



## Responding to the White Paper on Homelessness

### Homelessness Australia Issues Paper

This Paper summarises the key policy initiatives included in the White Paper, broken down by jurisdiction. It then pulls out the 11 most important issues that Homelessness Australia believes it can act on at a national level noting some proposed actions.

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## A summary of the changes

In December 2008, the Federal Government released *The Road Home – The White Paper on Homelessness*. The White Paper is a policy position paper, outlining the framework of the Federal Government's response to homelessness in Australia.

### 1) Funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement

Because the Federal Government's response to homelessness is to be delivered by the states and territories, this response to homelessness is subject to the Federal, state and territory agreement at the meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (**COAG**). At COAG, homelessness was dealt with as part of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (**NAHA**) negotiations.

The **NAHA** will combine the base funding for what was SAAP, as well as funding for public, community and other housing programs previously funded under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (**CSHA**). Total funding for the NAHA will be \$5.5 billion until 2012-13.. States and Territories will receive a single payment under the NAHA for

There are also 'national partnership' (NP) payments under the NAHA. These tie increases in funding to particular Government initiatives.

**A Homelessness NP** will fund the objectives of the White Paper with the exception of a small number of social and indigenous housing objectives included in other reforms. Under the Homelessness NP, \$800 million will be allocated up until 2012-2013 with half of the funding to come from the Commonwealth and the other half from the States and Territories.

**A Social Housing NP**, announced at the end of 2008, will fund the construction of between 1600 to 2100 new properties. This measure is also intended to fund specialist housing models such as Foyer and Common Ground initiatives. Funding of \$400 million was made available under the Social Housing NP payment for the next 2 financial years. Since this announcement, the Federal Government has announced \$6 billion in funding under its economic stimulus package. This is discussed in more detail below.

**An Indigenous Housing NP** will pay the first instalment of a plan to build up to 4,200 new houses and upgrade 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities over the next decade. Funding of \$1.94 billion from 2009 has been made available.



## 2) Funding for Social Housing under the stimulus package

On 3 February 2009, the Federal Government committed funding of \$6.4 billion under its stimulus package for social housing. A total of \$6 billion was announced for the construction of 20,000 new social housing properties by 2011-12. Construction will be carried out in two phases. In phase one, state and territory governments' will bring forward proposed social housing construction to this year and next year to build 2,300 homes; and in phase two, governments' would tender for 'social housing' properties, each building these homes over the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 financial years.

There will also be up to \$400 million for repairs to existing public housing properties that would be undertaken in 2008-09 and 2009-10, allowing around 2,500 properties to be retained in public housing.

Commonwealth & State Funding	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total
	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)
<b>National Affordable Housing SPP</b>	<b>\$587</b>	<b>\$1,204</b>	<b>\$1,217</b>	<b>\$1,240</b>	<b>\$1,271<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$5,519</b>
Original NAHA Payments	\$587	\$1,203	\$1,210	\$1,225	\$1,248	\$5,473
Indexation	\$0	\$1	\$7	\$15	\$23	\$46
<b>New National Partnership payments</b>						
Homelessness NP (Cth)	\$0	\$71	\$103	\$108	\$108	\$389
Homelessness NP (S/T)	\$0	\$75	\$105	\$110	\$110	\$400
Social Housing NP	\$200	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$400
Indigenous Housing NP	\$400	\$60	\$16	\$174	\$185	\$835
<b>A Place to Call Home</b>						
A Place to Call Home (Cth)	\$24	\$27	\$26	\$24	\$49	\$150
A Place to Call Home (S/T)	\$24	\$27	\$26	\$24	\$49	\$150
<b>Social Housing funding, stimulus package</b>	<b>\$260</b>	<b>\$4,072</b>	<b>\$1,744</b>	<b>\$312</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$6,388</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,496</b>	<b>\$5,739</b>	<b>\$3,239</b>	<b>\$1,994</b>	<b>\$1,774</b>	<b>\$14,242</b>

A Breakdown of State and Territory Funding is provided in Appendix A of this Paper.

<sup>1</sup> No funding is noted in this year of the forward estimates. A demonstration estimate is added to provide an idea of funding for this year.



### 3) Underlying Principles

The White Paper sets out the following principles to guide its actions:

- 1) A national commitment, strong leadership, and cooperation from all levels of government and from non-government and business sectors is needed;
- 2) Preventing homelessness is important;
- 3) Social inclusion drives our efforts;
- 4) Clients need to be placed at the centre of service delivery and design;
- 5) The safety and wellbeing of all clients is essential;
- 6) The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families needs to be protected;
- 7) Joined-up service delivery needs joined-up policy;
- 8) Transition points are a priority;
- 9) Evidence-based policy helps to shape our priorities for action; and,
- 10) Targets are set to reduce homelessness and hold ourselves accountable.

