).

What happens if Mr A persistently resists assessment and/or intervention?

Should Mr A be continually unavailable for assessment and there are concerns in relation to his health and living conditions persist, there are several ways in which his case could be dealt with. This is likely to be influenced by which service has had the most involvement. In Mr A's case, this would be mental health services and the local Council. An ideal outcome would be a joint approach (taking as much care to maintain confidentiality as possible) with one service taking on the role of "lead agency" and identifying a coordinator or "key worker". Continuing efforts should be made to engage Mr A and convince him to accept help voluntarily.

If Mr A continues to resist help, legal authorisation to enter his home to conduct an assessment will need to be undertaken. If there is evidence of a likely mental illness, Mental Health Services could apply to the local court for authority to conduct an assessment under the Mental Health Act. This would permit a mental health professional, to enter his home (in the presence of police and if necessary, by force) to enable a mental state examination including an assessment of capacity and risk.

If Mr A were determined to be mentally ill and at risk, the health professional could request the police/ambulance for further assessment and/ or treatment under the Mental Health Act 2007.

If authority to undertake an assessment was not granted to the Mental Health service, then the Council could invoke its powers under the amended Local Government Act 1993 and order a clean-up without Mr A's consent.

Source: Partnership Against Homelessness-Guidelines for field staff to assist people living in severe domestic squalor, August 2007.

Suggested Summary Sheet of Steps to assist a Family member, Neighbour or Friend living in squalor/hoarding conditions

There is no quick solution to assisting someone living in squalor hoarding. As touched on in the sample case study, the important question to ask right from the outset is whether this person has the capacity to understand the options available to them and the potential benefits and risks associated with each of these decisions.

The key thing to remember is each situation of squalor/ hoarding is unique, therefore the solution should be unique. This person you are concerned about may feel they are the only ones who are in this situation. They may also feel overwhelmed about their situation and not know where to start, with this in mind below are some steps to assist you

(Please note these suggested steps are based on the person agreeing to offers of assistance. If you are concerned that the person is at risk of harm to themselves or others please contact your local police /NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 and they will advise you of the first immediate steps to take).

Establish a rapport with the person concerned;



On establishing a sense of trust with the person concerned talk over with them the range of supports available through community services.(Please see the back of this kit for details of services .) The agency to contact will be guided by the complexity of the issue and the age of the person. If you are uncertain who to contact your Blue Mountains City Council's Aged and Disability Services Development Officer can be contacted for advice on ph 4780 5546.



Following contact with a service, set up a meeting in an agreed neutral location



At this meeting develop a plan of action to address the issues



Make contact with relevant services for support



Continue ongoing support to the person

Assessing Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Rating Scales

The aim of the rating scales below allows governments and community organisations to gauge the nature and urgency of the issues. It promotes better planning and intervention strategies, especially when seeking the support and assistance of other agencies or family members.

Living conditions rating scale for squalor

The scale has 13 domains, totalling 39 and each scoring 0 to 3.

1 = acceptability

2 = moderate

3 = extensive

Information for scoring:

| Interior of house | Scale |
|---------------------|--|
| Accessibility | Score according to ability to access e.g. 3 for completely unable to enter due to holes in floor/belongings piled up |
| Odour | Score 3 only if it is physically impossible to stay in the residence |
| Lighting | To score 3, no lighting/natural lighting i.e. very dark and unable to see without torch |
| Floor/carpet | Score 3 if unable to see the majority of carpet due to covering of newspapers etc |
| Walls | To score 3, the majority of the wall is covered with filth etc |
| Furniture | To score 3, there is only a mattress and no other furniture |
| Kitchen | To score 3, there must be no evidence of organisation, cleaning or rubbish removal over a long period of time; or no kitchen |
| Food | To score 3, there must be only minimal food, poorly stored food |
| Bathroom/toilet | To score 3, there must be a blocked, or not functioning sewerage system; or no bathroom; and/or no toilet |
| Disposal of excreta | To score 3, human or large pet excreta (exclude occasional cockroach dropping) |
| Hoarding | To score 3, there must be a massive number of items stored in the home |
| Clutter | To score 3, there must be more clutter than accessible routes through the home |
| Vermin | To score 3, vermin must be visible on inspection |

Living Conditions Rating Scale Ctd

Organisation of Person who completed rating scale:

Age of Client: Sex of Client: Post Code.....

Dwelling: [circle those appropriate] single/ shared/ unit/ house/ group home/ rented/
privately owned/ other.....

