



National Shelter

Homelessness Action Plan

Contact

Adrian Pisarski

Executive Officer

National Shelter

www.shelter.org.au

Ending Homelessness¹

Homelessness in Australia is rapidly increasing as a consequence of growing poverty, declining access to affordable housing, and persistently high levels of family violence. On any given night more than 116,000 people experience homelessness across Australia which is an increase of 13.6% in 5 years or 4.6% adjusted for population. More than 280,000 Australians received specialist homelessness services during the 2016-17 year. Homelessness can be addressed through the leadership, authority and commitment by the Commonwealth Government to creating and implementing a National action plan to end homelessness that has achievable targets and adequate funding for social housing and takes best practice to scale. The plan should include the following:

- 🏠 Address the drivers of homelessness including domestic and family violence, poverty and the inability to access affordable housing;
- 🏠 Rapidly rehouse people who are homeless; and
- 🏠 Provide support to people who need assistance to sustain their housing.

Preventing homelessness

Preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place must be paramount in any homelessness strategy that should include the following:

- 🏠 An emphasis on preventing homelessness by maintaining existing tenancies through appropriate tenant support services;
- 🏠 Homelessness early intervention initiatives with measurable targets that are built into all government program reforms. These targets need to establish responsibilities to prevent

¹ This document should be read in conjunction with National Shelter's Housing and Infrastructure Plan [insert link]

homelessness within mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic and family violence, out of home care and justice, with a particular focus on preventing Aboriginal homelessness.

- 🏠 Specific funding allocated to Specialist Homelessness Services to strengthen support services to assist in maintaining tenancies in both private and social housing.
- 🏠 An output measure established to monitor evictions into homelessness from social housing.

Housing Led

Housing led is a term developed by the Shelter network to encompass solutions and services which provide housing as a primary goal with support tailored to an individual or family's need.

To end homelessness, we should learn from international evidence and a Housing First approach – the provision of long term housing with wrap-around, long term support where it is needed, rather than a focus on crisis accommodation. Housing First should underpin the homelessness response across Australia and to succeed requires the following:

- 🏠 Housing Led to be established as the foundation to allocation policy across social housing programs.
- 🏠 Support services resourced to provide the level of support, including legal advice, required to assist individuals and families to establish and maintain their tenancies.
- 🏠 Appropriate calibration of the Housing First model for different cohorts including rough sleepers, people leaving custody, people with complex needs, families and young people.
- 🏠 Funding services to provide support for as long as required to maximise success.
- 🏠 Achievable targets of halving homelessness in 5 years and ending it in 10 years

Many countries are on their way to ending homelessness. They have achieved this through developing an evidence base around what works, which is reviewed and refined to ensure that targets are being met. A National action plan on homelessness needs to include a resourced research and evaluation agenda that allows for ambitious yet achievable targets to be met.

The plan needs to include review points that allow the plan to be adjusted and revised to ensure that we are on track to meet these targets. Ending homelessness in Australia is a realistic goal that we should all be striving to achieve.

National Shelter notes the particularly high level of homelessness experienced in the Northern Territory and calls for specific additional funding to be made available to the N.T. and the services working with people experiencing homelessness in the N.T.