### 4) Headline Goals

The White Paper sets the following goals to guide the long-term response to homelessness:

- Halve overall homelessness by **2020**;
- Offer accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by **2020**.

The White Paper points out that this would mean a reduction in the rate of people who are primarily homeless by between 750-1000 per year for each of the five years to **2013**.

### 5) Targets

#### a) National Interim Targets

To allow for interim measurement of movement towards these goals the Federal Government has set national interim targets to be achieved by **2013**:

- A 20 per cent reduction to overall homelessness;
- A 25 per cent reduction to primary homelessness;
- A 25 per cent reduction to the number of people seeking specialist homelessness services more than three times a year.

#### b) State and Territory Interim Targets

To meet the national interim targets by **2013**, the White Paper sets the following state and territory interim targets:

- A 50 per cent increase in the number of people engaged in employment, training, or education after presenting at specialist homelessness services;
- A 25 per cent increase in the number of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who have improved housing stability, family engagement, school and work participation outcomes;



- A 25 per cent reduction in the number of people existing care or custody into homelessness;
- A 20 per cent increase in the number of families who maintain secure, safe and sustainable housing following domestic and family violence;
- A 25 per cent reduction in the number of people exiting from social housing and private housing into homelessness;
- A 50 per cent increase in the number of children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness being provided with additional support and engaged in education;
- A 25 per cent increase in the number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receiving financial advice, counselling or case management;
- A 25 per cent increase in the number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive legal services.

## 6) Proposed Policies and Actions

In this context, the imperatives under the White Paper can be broken down to the following:

### a) The Federal Government will:

#### **Legislative Changes & Governance**

- 1) Implement new legislation to ensure people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receive quality services and adequate support to meet their needs.
- 2) Amend the Aged Care Act 1997 to recognise older people who are homeless as a 'special needs' group.
- 3) Regulate tenancy databases by June 2010 to prevent exclusion and work with states and territories to review the impact of tenancy laws on rates of homelessness.
- 4) Examine enrolment issues for people who are homeless as part of electoral reforms to be progressed in 2009.
- 5) Appoint the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness to drive the reforms set out in the White Paper and monitor its implementation and progress over 12 years to 2020.
- 6) Establish the Bea Miles Foundation to channel funding, in kind support and sponsor innovation and research to support the work of governments and the not-for-profit sector in combating homelessness

#### **Plans & Funding**

- 7) Implement a funding round for the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) Program.
- 8) Align the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children with the new response to homelessness.



- 9) Align the National Child Protection Framework with the new response to homelessness.
- 10) Encourage the use of local and regional action plans, with particular focus on service connections.

### **Centrelink**

- 11) Work with states and territories to introduce compulsory rent payments from Centrelink benefits for tenants in public housing to eliminate the risk of eviction due to non payment of rent.
- 12) Introduce a 'flag' within Centrelink records to identify clients who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to improve services for this group.
- 13) Increase the capacity of Centrelink social workers to work directly with young people under 18 years of age who have applied for Youth Allowance Unreasonable to Live At Home and their families.
- 14) Make weekly payments available for Centrelink's most vulnerable customers including people who are homeless.
- 15) Establish a network of 90 Community Engagement Officers in Centrelink to provide outreach services to people who are homeless and work with local service providers to prevent homelessness.

### **Employment Services 2009-2012**

- 16) Reform employment services to provide greater incentives to employment service providers to assist homeless jobseekers.

### **Aged Care**

- 17) Allocate aged care places and capital for at least one new specialist facility for ageing homeless people in an area of need in each of the next four years.

### **Research**

- 18) Develop a national homelessness research strategy, which builds on existing data and research, to measure progress against goals and targets and ensure that our homelessness intervention is evidence based.
- 19) Reform the National Data Collection process.

b) The Federal and State Governments' together will:

### **Plans**

- 1) Finalise implementation plans for the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnerships on Homelessness, Social Housing and Remote Indigenous Housing by 1 April 2009.



### **Program Delivery**

- 2) Pilot the co-location of state and territory housing services in Centrelink Customer Service Centres.
- 3) Develop agreed national accreditation for specialist homeless services.
- 4) Develop service standards and service charters for people who are homeless.
- 5) Review the current distribution of specialist homelessness services against the geographic distribution of people who are homeless (particularly those sleeping rough).
- 6) Test new funding models for specialist homelessness services that reflect the costs of delivering services to clients with complex needs.
- 7) Build a national service system where there are 'no wrong doors', addressing coordination issues between the Federal, state and territory Governments' and homelessness services and between homeless and mainstream services.