Age of Dwelling:

| Interior of house | | Tick / comment |
|-------------------|---|----------------|
| Accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some difficulty entering the house or rooms ➤ moderately difficult to enter the house or rooms ➤ rooms or house inaccessible or impossible to enter safely | |
| Odour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ slight unpleasant smell ➤ moderate unpleasant smell ➤ unable to spend any length of time in house due to the smell | |
| Lighting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ poor lighting ➤ most lights not working ➤ no lighting available | |
| Floor/carpet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some rubbish, food stains, filth covering floor ➤ moderate amount of rubbish, food stains, filth covering floor ➤ thick covering of newspaper, cardboard, discarded packaging and stains on floor covering | |
| Walls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some filth, nicotine stains and grime covering some walls ➤ moderate filth, nicotine stains and grime covering most walls ➤ all walls covered with filth, nicotine stains and grime | |
| Furniture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ acceptable amount of furniture (bed, table, chairs, white goods) ➤ short of some necessary items (i.e. no couch or bed) ➤ missing essential items (e.g. no fridge or stove but has a bed) ➤ no essential furniture (i.e. mattress only) | |
| Kitchen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some unwashed crockery and benches left for a couple of days ➤ most crockery unwashed and benches unwiped for some time ➤ full of unwashed crockery, mouldy scraps evident, benches not wiped for months or more | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ acceptable amount of storage space and healthy variety of food ➤ some storage problem (i.e. food not in cupboards) and reasonable variety of food ➤ balanced diet only on pay days ➤ Groceries left in bags on the floor ➤ little food in the house e.g. staple diet of tea, bread, biscuits, cakes and tinned food and/or inappropriate storage of food (i.e. frozen food not in freezer) | |
| Bathroom/ toilet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ workable sewerage system ➤ blocked or non-workable sewerage system | |
| Disposal of excreta (include pet excreta) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ no excreta noted throughout the house ➤ excreta noted in the house i.e. on floor or walls | |
| Hoarding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some collection of singular items i.e. cartons, bottles, newspapers ➤ moderate collection of singular items ➤ mass collection of singular items | |
| Clutter (include clothing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some cluttering of living space ➤ moderate amount of clutter starting to affect living space ➤ bags and boxes markedly reduce living space | |
| Vermin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ within acceptable standards ➤ some evidence of vermin present ➤ moderate amount of evidence of vermin present ➤ rats/cockroaches are evident most of the time | |

Source: *Partnership Against Homelessness-Guidelines for field staff to assist people living in severe domestic squalor, August 2000* (Adapted for Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Working Group, September 2013).
An analysis of Fire Incidents Involving Hoarding Households May 2009 (Adapted for Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Working Group, September 2013)

Clutter/Hoarding Inventory Scale

This scale has 13 questions, totaling 52 and each scoring 0 to 4.
(Please circle the response that is most appropriate)

1. To what extent do you have difficulty throwing things away?

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = To a mild extent
- 2 = To a moderate extent
- 3 = To a considerable extent
- 4 = Very much so

2. How distressing do you find the task of throwing things away?

- 0 = No distress
- 1 = Mild distress
- 2 = Moderate distress
- 3 = Severe distress
- 4 = Extreme distress

3. To what extent do you have so many things that your rooms(s) are cluttered?

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = To a mild extent
- 2 = To a moderate extent
- 3 = To a considerable extent
- 4 = Very much so

4. How often do you avoid trying to discard possessions because it's too stressful or time consuming?

- 0 = Never avoid, easily able to discard items
- 1 = Rarely avoid, can discard with a little difficulty
- 2 = Sometimes avoid
- 3 = Frequently avoid, can discard items occasionally
- 4 = Almost always avoid, rarely able to discard items

5. How distressed or uncomfortable would you feel if you could not acquire something you wanted?

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = Mild, only slightly anxious
- 2 = Moderate, distress would mount but remain manageable
- 3 = Severe, prominent and very disturbing increase in distress
- 4 = Extreme, incapacitating discomfort from any such effort

6. How much of the living area in your home is cluttered with possessions?(Consider the amount of clutter in your kitchen, living room, dining room, hallways, bedrooms, bathrooms or other rooms.)

- 0 = None of the living area is cluttered

- 1 = Some of the living area is cluttered
- 2 = Much of the living area is cluttered
- 3 = Most of the living area is cluttered
- 4 = All or almost all of the living area is cluttered

7. How much of the clutter in your home interferes with your social, work or ever day functioning? Think about things that you don't do because of clutter.

