

For release Monday 5 November 6:00AM AEST

**M
E
D
I
A

R
E
L
E
A
S
E**

Homelessness an elephant in the election room

While housing affordability has been high on the election agenda, the drop in real funding to the national homelessness support system hasn't rated a mention.

100,000 Australians experience homelessness each night. More than half of these are under 25 and 10,000 are under 12.

"These vulnerable Australians deserve more from all sides of Parliament", Homelessness Australia Executive Officer Simon Smith said today.

"It's not just about housing affordability. People experiencing homelessness have a right to safe, secure and appropriate homes. They have a right to properly funded homelessness support agencies so they don't have to sleep in tents, in their cars, with friends or family, or on the street."

Most of all, Australians who lack access to a basic right – a safe, secure home to call their own - deserve a comprehensive national policy response to homelessness.

"It's almost beyond belief that we don't have a coherent Commonwealth strategy to respond to homelessness", Mr Smith said.

While moves to address housing stress and rising housing costs are welcome, a satisfactory response to homelessness must also include:

- Support for early intervention programs that catch people one step away from homelessness and help them to resolve their situation;
- Adequate funding for crisis accommodation services. This includes at least a 30% increase in funds to the overstressed national homelessness support system, which is currently forced to turn away half of all people requesting accommodation each night; and
- Support for sustainable pathways out of homeless. This includes a commitment to increasing social and public housing stock through a rejuvenated Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

"We know that women and children are most often left homeless as a result of domestic violence. A national response to homelessness must also take this into account", Mr Smith said.

"Given our strong economy and significant budget surplus it is inexcusable that we have failed to secure the basic rights of these most vulnerable Australians", said Mr Smith.

For comment: Simon Smith, Executive Officer

(02) 6247 7744, 0428 452 830