### **Research**

- 8) Undertake a scoping study on ways information technology could be used to better connect specialist homelessness services with each other and with mainstream services.
- 9) Pilot a data linkage study to gain a clearer picture of the pathways through service systems for people experiencing homelessness
- 10) Improve service integration through improved IT systems.
- 11) Develop a shared definition of homelessness to streamline data collection.

c) Under the Homelessness NP, the state and territory governments' will:

### **Early Intervention and Prevention Programs**

- 12) Provide additional support for private and public tenants, including advocacy, financial counselling and referral services to help people sustain their tenancies.
- 13) Deliver additional prevention and early intervention services for up to 2,250 families at risk of homelessness.
- 14) Implement a policy of 'no exits into homelessness' from statutory, custodial care or hospital settings.
- 15) Deliver additional services for up to 9,000 12-18 year olds at risk of homelessness to remain connected with their families, where it is safe and appropriate, as well as access to education, training and employment.
- 16) Provide additional support to make it safe for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence to stay safely in the family home.
- 17) Improve legal services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



### **Responding to Homelessness**

- 18) Deliver additional services – including brokerage funds and long-term support – to assist people with mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues who have been homeless to maintain their housing and participate in the community.
- 19) Improve collaboration between mainstream and specialist homelessness services.
- 20) Work towards developing advanced practitioner positions in specialist homelessness services.

### **Transitions**

- 21) Provide additional assertive outreach programs to locate rough sleepers and connect them to long term housing and health services.
- 22) Provide additional specialist support to children including brokerage funds to assist them to return to home and school.

#### **d) Under the Social Housing NP, the state and territory governments' will:**

- 1) Build up to 2,700 homes for people who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 2) Build 20,000 'social housing' homes over four years to 2012.
- 3) Renovate 2,500 public housing homes over two years to 2010.

#### **e) Under the Indigenous Housing NP, the state and territory governments' will:**

- 23) Build up to 4,200 new houses and upgrade 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities over the next decade.



## Key Issues

Homelessness Australia will work on each imperative as opportunities present but believes that the following 11 items are the key issues on which it can take active steps:

- 1) Proposed legislation;
  - a) The common definition of homelessness;
- 2) The 'no wrong doors' model: joined-up policy and service delivery;
  - a) Mental health and alcohol and other drug service intervention;
- 3) Funding for specialist homelessness services (no more SAAP);
- 4) The national accreditation systems and service standards;
- 5) Better linkages between the response to homelessness and the
  - a) National Child Protection Framework, and the
  - b) National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.
- 6) The structure of the advanced practitioner model and advocating for broader workforce strategies;
- 7) The 'no exits from homelessness' policy will work;
- 8) The role of Centrelink in the homelessness response;
- 9) Targets and Research;
- 10) Housing policy including;
  - a) Tenancy database reform; and,
  - b) Compulsory rent payments; and,
- 11) Governance structures.

Each issue is addressed below.

### 1) Proposed Legislation

As part of the new response to homelessness, the Federal Government will repeal the SAAP Act and replace it with a broader 'Homelessness Act' that seeks to guarantee quality services and adequate support. The White Paper notes that the best parts of both the SAAP Act and the Disability Services Act would be incorporated into the new Act, implying that the principles underlying the SAAP Act and the service quality standards in the Disability Services Act may be the basis for similar sections in the new 'Homelessness Act'. In relation to the service quality standards, it notes that the underlying principles used to develop these could be innovation and a focus on achieving positive outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness Australia believes that it is not clear whether the new 'Homelessness Act' will provide a legal framework for the entire homelessness response or just specialist



homelessness services. Further, the principles noted in the White Paper leave quite a lot of room for interpretation. Finally, the White Paper does not address several key issues, for example whether the Federal Government will remove the categories of who are eligible for assistance under SAAP in the current Act. For example, only children above the school leaving age can be considered as clients at present. This is to ensure that that they are not accessing SAAP when they should be being supported by the child protection system.

*Homelessness Australia will determine the process being undertaken to develop the new 'Homelessness Act' and will work with FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing to ensure that the concerns of homeless services are addressed.*

#### a) Common Definition of Homelessness

The Federal Government seeks to develop a common definition of homelessness. This would need to be implemented across jurisdictions, agencies, and community organisations. The definition of homelessness would also underlie the breadth of the response to homelessness. It is therefore at the core of the entire reform process.

Homelessness Australia welcomes the cultural definition of homelessness used in the White Paper, which distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. We note that the definition of tertiary homelessness referred to in the White Paper is imprecise and does not match the methodology used by Chamberlain and Mackenzie in *Counting the Homeless*.

Homelessness Australia also advocates for the definition to incorporate 'people at risk of homelessness' in the new Act. This is something that the SAAP Act currently provides for in its definition of homelessness, which also includes people living in housing that places the person in circumstances which threatens or adversely affects their safety and security. This is a particular issue for women and children escaping domestic violence. Domestic violence has consistently been the largest reason people seek support from specialist homelessness services over the life of SAAP.