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = Mild, slight interference, but overall functioning not impaired
- 2 = Moderate, definite interference, but still manageable
- 3 = Severe, causes substantial interference
- 4 = Extreme, incapacitating

8. How often do feel compelled to acquire something you see (e.g., when shopping or offered free things)?

- 0 = Never feel compelled.
- 1 = Rarely feel compelled
- 2 = Sometimes feel compelled
- 3 = Frequently feel compelled
- 4 = Almost always feel compelled

9. How often do you decide to keep things you do not need and have little space for?

- 0 = Never keep such things.
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Occasionally
- 3 = Frequently
- 4 = Almost always keep such possessions

10. How frequently does the clutter in your home prevent you from inviting people to visit?

- 0 = Not at all
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Often
- 4 = Very often or nearly always

11. How upset or distressed do you feel about your acquiring habits?

- 0 = Not at all upset
- 1 = Mildly upset
- 2 = Moderately upset
- 3 = Severely upset
- 4 = Extreme embarrassment

12. To what extent does the clutter in your home prevent you from using parts of your home for their intended purpose? For example, cooking, using furniture, washing dishes, cleaning etc?

- 0 = Never

- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Frequently
- 4 = Very frequently or almost all the time.

13. How often has the amount of clutter in your home been the subject of disagreements or arguments with other people (for example, family members, friends, landlord, neighbours etc.)?

- 0 = Never.
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Frequently
- 4 = Almost all the time

14. Have you been avoiding activities that might tempt you to acquire more things?

- 0 = No avoidance
- 1 = Mild minimal avoidance
- 2 = Moderate some avoidance
- 3 = Severe, much avoidance
- 4 = Extreme, very extensive avoidance, I do almost everything I can to avoid these types of situations

Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

Please note the above rating scales are guides only. If a person does not rate highly on these scales, it does not mean that they should not be referred to relevant services for assistance.

Source: Partnership Against Homelessness-Guidelines for field staff to assist people living in severe domestic squalor, August 2000 (Adapted for Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Working Group, September 2013). An analysis of Fire Incidents Involving Hoarding Households May 2009 (Adapted for Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor/Hoarding Working Group, September 2013)

Suggested Contact list to address Impacts of Squalor/Hoarding on the Individual's Health and Well being

On reviewing the rating scale for squalor /hoarding, the tables below give suggestions of who to contact.

| Factor/s | Sources for further information |
|--|--|
| Self-neglect with poor nutrition, dehydration, probable untreated medical problems | Medical Services (e.g. GP, home nurses, Aboriginal Medical Service) psychiatric services (e.g. community mental health team, Transcultural Mental Health, Aged Care Assessment Team) |
| Confusion, disorientation, memory impairment, wandering and getting lost, delirium, chronic psychiatric symptoms and symptoms suggestive of severe depression. | Medical, psychiatric services (see above) |
| Aggressive behaviour or threatened harm to self or others. | Medical, psychiatric, drug and alcohol services, police, emergency services e.g. Ambulance |

| Factor/s | Sources for further information |
|---|---|
| Exposure to possible financial exploitation or abuse | Trustee and Guardian NSW, Aged Care Assessment Team |
| Threatened eviction and at risk of becoming homeless | Housing Authority (Housing NSW, Community Housing, Landlord/ Real Estate Agent), NGOs |
| Lives alone and/or unable to access help or supervision, marked decline in activities of daily living and functional status | Medical services, intake and referral section of ADHC, Aged Care Assessment Team |
| Limited mobility and risk of falls, incontinence | Medical services, ADHC, Aged Care Assessment Team |
| Utilities not present or not functional, i.e. water, power, sewerage, heating, telephones | Local Council, Local Water Authority, NGOs, Housing NSW, Wentworth Community Housing, Landlord/Real Estate Agent. |

Source: Partnership Against Homelessness-Guidelines for field staff to assist people living in severe domestic squalor, August 2007(Adapted for Blue Mountains Domestic Squalor Working Group, September 2009).

Impact of Squalor/Hoarding on the Family and/or Local Community

In assessing the impact of squalor/hoarding on family members and the local community, the family and or friends may encounter the issues identified below. If such issues are apparent, you may need to seek further information from relevant agencies listed in the right column of the table below.

| Issue | Agencies and/or services for further information |
|---|--|
| Excessive hoarding /squalor causing health and safety issues for neighbours. | Housing NSW, Wentworth Community Housing, Local Council. |
| Complaints from adjoining neighbours regarding the mess, invasion of space, excessive smells (from rubbish and/or sewerage), fire hazards, or vermin infestation. | Housing NSW, Wentworth Community Housing Local Council, some cleaning services, local water authority, Community Legal Centre. |
| Presence of dependent others, e.g. children, elderly relatives. | Community Services (Department of Family and Community Services FACS), Ageing Disability and Home Care (FACS), Aged Care Assessment Team |
| Pets kept in poor health | Royal Society Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Pets of Older Persons |

Source: Partnership Against Homelessness-Guidelines for field staff to assist people living in severe domestic squalor, August 2007.

What Organisations can do to Assist

Services and agencies that can support and or assist people living in squalor/hoarding include the following:-

My Aged Care

My Aged Care is the entry point for older Australians to access aged care. Someone may be eligible for Australian Government funded aged care services if they are an older person (usually 65+ or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) finding it harder to do the things they used to do, such as maintaining their home.

