



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

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Will you be home for Christmas?

“At this time of year many Australians have little to celebrate if they do not have a safe place to sleep,” Homelessness Australia’s CEO Nicole Lawder said today.

Homelessness Australia welcomes the two year anniversary of the release of the first ever Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home* and urges the Australian Government to extend the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for a further five years. (*The Road Home* was released by the Federal Government 21 December 2008).

“It is now 24 months since the release of the White Paper on Homelessness. Important progress has been made and most of the new programs and service models are now up and running. They are starting to provide more accommodation options for Australians who are experiencing homelessness. However we need assurance that funding for these new programs will be provided on an ongoing basis. We are calling on the Australian Government to commit to funding the National Partnership for a further five years,” said Ms Lawder.

While there is definite progress, some crucial challenges remain in meeting the White Paper’s target of halving homelessness by 2020.

Homelessness Australia’s Chairperson Narelle Clay said, “While it is imperative that people can access affordable, safe, secure housing and support services when necessary, we also need to ensure that the right mix of policies and programs are in place to enable us to reduce homelessness and its impact in Australia. Ending homelessness is everyone’s responsibility and it will only be possible if we address the underlying causes such as poverty, social inequality, domestic violence and family breakdown.

Despite being termed the “lucky country”, Australia continues to experience growing gaps in society that are especially highlighted during the Christmas season.

To make a donation this festive season to a charity of your choice, go to <http://www.givenow.com.au/>

Media release ends.

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Notes for editors:

Our organisation

Homelessness Australia is the national peak body representing more than 1500 providers of direct services for people experiencing homelessness and working to achieve our aim of creating a framework to end homelessness.

For more information, please visit www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au

The numbers

- On any given night approximately 105,000 Australians have no safe and secure place to call home.
- 56% of those were male, 44% female.
- Of those, 44,000 (43%) are under 25 and 12,000 are children aged 0-12.
- Evidence indicates that homelessness is increasing among children and families and older Australians.
- Just under 205,000 people received support from specialist homelessness services in 2008/09. Of those, just over 79,000 were children.
- 1 in 39 Australian children aged 0-4 spent time in a homelessness service in 2008/09.

The causes

- Escaping domestic and family violence is the most often cited reason given by women for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in 2008/09.
- Family breakdown was the most often cited reason given by young people.
- Financial crisis and being unable to meet housing costs were the most often cited reasons given by men.
- People leaving institutions such as child protection, foster care, mental health settings and prisons are at a much higher risk of becoming homeless than other Australians.
- The shortage of affordable housing is a cause of homelessness as well as being a major factor preventing people from being re-housed quickly.

The solutions

- Provide funding for an additional 220,000 affordable houses by 2020.
- Extend the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for a further five years from 2013 with a minimum of \$849 million.
- Increase non-pension income support payments by \$45 per week (which needs to be indexed).
- Increase funding for early intervention programs that have been proven to work.
- Support the homelessness sector workforce to ensure clients achieve their best outcomes.