*Homelessness Australia is already working with FaHCSIA to address the definitional problem in the White Paper and will stay involved in the process to ensure that it meets the cultural definition of homeless, as well as reflecting those people at risk of homelessness.*

#### 2) The 'No Wrong Doors' Model: Joined-up Policy and Service Delivery

The White Paper states that the new response to homelessness will be delivered through joined-up policy and service delivery between 'mainstream services' and specialist



homelessness services. In its words '(p)rogram funding and accountability boundaries must be changed to allow governments and funded organisations to take a multidisciplinary approach to addressing people's needs.' Thus, the Federal Government seeks to build a 'no wrong doors' system which would include 'mechanisms for cross-agency case assessments, case management and case planning, as well as service protocols (between specialist homelessness services and other services).' The White Paper notes that this would include mainstream services assessing the housing needs of their clients; specialist homelessness services assessing other needs beyond housing like education and employment needs of clients; strong service networks and agreements at a local level; joint assessment, planning coordination and case management; and sharing information about clients.

This is a large scale change to the service system that will require a significant upgrade of data collection and sharing mechanisms as well as substantial coordination mechanisms that will involve community organisations and state and territory and Federal Government departments.' This will be difficult as demonstrated in a NSW Auditor-General's report on that State's response to homelessness which found that there were 'no state-wide performance measures or targets on homelessness.' It also found that in terms of access to services that 'significant barriers still exist. These include waiting lists, expectation gaps, intimidating physical environments, and reliance on paper based systems.'<sup>2</sup>

*Homelessness Australia believes that it will be quite difficult to coordinate mainstream and specialist homelessness services. We would like to investigate how the Federal Government seeks to deliver this policy. We will argue for effective mechanisms to coordinate services and policies regardless of whether they are 'joined-up' or merely communicating better.*

#### a) Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Service Coordination

The White Paper also points out the high prevalence of people with substance abuse problems, mental disorders and mental illnesses in homeless populations. While it outlines policies to deal with mental disorders and illnesses, it does not outline any policies to specifically deal with alcohol and other drug issues. It also does not outline policies addressing the high-cross over between people suffering from a mental illness or disorder and people with alcohol and other drug dependencies. The Department of Health and Ageing has been developing mechanisms to facilitate coordination between mental

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<sup>2</sup> NSW Auditor General's Report: Performance Audit, *Responding to Homelessness*, Sydney, 2007, pp.2-3.



health and alcohol and other drug sectors at a treatment level, and FaHCSIA needs to address how its policies will coexist with DOHA's policies.

*Homelessness Australia will engage with FaHCSIA to ensure that the mental health and alcohol and other drug policies that are implemented are coherent and take account of the work other agencies are already conducting in these areas.*

### 3) Funding for specialist homelessness services (formerly SAAP)

Base funding for what was SAAP will now be delivered under the NAHA. At the time of writing, it is not clear how it will operate in practice. Clearly the commitment to halve homelessness will not be possible without a well resourced specialist homelessness sector. Homelessness Australia will continue to advocate strongly for the value-add that specialist homelessness services provide through their experience, skills and proven effectiveness in supporting people who are homeless to achieve sustainable positive outcomes.

The White Paper also proposes a trial for a new funding model to better quantify the actual costs of supporting high-needs clients and test whether additional outcome-based performance payments can improve both employment and housing outcomes for people who are homeless. There is no detail in the White Paper on how the trial will be undertaken, or what the findings of the trial might mean for the funding of specialist homelessness services.

*Homelessness Australia will work with State/Territory homeless peak bodies to assess the effects of new funding arrangements under the NAHA on the level of resources for specialist homelessness services.*

*Homelessness Australia will determine the process for the 'case mix' trial. We will work with FaHCSIA in reviewing the findings of the trial on the funding arrangements for specialist homelessness services.*

### 4) National Accreditation and Service Standards

The new approach to homelessness will mean that services that work with homeless people will be subject to service charters and specialist homelessness services will have to undertake national accreditation. The White Paper suggests that there could be a national service charter that would be enshrined in national legislation and also that the national accreditation system could be a prerequisite to funding. Further, the White Paper suggests that the Federal and state and territory governments' would work with homelessness services and people who are homeless to develop these instruments. These instruments will play a large role in determining the operation of specialist homelessness services. In



addition, they may have an impact on mainstream services who work with people experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness.

*Homelessness Australia will seek information on the development of the national accreditation framework from FaHCSIA. We will consult with members and State/Territory homelessness peaks to ensure the framework takes into account the needs of diverse service models and smaller agencies and use this information to lobby FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing on the development of the National Accreditation System and Service Standards.*

## 5) Linking the response to homelessness and other government policy initiatives

### a) The National Child Protection Framework

The National Child Protection Framework is currently being developed by the Federal Government. Amongst other issues, it deals with transitions from care and protection services into homelessness in order to address the high prevalence of care and protection clients in the homelessness system. As the White Paper also deals with this issue, there is a clear need for effective coordination.