Referrals are made via My Aged Care on 1800 422 200 or <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/referral>. If a Health Professional or service provider believes that their patient/client is already receiving aged care services, they can call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 to find out more information before deciding to make a referral. You will need your patient's consent (documented or via phone), or that of their legal representative, to obtain this information.

Home support assessments are provided by a local assessor from a Regional Assessment Service or RAS. The RAS assessor can approve eligibility for entry level services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) to help a person to be independent in their home and actively participate in their community.

You need a comprehensive assessment by an Aged Care Assessment Team or ACAT to determine if someone is eligible for a home care package, residential care in an aged care home or residential respite care.

Blue Mountains City Council Ph 4780 5000

Community Outcomes Team

The Council's Aged and Disability Services Development Officer is responsible for providing advice, input and advocacy on issues relating to improving the quality of life of the frail aged, people with a disability and people living with or recovering from a mental illness. This support may include: a referral to a community care service to assist with the clean-up of the property, the coordination of other services so that the health and well being of the person is supported, and the identification of the possible issues that contributed to the property becoming squalid are identified so that the property does not revert back to its squalid nature.

Development Monitoring Team

The Council's Development Monitoring Team (DMT) responds to complaints from the public in regards to a wide range of compliance matters, many of them about untidy, unhealthy and overgrown premises. Upon investigation these matters may involve domestic squalor. DMT's response to these issues can take a number of avenues and would initially involve an inspection and discussions/requests to the resident. If this is

unsuccessful and there is an impact to neighbouring properties DMT may use the regulatory approach. This means the issue of Notices and Orders requiring certain works to remediate the unhealthy or unsafe conditions. Where the person may not have the capacity to undertake the works, DMT will ensure the person is brought to the attention of other agencies that may be able to assist. In determining if Notices or Orders are the best way to respond DMT will consider any recommendations from agencies assisting the person and/or any underlying issues. When Orders are not complied with the person could be subject to fines or court action to resolve the matter.

Noxious Weeds Section

Council's Urban Weeds Team annually inspects properties for the presence of Priority Weeds. These are highly invasive weeds which have been listed as Priority Weeds in the Greater Sydney Local Land Services Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan, which is enforceable under the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. These weeds are known to have significant impact on human health, agriculture and the environment and are a contributing factor to squalor.

When an inspection is planned to occur on a person's property they will receive prior notification in writing by Council. If weeds are found on the land, the person will receive further notification from Council to control the weeds. Where the person does not have the capacity to undertake the necessary works, the team will engage with other support agencies both internal and external to assist the person with the removal of the weeds, where possible.

Council's Biosecurity Weed Officers are able to advise on the best approach to controlling weeds in the long term. Where a person has difficulties with making payment for the removal of weeds by Council's appointed contractor, other Council staff can assist in the development of a plan which spreads the costs over an extended time period. If a person receives a notice and they are concerned about what it might mean, or how to deal with it, the Urban Weeds Team can discuss this with the person to allay any fears that they might have with complying with the notice.

Revenue/Rates Section

Council's Revenue Department oversees the administration of rate and revenue payments throughout the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. Part of this process is to assist ratepayers who experience difficulty making payments. Revenue Officers are aware of issues that ratepayers could encounter when experiencing financial difficulty. This includes identifying squalor, which in turn could lead to referrals to relevant stakeholders.

The Council Rates and Revenue Section have a focus on the following in relation to squalor:

- Identifying potential cases and referring these to the relevant agency;
- Avoiding or minimising the costs incurred for clean ups;
- When invoices are raised, ensure the debt recovery process is conducted sensitively and accommodates mutually acceptable arrangements to pay;
- Assessment of overall financial and other hardship issues for individual circumstances; and

- Promote a system of regular follow up of financial difficulties experienced by identified rate payers with the aim of minimising the likelihood of future squalor.

Waste Services Section

The Council operates two Waste Management Facilities (WMF) in the Blue Mountains. These offer a wide range of services including landfill, special waste and asbestos. For the dumping of special waste and asbestos at these facilities it needs to be booked in advance. Plastics, metal and cardboard are accepted for free. Council also provides a weekly household waste and recycling kerbside collection service as well as a kerbside booked waste service for green waste chipping and bulky waste pick-up (includes 2 free services per year and other paid services also available)

There are set fees and charges which apply to waste which has been produced within the Blue Mountains (waste not produced in the Blue Mountains is not accepted at the Waste Management Facilities). Customers must be able to show proof of residency in the form of a driver's licence or rates notice when delivering waste at the site. Sorted waste can reduce fees and charges.

Where residents present with financial and or hardship issues, Council assesses these cases on a case by case basis for possible intervention or payment plans.

