



Homelessness Implementation Plan

AUSTRALIAN, STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness in Australia

On the best available data, 105,000 Australians are homeless every night. Of these, 16,375 are sleeping rough. Homelessness is increasing among families and the elderly. The number of homeless children under the age of 12 increased by 22 per cent between 2001 and 2006. Over the same period, the number of elderly homeless people increased by almost 30 per cent.



There has been some success in tackling youth homelessness, which dropped by 16 per cent between 2001 and 2006.

What we are doing

In December 2008, the Australian Government released a White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home*, which called on all levels of government, business, the not for profit sector and the community to join together to reduce homelessness.

The Road Home outlined the need for new investment in homelessness and reform of existing services. Homelessness must be prevented wherever possible. People who experience homelessness must be supported to move quickly through the crisis system into long term housing and at the same time get help to reconnect with education, employment and the community. Mainstream services and homelessness services have to work together more effectively to reduce homelessness.

In *The Road Home*, the Australian Government adopted two headline goals to:

- halve overall homelessness by 2020;
- offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020.

The White Paper also included interim targets to 2013 to contribute to these long term goals.

The State and Territories have primary responsibility for the delivery of essential public services such as health, education, community services, social housing, justice and policing. The White Paper and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness build on the work already undertaken by the jurisdictions towards reducing homelessness.

Work already under way

In *The Road Home* the Australian Government committed to boost its efforts across all areas of government to achieve the 2020 headline goals and interim targets for reducing homelessness. This is especially important in areas such as social housing, employment, income support and aged care.

Specific Australian Government initiatives include:

- \$1.2 billion per year over five years (2008-13) for the National Affordable Housing Agreement to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation;
- \$5.6 billion for the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan to construct new dwellings and refurbish existing social housing dwellings;
- \$400 million over two years (2008-10) for the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing to increase the supply of social housing;
- \$5.5 billion over 10 years (2008-18) for the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to provide new houses and upgrades to existing houses in remote Indigenous communities;
- \$1 billion nationally over the next four years to build 50,000 affordable rental properties under the National Rental Affordability Scheme;
- 90 Community Contact Officers in Centrelink to provide outreach services to people who are homeless and
- Additional emergency relief funding, more personal helpers and mentors for people living with severe mental illness, innovative employment services and increased capital and recurrent funding for elderly people who are homeless.

New work through the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Homelessness

As part of *The Road Home*, in December 2008, the Council of Australian Governments established a National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. Under the Agreement the Australian Government has agreed to provide additional funding for homelessness to the States and Territories who have agreed to match Commonwealth funding and deliver services and capital projects that will contribute to an overall reduction in homelessness.

The Australian Government is contributing \$550 million from 2008-09 to 2013, with the States and Territories required to match this amount, making a total of \$1.1 billion for new homelessness services. Some States and Territories are contributing more than the matching required, so the total spend will be greater than this.

What are some of the measures included in the Implementation Plans?

Under the National Partnership on Homelessness all States and Territories are required to have an Implementation Plan. At the end of the first year of the Agreement all Implementation Plans will be thoroughly reviewed, alongside Australian Government efforts to reduce homelessness, to ensure our combined efforts will meet the targets and goals set out in the White Paper. Initiatives include:

A Focus on Youth –young people will be helped to rebuild their family connections, wherever possible

SA: *Reunification House*: three purpose built facilities for 15 young people a year aged 12-15 years focusing on reunification and shared care.

Qld: *Youth Housing and Reintegration Services*: 30 bungalows will be provided for young people at risk of homelessness in the backyards of family or care givers' homes in Townsville, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Inala, Mt Isa and Hervey Bay.

Stopping Exits into Homelessness - people exiting prisons, child protection and mental health in-patient care will get help to find stable housing

WA: eight specialist housing workers to assist people leaving mental health services; Five specialist housing workers to help people leaving correctional facilities to secure and maintain accommodation.

ACT: prisoners exiting the Alexander Maconochie Centre will receive accommodation and support until they are ready to transition to independent living.

Vic: 50 intensive psychosocial support packages for people with enduring mental illness and psychiatric disability.

Indigenous homelessness will be reduced through targeted culturally appropriate responses

SA: *Aboriginal Transitional Accommodation*: 180 people each year will get housing and help to access health and welfare services for transient Indigenous people. To be delivered through Port Augusta and Ceduna Town Camps.

NSW: *Transition Program for Aboriginal People*:- Accommodation and support for Aboriginal young people aged 10-17 years in contact with the justice system to help them transition to independent living.

Long term housing and intensive support will keep people housed and connected with communities

SA: a 40 unit Common Ground in Port Augusta for Indigenous people who are homeless.

Vic: a Foyer model service in regional Victoria providing housing and support for up to 45 young people while they study or work.

ACT: accommodation and support for 20 young people aged 16-25 years to maintain stable housing and engage with education and employment services.

Enhanced Tenancy Support - homelessness will be prevented by helping vulnerable tenants before they get into crisis

Vic: *Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program*: supporting 'at risk' social housing tenants to prevent housing breakdown will be enhanced and expanded to provide more people with better services.

Qld: *RentConnect*, which provides assistance for households to access the private rental market, will be expanded to Rockhampton, Caboolture, Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville and the Gold Coast.

The cycle of homelessness will be broken by reaching out, assertively, to rough sleepers

NSW: *Newcastle Assertive Outreach Service* (includes legal support, health and medical components) focuses on working with the chronically homeless on the streets and facilitating their move to long term accommodation with support.

TAS: five properties will be acquired for homeless people and together with high level support services will assist in reaching goal of halving rough sleepers by 2010. Two new facilities in Hobart, two in Launceston and one in Devonport.

Prioritising Kids - Intervention with children will be early so they get the help they need

Vic: each year up to 500 children under 12 years who are homeless will get help to maintain their contact with school and to deal with the trauma of homelessness.

WA: support for children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including assistance to maintain contact with the education system. Location: state-wide including new services in metropolitan and rural areas.

Women and children leaving violence – will be assisted to remain in their homes, where it is safe to do so

NT: the *Family Violence Investment Strategy* will prevent families experiencing violence from becoming homeless by expanding capacity of shelters and better skilling workers.

Vic: increase support across Victoria to enable more women and children to stay safely in the family home. The support will be in the form of case management to women who have been referred by police, courts and other services following family violence incident.

For more information on what Australian Governments are doing to reduce homelessness visit www.fahcsia.gov.au.