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the National Child Protection Framework and the policies that arise out of the Homelessness White Paper are aligned. Key stakeholders that we will look to work with are the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), which is involved in the development of the Framework.*

### b) National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children is also currently being developed by the Federal Government. The Plan is being developed consultation with the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, who provide expert advice to Government on domestic and family violence and sexual assault.. There is likely to be a large cross-over between this Plan and the initiatives in the White Paper. Since both sets of policies are being developed simultaneously, there is a risk that the two sets of policies will not match-up or complement each other.

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA and other relevant bodies to ensure consistency between the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children and the Homelessness White Paper. This will include working with WESNET, one of our founding member organisations, which is a member of the National Council.*



## 6) The advanced practitioner model and workforce strategies

The White Paper calls for the creation of a new award for 'advanced practitioners' who would work at specialist homelessness services. This new award would allow services to pay highly skilled workers at specialist homelessness services more than the current award and is intended to facilitate the retention of highly skilled homelessness workers in specialist services. Homelessness Australia believes that there are several problems with this proposal, including that the underlying workforce and resourcing problems are not addressed. Thus, while both the Green Paper and White Paper state that workforce issues need to be addressed, the White Paper implies that they are state and territory issues and outside the scope of the White Paper. Unaddressed, workforce issues have the potential to undermine the role of the advanced practitioners by diluting their capacity across the range of tasks left incomplete because of the underlying workforce deficiencies.

*Homelessness Australia will lobby FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing to address the underlying workforce issues in specialist homelessness services. This could include a pay and conditions survey done in collaboration with the Australian Services Union (ASU).*

## 7) The 'no exits from homelessness' policy

The 'no exits into homelessness' policy aims to prevent any person leaving a medical or custodial situation from being exited into homelessness. The White Paper does not make clear how this would operate, particularly in a situation where a person is exited after a relatively short stay in care. For example, it would be hard for a hospital to justify keeping someone after they are discharged and this raises the prospect that people may be exited into short-term unsustainable housing options. The White Paper also doesn't canvass how people at risk of homelessness are prevented from becoming homeless upon entry to medical or custodial services by virtue of their stay in that service. In other words, it doesn't provide contingencies to prevent a person becoming homeless simply because their housing wasn't maintained during an impromptu period in care or custody.

The 'no exits into homelessness' policy is an important policy that has the potential to easily reduce homelessness. However the manner in which it's rolled out and the conditions and resources put into it by Federal and state and territory governments will almost completely determine its success.

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA, state and territory homelessness peaks, and national health and justice peaks to determine a way forward on the 'no exits from homelessness' policy.*



## 8) Centrelink services for people experiencing homelessness

The White Paper sets out a number of measures to improve Centrelink's response to homelessness. These measures are welcome, however Homelessness Australia understands that Centrelink is not being provided with any extra resources to implement these initiatives. This raises several questions: 1. whether Centrelink will be taking resources from other areas to fund these new projects; and, 2. whether these policies will only be nominally adopted by Centrelink. For example, will the 90 new Community Engagement Officers simply be rebadged Community Contact Officers and will increasing the capacity of Centrelink social workers be taken literally to 'refocus' their time or will it be taken as an opportunity to for professional development for these workers to better deal with young people at risk of homelessness. These are all questions that need to be answered.

*Homelessness Australia will work with Centrelink to shape the implementation of the initiatives they are responsible for in the White Paper.*

## 9) Targets and Research

The White Paper on Homelessness sets some admirable and impressive targets. However, it does not mention how measurement of these targets can be undertaken. For example, it is not clear how the 2013 interim targets can be measured at the state and territory or Federal levels. It is also not clear how the overall target of reducing homelessness will be measured. For example, if this is to be measured against the Census, then whether the target is achieved or not will not be known until the results of the 2021 Census are available. This may not be until 2023.. The White Paper also states that the evidence base on the state of, and effectiveness of, responses to homelessness is weak containing significant gaps. This raises questions about the credibility and achievability of the targets.

The White Paper sets out several instruments that the Federal Government can use to close these gaps over time that include a 'national homelessness research strategy', reform of the National Data Collection process, better data linkage, and more effective use of IT systems. There is considerable scope for contribution here, and at a minimum Homelessness Australia would be well placed to advise on the scope of the 'national homelessness research strategy', and the capacity of homeless services to effectively use new IT based systems. Data linkage and the National Data Collection are areas that would naturally be covered in these discussions.