Australian Home Care 1300 303 770

Australian Home Care (AHC) offer Services including Domestic Assistance, Care Coordination and After Hours support from NDIS, CHSP and HCP approved programs. Where major initial clean ups are required we would refer to a Squalor & Hoarding specialist cleaning group prior to undertaking the ongoing service.

Australian Home Care is a reliable service provider with effective coordination of services on a short term, episodic or permanent basis from as little as one hour per month to 24 hours a day / 7 days a week 365 days per year.

A 'Central Intake' team receive all enquiries and referrals by phone, email, fax or portals. Our Client Management system, tracks, actions and records response times.

Call 1300 303 770 &/or email intake@ahcs.org.au

Catholic Health Care 1800 225 474

Catholic Healthcare's hoarding and squalor program aims to support people who have hoarding tendencies, or may live in domestic squalor.

We provide support to people over 65 living at home and people over 50 who are at risk of homelessness.

We can support you when:

- You, your friends, or your family, are concerned about your living conditions, but you feel overwhelmed and unsure of where to access support
- There is an accumulation of items at your property, making access difficult
- Your living conditions are placing you or others at risk (e.g. health, fire or eviction)
- You are at risk of becoming homeless.

Benefits of our services

- One-on-one assistance to support you to maintain a safe living environment
- Improved home safety by reducing falls and fire risk
- Support to make help you make decisions around disposal and rubbish removal
- Support to assist you in clearing out clutter
- Improved hygiene and increased ease of cleaning.
- Connecting clients with other support services
- Development of a plan

How to access our services

We can assist you to access this program through My Aged Care. My Aged Care will link your Commonwealth Home Support program referrals to our hoarding and squalor program in the Nepean Area.

How are our services funded?

This program is funded by the Department of Health to support people who are unable to access mainstream services due to their current living environment.

The hoarding and squalor program can also be accessed through our private services, which may be used by people who are waiting for government funding, or are already receiving another funded service and would like to purchase extra support. Our care advisor can make an appointment to discuss your individual needs and work with you to choose and arrange the services best suited to you.

If you would like to gain a better understanding of hoarding and squalor please visit www.hsru.com.au or call us on .

DARE- Disability Support

Ph: 4751 5266 or 0414 265 826

Dare Disability Support provides a range of services including:

- Day programs
- Residential Services
- Business Services
- Industries and
- Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance.

The DARE- Disability Support Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance Service carries out jobs ranging from rubbish and noxious weed removal, lawn mowing, complex landscaping and general maintenance works in the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith regions.

The services are provided to private residences as well as commercial customers including Blue Mountains City Council and RailCorp.

DARE- Disability Support has five fully trained teams comprising of supported employees and staff. Employees are trained and supported in safe handling and use of all equipment.

Quotes can be obtained for the removal of noxious weeds and rubbish by contacting the service.

The Aider Program

Ph 8741 4955

The Aider Program is a one off free service that provides assistance for infirm, disabled and elderly residents to support them to live more safely and confidently in their own home on Bush fire prone land.

Fire & Rescue NSW's Smoke Alarm and Battery Replacement (SABRE) Program

Ph 1800 151 614.

The Smoke Alarm and Battery Replacement (SABRE) program assists people who are vulnerable in the case of a fire because they are not able to install and/or maintain their smoke alarms.

Firefighters can visit the residence to install a battery-operated smoke alarm or replace existing smoke alarm batteries at no cost. The resident must supply the battery-operated smoke alarm or batteries. Firefighters can also provide home safety advice while visiting premises.

Eligibility

Residents who have limited domestic support (no access to family, friends or neighbours who can assist) and are living in their own or privately rented home in FRNSW fire district are eligible for the program. Examples are:

- frail aged people (aged over 65),
- people with disabilities,
- people who are already receiving community assistance and services.

How can I Access the Program?

Eligible residents or their service providers should contact their local fire station to get assistance. If your smoke alarm 'chirps' earlier, this may indicate a low battery level. Look up your local FRNSW fire station number in the Government Section of the White

Pages or by following this link: [Contact details - Fire & Rescue NSW](#). Alternatively, contact 1800 151 614.

Smoke alarm safety tips

To keep your smoke alarm in good working order:

- Test it once a month by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds,
- Clean it with your vacuum cleaner every six months to remove dust,
- Change the battery once a year (unless it's a ten-year lithium battery), and
- Replace the whole unit every ten years.

*** Note: Limited domestic support means those persons without family, relatives or friends who are able to assist.**

Metro Cleaning and Maintenance Service

Ph: 04 3256 8189 or 04 3071 4352

This service specialises in hoarding and squalor, forensic cleaning, heavy-duty home cleaning, removal of unwanted items, sanitising as well as carpet cleaning. They work with a number of agencies, such as the NSW Trustee and Guardian, Mission Australia, The Crossing, The Station Drop In Centre as well as private businesses.

