

Case study – COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

# Rural Housing Network

2013 to 2015

## The Client

The Rural Housing Network (RHN) receives about 6000 requests for help annually from people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless. RHN supports these people through an extensive network of government agency and not-for-profit services.

**“We were already very busy and hesitated to take on another project of this scale. But Birgit managed us and the stakeholder consultation and delivered a valuable piece of work in a short timeframe.”**

**Celia Adams,**  
CEO

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## The Challenge

RHN had identified a range of issues which would affect its ability to continue to improve services in a complex and changing environment.

While lack of available housing and funding insecurity were significant concerns for the organisation, RHN also identified a lack of awareness about its services and its low media profile as issues.

The challenge for Fishbowl PR was to discover any gaps in RHN's recognised issues and confirm if those identified were real for the stakeholders.

## Our Approach

Fishbowl PR consulted RHN's key stakeholders who said that in addition to the factors mentioned above, consumers were confused about the services RHN provided and the difference between RHN and some of its referring agencies.

RHN could see this confusion had implications for many other stakeholders including staff, local government, potential donors, partners and the users of the services.

Fishbowl PR developed a Communication Strategy to address this confusion and help better position the organisation for its changing future.

The basis of the Strategy was that by improving understanding and awareness of RHN's services, there was greater potential to attract funding partners and develop more collaborative relationships to potentially influence funding and the operating landscape.

This would help to deliver on the RHN's number one goal: Actively working towards reducing homelessness in the Hume region.

Among the recommendations in the Communication Strategy was the review and redevelopment of RHN's website, increasing engagement with regional and local media and developing social media use.

## The Results

The consultation confirmed the issues RHN had identified and stakeholders revealed additional issues that were significant and taken on board by the organisation.

The Communication Strategy was shaped to address these and presented prioritised objectives and actions for RHN to implement.

RHN embraced the Strategy's recommendations and implemented the activities.

Measurements were set to facilitate evaluation of the success or otherwise of each communication activity. The following were some of the results:

Satisfaction with communication - 70% of a stakeholder sample said they were more satisfied with the communication they now receive from RHN.

Website visits - three months after the new website was launched, traffic to the site increased by 48% with significant increases in referrals from the Housing Registrar, Community Housing Federation of Victoria and DHS websites.

Media engagement - training and mentoring support to RHN staff helped achieve a 10% increase in uptake of media releases produced in-house and led to new relationships with journalists.