*Homelessness Australia will work with the ABS, the AIHW, FaHSCIA and the Minister for Housing to ensure that targets can be effectively measured at a state and territory and Federal level.*

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the sector is engaged in the development of the new homelessness research strategy.*

## 10) Housing Policy

### a) Databases

The White Paper discusses regulating tenancy databases by June 2010 to prevent arbitrary exclusion of homeless people (or people at risk of homelessness) from private rental. Tenancy databases, if used inappropriately, can exacerbate homelessness. As they are privately owned, there is nothing to prevent a real estate agent abusing the databases. The Federal Government plans on regulating these databases nationally. Homelessness Australia believes it would be beneficial to be involved in determining the regulations relating to these databases.

The Federal Government also seeks to work with states and territories to review the impact of tenancy laws on rates of homelessness. As a part of this process, the Federal Government will review the impact of 'without-grounds-termination' clauses on homelessness in state and territory tenancy legislation. These clauses allow landlords in every state and territory except Tasmania to evict tenants without any fault on their part.

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA, the Tenant's Unions, the national network of Homeless Peoples Legal Centres/ Services to be involved in the discussions that lead to the modification in these provisions.*

### b) Compulsory rent payments for Centrelink customers in public and community housing

The White Paper notes that 70 per cent or more of public housing tenants pay their rent voluntarily. It also notes that 2000 tenants of public housing are evicted each year, possibly ending up homeless. It therefore claims that it will introduce compulsory rent payments for tenants in public housing at risk of eviction due to non payment of rent.

Homelessness Australia can't see a problem with compulsory rent payments for tenants in public housing at risk of eviction due to non payment of rent as it seems to be quite specific. It does however have concerns with its justification. This is because the 2000 tenants evicted from public housing constitute 0.6 per cent of public housing tenants. While data on evictions isn't available at a national level, an AHURI study in 2006 found (with a



small sample) that 35 per cent of people evicted from Queensland, South Australia and Victoria were evicted because of non-payment of rent. If taken to be representative, this means that of the 2000, 700 people would have to pay rent compulsorily. This means that maybe 490 tenants out of 331,000 would be affected by new compulsory payments. When we consider that neither the AIHW nor Centrelink has access to information on evictions, and given that the ABS counts almost 105,000 people who are homeless in Australia, Homelessness Australia would like to ensure that the cost of this policy is not disproportionate to its benefit.

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the cost of the 'compulsory rent payments' policy is not disproportionate to its benefit.*

*Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that this fairly specific policy is not expanded to other classes of tenant without legitimate justifications. We will work with Tenants Unions and the national network of Homeless Persons Legal Centres / Services in doing this*

## 11) Governance Structures

The Federal Government will appoint the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness to drive the reforms set out in the White Paper and monitor its implementation and progress over 12 years to 2020. However it does not set out how it would operate. We do not know whether it would operate similarly to the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, or whether it is to include community organisation representatives. We also do not know how the Council will interact with existing State and Territory Councils or bodies dealing with homelessness.

*Homelessness Australia will lobby the Federal Government for sector representation on the Council.*

As the Council will also be in charge of driving and monitoring the reforms set out in the White Paper, there is the question of how this will occur and whether their findings or recommendations are going to be persuasive or binding on the Federal Government and whether they will be public. Homelessness Australia believes that this process needs to be transparent, and the recommendations of the Council should create a mandate for the Government to amend its policy.

*Homelessness Australia will build a relationship with the Council and the Prime Minister's staff to ensure that the Council is diverse as well as effective.*



## Proposed Actions

- 1) Homelessness Australia will determine the process being undertaken to develop the new 'Homelessness Act' and will work with FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing to ensure that the concerns of homeless services are addressed.
- 2) Homelessness Australia is already working with FaHCSIA to address the definitional problem in the White Paper and will stay involved in the process to ensure that it meets the cultural definition of homeless, as well as reflecting those people at risk of homelessness.
- 3) Homelessness Australia believes that it will be quite difficult to coordinate mainstream and specialist homelessness services. We would like to investigate how the Federal Government seeks to deliver this policy. We will argue for effective mechanisms to coordinate services and policies regardless of whether they are 'joined-up' or merely communicating better.
- 4) Homelessness Australia will engage with FaHCSIA to ensure that the mental health and alcohol and other drug policies that are implemented as a result of the White Paper are coherent and take account of the work other agencies are already conducting in these areas.
- 5) Homelessness Australia will work with State and Territory homeless peak bodies to assess the effects of new funding arrangements under the NAHA on the level of resources for specialist homelessness services.
- 6) Homelessness Australia will determine the process for the 'case mix' trial. We will work with FaHCSIA in reviewing the findings of the trial on the funding arrangements for specialist homelessness services.
- 7) Homelessness Australia will seek information on the development of the national accreditation framework from FaHCSIA. We will consult with members and State and Territory homelessness peaks to ensure the framework takes into account the needs of diverse service models and smaller agencies and use this information to lobby FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing on the development of the National Accreditation System and Service Standards.
- 8) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the National Child Protection Framework and the policies that arise out of the Homelessness White Paper are aligned. Key stakeholders that we will look to work with are the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), which is involved in the development of the Framework.
- 9) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA and other relevant bodies to ensure consistency between the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their