They have a good understanding that some clients present with complex needs and/or often live in neglected home environments. They work with case managers and service coordinators to address the issue, provide an initial clean-up so mainstream community services can take over and maintain a clean and safe home environment. The team has qualifications and experience in the mental health field and have the ability to collaborate with families, social workers, guardians, executors as well as community and government agencies.

They are also NDIS registered.

Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative – Flourish Australia

Ph 9393 9344

The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) is a joint partnership between Flourish Australia and community mental health services in the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District. HASI is a non-clinical support for people with severe mental illnesses and offers people with mental health issues access to stable housing, linkage to clinical mental health services and recovery focused support. HASI focuses on supporting people with mental health issues to maintain successful tenancies, make social connections, living skills and support their independence. Flourish Australia works with local social housing agencies to support people with severe mental illnesses to maintain their housing.

Eligibility

- Aged between 16yrs and old age (not too frail to participate or reside in an aged care facility);
- Are diagnosed with a severe and high needs mental health condition;

- Experiences psychosocial disability related to a mental health condition which impacts on their day to day functioning and their ability to maintain accommodation;
- Have genuinely consented to participate in the program and/or where relevant have their guardian's consent;
- Is willing to engage with psychosocial support services;
- Have the desire and with support, the ability to live in the community;
- Are currently receiving clinical support from a community health team;
- Are receiving clinical treatment for their mental illness.

This service is funded by NSW Ministry of Health. The service area covers the Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Lithgow.

Enhanced Adult Community Living Support program – Flourish Australia

The Enhanced Adult Community Living Support program (EACLS) is primarily a partnership between Flourish Australia and community mental health services in the Nepean Blue mountains Local Health district. EACLS is a non-clinical support for people with severe mental illness. EACLS is focused on supporting people with severe mental health issues to live independently in the community. It has been designed to support people to access clinical mental health services as well as provide people with non-clinical psychosocial support.

Eligibility

- Aged between 16yrs and old age (not too frail to participate or reside in an aged care facility);
- Have a complex mental health issue mental (if someone doesn't have a formal diagnosis they will require an assessment through Access Team or treating psychiatrist);
- Is connected to a clinician who is managing their mental health (can be LAH, GP, psychologist or psychiatrist);
- Experiences psychosocial disability related to a mental health condition which impacts on their day to day functioning and their ability to maintain accommodation;
- Have genuinely consented to participate in the program and/or where relevant have their guardian's consent;
- Is willing to engage with psychosocial support service;
- Have the desire and with support, the ability to live in the community;
- Is receiving clinical treatment for their mental illness;
- Have a fixed address at least three nights per week.

This service is funded by NSW Ministry of Health. The service area covers the Hawksbury and Nepean - Blue Mountains area.



Housing NSW

Ph: 1300 468 746

Housing NSW provides services to people of NSW, and supports its tenants to live safely and in harmony with neighbours. It assumes the responsibilities of a landlord under the Residential Tenancy Act and manages tenancies to ensure that tenants keep their premises reasonably clean, do not cause a nuisance, and do not interfere with the reasonable peace, privacy and comfort of their neighbours.

Where extreme hoarding or unclean behaviours create a public health or safety risk (such as fire risks), then Housing NSW will attempt to negotiate with the tenant, emphasising the safety, aesthetic and access implications of their actions.

Housing NSW staff will make every effort to salvage tenancies where unacceptable, unclean or hoarding behaviours are evident by supporting and referring clients. Where possible, staff will take on an early intervention approach and work closely with other agencies when managing extreme hoarding or unclean behaviours.

Where tenants refuse support and their behaviours continue to be in breach of their Residential Tenancy Agreement, action may be taken through the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) to gain access to premises or to ratify Specific Performance Orders. The agreement content of these orders may be developed in conjunction with other agencies and be intended to support longer term changes for the client.

In addition to this, there are major strategic level policy initiatives, led by Housing NSW, intended to increase the quality of service to social housing tenants with mental health issues. These are the Joint Guarantee of Service and Housing NSW and Human Services Accord.

Wentworth Community Housing

Ph: 4780 6008

Wentworth Community Housing provides social housing in the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Nepean and Blacktown Local Government Areas. Like Housing NSW, Wentworth Community Housing assumes the responsibilities of a landlord under the Residential Tenancy Act and manages tenancies to ensure that tenants uphold their responsibilities of keeping their premises reasonably clean and tidy, not causing a nuisance, and not interfering with the reasonable peace, privacy and comfort of their neighbours.

Wentworth Community Housing will attempt to negotiate with a tenant when a hoarding or squalor situation becomes evident. Staff will make every effort to save such tenancies by supporting and referring clients to relevant services. Wentworth Community housing will work closely with other agencies and services to try and resolve any health and safety concerns for the tenant and community.