- Children and the Homelessness White Paper. This will include working with WESNET, one of our founding member organisations, which is a member of the National Council.
- 10) Homelessness Australia will lobby FaHCSIA and the Minister for Housing to address the underlying workforce issues in specialist homelessness services. This could include a pay and conditions survey done in collaboration with the Australian Services Union (ASU).
  - 11) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA, state and territory homelessness peaks, and national health and justice peaks to determine a way forward on the 'no exits from homelessness' policy.
  - 12) Homelessness Australia will work with Centrelink to shape the implementation of the initiatives they are responsible for in the White Paper.
  - 13) Homelessness Australia will work with the ABS, the AIHW, FaHSCIA and the Minister for Housing to ensure that targets can be effectively measured at a state and territory and Federal level.
  - 14) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the sector is engaged in the development of the new homelessness research strategy.
  - 15) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA, the Tenant's Unions, the national network of Homeless Peoples Legal Centres/ Services to be involved in the discussions that lead to the modification of provisions relating to tenancy databases.
  - 16) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the cost of the 'compulsory rent payments' policy is not disproportionate to its benefit.
  - 17) Homelessness Australia will work with FaHCSIA to ensure that the 'compulsory rent payments' policy is not expanded to other classes of tenant without legitimate justifications. We will work with Tenants Unions and the national network of Homeless Persons Legal Centres / Services.
  - 18) Homelessness Australia will lobby the Federal Government for sector representation on the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness.
  - 19) Homelessness Australia will build a relationship with the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness and the Prime Minister's staff to ensure that the Council is diverse as well as effective.



## Next Steps

Homelessness Australia will consult with key stakeholders, particularly state and territory peaks to refine these policies over the next few months. As more information becomes available, Homelessness Australia will update these policies.

A 'Survey of Members' in March will be used to prioritise the actions that we have identified in responding to the White Paper. The Policy Forum at the Face-to-Face meeting will be used to develop Homelessness Australia's key policy directions for the White Paper period.

Please contact the Policy and Research Officer at Homelessness Australia if you have any questions at [policy@homelessnessaustralia.org.au](mailto:policy@homelessnessaustralia.org.au) or by phone at (02) 6247 7744



## Appendix A – Proposed Breakdown of Funding by States and Territories

- Where noted, these figures are based on the assertions in the IGA on how money will be distributed. This may be further negotiated by the states and territories.
- The National Affordable Housing SPP (NAHA SPP) is the general pool of funding available for housing affordability and homelessness. It covers funding for a range of measures including private rental market support, home purchase assistance, as well as homelessness.
- The Homelessness NP is a pool of funding specifically for homelessness programs.
- The 'Place to Call Home' funding is for creating 600 new homes for homeless individuals and families across the country.
- The Social Housing NP will provide for additional social housing dwellings as well as some reform of the social housing system.

### 1) National Affordable Housing SPP

States and Territories will receive the following amounts of the National Affordable Housing SPP:

<b>Funding Breakdown</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>NAHA SPP</b>	<b>(m)</b>	<b>(m)</b>	<b>(m)</b>	<b>(m)</b>	<b>(% of Cth funding)</b>
<b>NSW</b>	\$380.45	\$386.31	\$395.21	\$405.85	31.95%
<b>VIC</b>	\$266.09	\$275.24	\$287.03	\$300.66	24.16%
<b>QLD</b>	\$234.80	\$239.16	\$246.47	\$256.01	20.46%
<b>WA</b>	\$125.10	\$125.96	\$128.25	\$131.56	10.38%
<b>SA</b>	\$94.98	\$94.86	\$95.38	\$96.20	7.43%
<b>TAS</b>	\$34.48	\$33.51	\$32.71	\$31.93	2.38%
<b>ACT</b>	\$26.15	\$25.05	\$24.10	\$23.19	1.70%
<b>NT</b>	\$41.95	\$36.42	\$31.04	\$25.59	1.52%
<b>Totals</b>	\$1,204	\$1,216.5	\$1,240.2	\$1,271	100.00%

<sup>3</sup> Proposed funding is not available for this financial year.



## 2) Homelessness NP

Please note that these are based on population projections and the assertion in the NAHA that money would be allocated on the basis of the number of homeless people in each state and territory. States and territories may further negotiate these numbers.