Where tenants refuse assistance and their behaviours continue to be in breach of their Residential Tenancy Agreement, action may be taken through the Consumer Trader and

Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT). Such action could involve gaining access to the premises or a Specific Performance Order aimed at supporting the tenant to make necessary changes to comply with the Agreement.

NSW Mental Health Advice Line

Ph. 1800 011 511

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health Services provides services to people experiencing mental illness and/or disorders.

When the local Blue Mountains Mental Health Assessment and Referral Team [MACCESS Team] or the Katoomba Mental Health Team are conducting a full Mental Health Assessment, domestic squalor and or hoarding is considered

AFTERCARE 1300 001907

Aftercare is a non-government, not for profit, NDIS registered organisation with over 110 years of experience. Aftercare provides support for people aged 0 to 64 years of age who experience significant functional limitation as a result of mental health concerns. Aftercare can help individuals, families and carers every step of the way in their recovery journey. We work with individuals to achieve their personal goals to enable them to live as independently as possible, including assisting in addressing the causes and impacts of hoarding and/or squalor.

Aftercare has provided supports in the Blue Mountains LGA for over 10 years.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Ph: 9770 7555

In response to a call of animal hoarding with regards to domestic squalor, the RSPCA Inspectors will initially attempt to make contact with the owners. If the owners refuse access to the property, and there are significant animal welfare concerns, then application maybe made via the local magistrate to access the property. If the owner of the animal(s) is deemed violent or presents antisocial behaviour then the Mental Health Team and/or the Police may be asked to accompany the inspectors on a site visit.

Where the animals are deemed in very poor condition and/or in need of immediate veterinary assistance or any other breach of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*, the inspectors can seize the animals from the property under the above Act.

Pets of Older Person's (POOP's) may assist with the care of an animal of an older person who is unable to appropriately care for their pet and/or who is living in squalor. Referrals can be received by individuals and/or agencies. Where there are more than two or three animals in need of care, the case is referred to an RSPCA inspector.

Any concerns over the welfare of animals can be referred to an RSPCA Inspector.

Financial Advisory Services/Assistance Support

There are a number of agencies that can assist or support a person living in squalor and or hoarding that have financial difficulty. These include:

Thrive Services

Ph. 4782 1555

Thrive Services (Blue Mountains Family Support Service) provides a number of services for families and individuals requiring practical assistance or parenting support. Services include:-

- Referral, Advice and Information
- Emergency relief food vouchers
- Electricity, gas and water assistance
- Donated food
- Family work and case management for families with children aged under 13 years. To access this service you must be residing in the Blue Mountains.
- Access to parenting groups and workers, for families with children aged 13 years and under. To access this service you must be residing in the Blue Mountains.
- Housing and homelessness for families in the Blue Mountains with children aged up to 16 years.

This service covers all areas of the Blue Mountains Local Government Area.

Gateway Family Services

Ph: 4720 6500

This service provides the same service as Blue Mountains Family Support Service. The service covers the areas of Lapstone to Hazelbrook.

Centrelink

Ph: 131 021

Provides a number of payment schemes to assist families and/or individuals who are financially disadvantaged. Some of these schemes include:

Centrelink Advance Payments

Advance Payments are available from Centrelink for most customers. Customers need to have been on a Centrelink payment for a minimum of 3 months. This is only available to customers if they do not have a debt with Centrelink.

Payments can be accessed online, by phone or by coming into the office. If a person is on an allowance, the money will take approximately one working day to go into their bank account. If a person is on a pension, it will take approximately 2 working days to go into the bank account.

Advance Payments can be made up to \$500, once a year only. The amount that can be borrowed depends on the amount the client is paid. A \$500 loan takes 6 months to pay off at \$38.50 per fortnight.

There is also a Family Tax Benefit Advance which can be paid twice a year. This is only available to customers if they do not have a debt with Centrelink. It is calculated on the number of Family Tax benefit payments left in the 6 months. So clients need to ask for it in January and July to get the maximum payment. It can be arranged to be paid automatically into their bank account.

Life Line Central West 1300 798 258

Provides FREE Counselling services and skilled impartial advice on personal finances to assist a person with:

- Debt problems;
- Difficulties with meeting financial commitments
- Spending more than you earn
- Assistance with sorting out family finances
- Assistance with financial problems associated with gambling

The service covers Mt Victoria to Woodford. Credit Line Central West is an activity of Life Line Central West. It does not lend money. **All information given to this service is completely confidential.**

No Interest Loan Services (NILS) ®

No Interest Loan Schemes (NILS) assists residents to purchase white goods and other items. NILS can also be used for medical treatment, glasses, dental, etc. NILS operates from the following four neighbourhood centres

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 4787 7770

Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 4754 4050

Belong Blue Mountains

Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 4759 2592

Lower Mountains Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 4739 1164

Neighbourhood Centres

There are 5 neighbourhood centres across the Blue Mountains that provide assistance to people in need

Belong Blue Mountains

Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 47821117

Provides information and referral, community development and a range of services for children, elderly and disabled people and their carers and people who are financially and socially disadvantaged.

Belong Mid Mountains (Lawson)

Ph:4759 2592

Provides information, referral, courses and community development. Projects include:

- Palliative Support Project
- Neighbour Aid Service
- No Interest Loan scheme
- Strengthening Over Sixties exercise program
- Tax help
- Lawson Festival
- Mid Mountains Community Garden
- **Belong Lower Blue Mountains Neighbourhood Centre**

Ph: 4739 1164

Provides information, referral and community development services including volunteer home visitors service, personal development workshops, adult learning, Seniors computer classes, Over 50s and other social groups, no interest loan scheme for low income earners, graffiti management service, and medical and shopping transport services for older people who are frail or who have a disability. Home library service for housebound. Also offers outreach personal, financial and gambling counselling.

Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: 4787 7770

Provides information, support and referral. Activities include Community Development, emergency food service, and a range of classes, events and activities.

Springwood

Ph: 4751 3033

The Springwood Neighbourhood Centre Co-operative Ltd (SNCC) provides services to meet the evolving needs of the community, including a range of affordable courses, activities and opportunities for community gatherings. They also offer free Wi Fi, drop in lounge, daily newspapers, general information, support and advocacy

Winmalee

Ph: 4754 4050

Provides emergency relief, gas, electricity, Telstra, food vouchers and brokerage(through Outreach Wesley Community) FREE fresh bread and food 5 days per week

The Salvation Army

Ph: 4782 6683 or 4782 9251(primary number)

(Covers the townships of Woodford to Mt Victoria)

The Salvation Army Springwood Corps

Ph: 47511802

(Covers the townships of Linden to Lapstone)

Provides a range of voluntary welfare services via a family store and community service centre. These services include emergency material assistance, referral to other services and communal meals. The Salvation Army Corps based at Katoomba covers the townships from Woodford to Mt Victoria. The Springwood Corps covers Linden to Lapstone. The Salvation Army will accept referrals from all services on official letter head.

Money Care-Salvation Army

This service provides FREE and confidential financial counselling by appointment only at Katoomba –Tuesdays ph 0428 469 942

Penrith-Mondays and Wednesdays ph 0438 708264

Budgeting assistance and advocacy with paying utility bills is also available

Ph 0435 965 015 and the Doorways provides a range of support options

Ph 0427 192 952

Wesley Credit Line Financial Counselling Service

Ph:4723 19217

Provides a FREE financial Counselling outreach service each Friday at Lower Mountains and Winmalee Neighbourhood Centres for people under financial stress by appointment only .

These are only suggested agencies. The Council does not endorse any one agency over another.

Acronyms

| | |
|------------|---|
| ACAT | Aged Care Assessment Team |
| BMCC | Blue Mountains City Council |
| BMDS | Blue Mountains Disability Service |
| MAC ACCESS | Blue Mountains Mental Health Access and Referral Team |
| FACS | Family and Community Services |
| GP | General Practitioners |
| HASI | Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative |
| HNSW | Housing NSW |
| KCCT | Katoomba Coordinated Care Team |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisations |
| WCH | Wentworth Community Housing |
| WH&S | Work Health & Safety |
| PHAMS | Personal Helpers and Mentors Program |
| POOPS | Pets of Older Persons |
| RSPCA | Royal Society Prevention of Cruelty to Animals |
| SCCT | Springwood Coordinated Care Team |

Useful Website Contacts/References

| | |
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| Blue Mountains City Council | www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au |
| Family and Community Services | www.facs.nsw.gov.au |
| Dealing with Domestic Squalor Northern Sydney | www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au |
| NSW Trustee and Guardian | www.gt.nsw.gov.au |
| Housing NSW | www.housing.nsw.gov.au |
| Local Government Act | www.legislation.nsw.gov.au |
| Mental Health Act: Section 27. | www.legislation.nsw.gov.au |
| Partnerships Against Homelessness | www.housing.nsw.gov.au |
| Residential Tenancies Act | www.legislation.nsw.gov.au |

Community Care Guide (published November 2008, updated 2018) - A guide to Community Care Services in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. Copies are available from Blue Mountains City Council, ph: 4780 5000.

Capacity Toolkit (published 2008) - A guide to assist Government and Non Government bodies, families and carers in New South Wales identify a person's capacity to make decisions. For copies of the handbook refer to the website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/diversity_of_services