States and Territories will have the following funding for the delivery of the Homelessness NP:

<i>Funding Breakdown</i>	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Homelessness NP	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(% of Funding) <sup>4</sup>
NSW	\$38.21	\$54.26	\$56.88	\$56.88	26.15%
VIC	\$28.63	\$40.66	\$42.62	\$42.62	19.59%
QLD	\$37.38	\$53.09	\$55.65	\$55.65	25.59%
WA	\$18.69	\$26.55	\$27.82	\$27.82	12.79%
SA	\$11.11	\$15.78	\$16.54	\$16.54	7.61%
TAS	\$3.50	\$4.97	\$5.21	\$5.21	2.40%
ACT	\$1.90	\$2.70	\$2.83	\$2.83	1.30%
NT	\$6.68	\$9.49	\$9.94	\$9.94	4.57%
<b>Totals</b>	\$146.10	\$207.50	\$217.50	\$217.50	100.00%

## 3) A Place to Call Home

Please note that these are based on population projections and the assertion in the NAHA that money would be allocated on a per capita basis.

States and Territories will have the following funding for the delivery of the 'A Place to Call Home' program:

<i>Funding Breakdown</i>	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
A Place to Call Home	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)
NSW	\$15.86	\$17.23	\$16.78	\$15.43	\$31.40
VIC	\$12.08	\$13.16	\$12.85	\$11.85	\$24.18
QLD	\$9.84	\$10.80	\$10.63	\$9.88	\$20.29
WA	\$4.95	\$5.43	\$5.34	\$4.96	\$10.17
SA	\$3.64	\$3.95	\$3.84	\$3.53	\$7.17
TAS	\$1.14	\$1.23	\$1.19	\$1.09	\$2.21
ACT	\$0.78	\$0.85	\$0.83	\$0.76	\$1.55
NT	\$0.50	\$0.55	\$0.54	\$0.50	\$1.01
<b>Totals</b>	\$48.80	\$53.20	\$52.00	\$48.00	\$98.00

<sup>4</sup> Proposed funding is not available for this financial year.





#### 4) Social Housing NP

Please note that these are based on population projections and the assertion in the NAHA that money would be allocated on a per capita basis.

States and Territories will have the following funding for the delivery of the Social Housing NP:

<i>Funding Breakdown</i>	2008-09	2009-10
Social Housing NP	(m)	(m)
NSW	\$65.0	\$64.8
VIC	\$49.5	\$49.5
QLD	\$40.3	\$40.6
WA	\$20.3	\$20.4
SA	\$14.9	\$14.9
TAS	\$4.7	\$4.6
ACT	\$3.2	\$3.2
NT	\$2.1	\$2.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$200.0</b>	<b>\$200.0</b>

#### 5) Social Housing Funding under the Stimulus Package

States and Territories will have the following Social Housing Funding under the Stimulus Package:

<i>Funding Breakdown</i>	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Social Housing Funding (Stimulus Package)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)
<i>Additions to stock</i>				
NSW	\$19.60	\$1,262.30	\$568.60	\$101.70
VIC	\$14.90	\$959.80	\$432.30	\$77.30
QLD	\$12.00	\$755.30	\$349.20	\$62.50
WA	\$6.10	\$391.90	\$176.50	\$31.60
SA	\$4.50	\$290.20	\$130.70	\$23.40
TAS	\$1.40	\$90.30	\$40.70	\$7.30
ACT	\$1.00	\$62.40	\$28.10	\$5.00
NT	\$0.60	\$39.80	\$17.90	\$3.20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$60.10</b>	<b>\$3,852.00</b>	<b>\$1,744.00</b>	<b>\$312.00</b>
<i>Repairs</i>				
NSW	\$65.20	\$65.20		



VIC	\$49.60	\$49.60		
QLD	\$40.00	\$40.00		
WA	\$20.20	\$20.20		
SA	\$15.00	\$15.00		
TAS	\$4.70	\$4.70		
ACT	\$3.20	\$3.20		
NT	\$2.10	\$2.10		
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$200.00</b>	<b>\$200.00</b>		
<i>Total Funding</i>				
NSW	\$84.80	\$1,327.50	\$568.60	\$101.70
VIC	\$64.50	\$1,009.40	\$432.30	\$77.30
QLD	\$52.00	\$795.30	\$349.20	\$62.50
WA	\$26.30	\$412.10	\$176.50	\$31.60
SA	\$19.50	\$305.20	\$130.70	\$23.40
TAS	\$6.10	\$95.00	\$40.70	\$7.30
ACT	\$4.20	\$65.60	\$28.10	\$5.00
NT	\$2.70	\$41.90	\$17.90	\$3.20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$260.10</b>	<b>\$4,052.00</b>	<b>\$1,744.00</b>	<b>\$312.00</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$6,368.10</b>