



What needs to be done?

Ending and preventing homelessness is not as simple as getting people jobs or building houses. There are a number of investments and commitments required. These start with the Australian government and include:

1. State and Territory housing authorities must maintain their current public housing stock.
2. The Australian Government should establish an affordable housing growth fund to deliver at least 20,000 new social and affordable housing dwellings each year in perpetuity.
3. Renewal of funding for innovative homelessness services through the NPAH.
4. Ensuring funding for homelessness services in the NAHA are supported through adequate and planned indexation and a wages component.
5. Increase of funding for homelessness prevention and early intervention programs with proven records of success.
6. Restore funding for research to measure and maximise the effectiveness of homelessness spending, and to identify and develop innovations in homelessness prevention and interventions.

7. Non-pension allowance payments must be increased by a minimum of \$50 per week to give people most in need a fighting chance of meeting the costs of living.
8. Re-allocate funding to the Department of Social Services grants programme for Housing and Homelessness Service Improvement and Sector Support activities.

Homelessness is not just for the Government to solve. Homelessness is everyone's responsibility.

References

- i AIHW, 2015 *Specialist Homelessness Services 2014-15*
- ii ABS, Census 2012
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- iv Baldrey et al, 2012, *Lifecourse institutional costs of homelessness for vulnerable groups*
- v Wilhelm. K, 2012, *Costs of Rough Sleeping*
- vi Mental Health Council of Australia, 2012, *National Mental Health Report Card*
- vii Australian Government, 2008, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Homelessness*



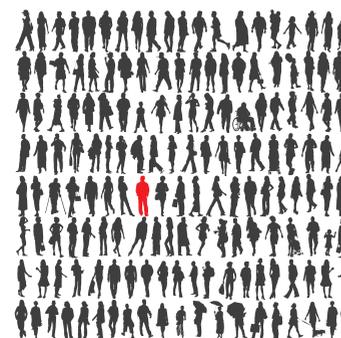
Homelessness Australia

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Homelessness in Australia



On any given night in Australia **1 in 200** people are homeless

The Facts



There are **105,237** people homeless in Australia



56% are male; **44%** female



There are **17,845** children under 10, with **402** children sleeping out.

The NT has a rate of **730 per 10,000** people homeless



255,657 people received support and almost seven million nights of accommodation services were provided by specialist homelessness services in 2014-15.ⁱ

What is homelessness?

Homelessness Australia uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical definition of homelessness.

The ABS statistical definition states that when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
 - has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
 - does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.
- People who are experiencing homelessness are usually staying in the following areas:
- Improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
 - Supported accommodation for the homelessⁱⁱ



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness





- Temporarily with other households
- Boarding houses
- Other temporary lodging
- "Severely" overcrowded dwellings.

Why are people homeless?

Homelessness is often a result of a number of complex issues which can include:

- The chronic shortage of affordable and available rental housing
- Domestic and family violence
- Intergenerational poverty
- Financial crisis
- Long term unemployment
- Economic and social exclusion
- Severe and persistent mental illness and psychological distress
- Exiting state care
- Exiting prison
- Severe overcrowding/housing crisis.

Impact of homelessness

Homelessness results in significant social and economic costs not just to individuals and families, but also communities and

the nation as a whole.

On an individual level homelessness makes it difficult to maintain school or further study and leaves people vulnerable to long-term unemployment and chronic ill-health. Some health problems are a consequence of homelessness including depression, poor nutrition, poor dental health, substance abuse and mental health problemsⁱⁱⁱ. Australians experiencing homelessness are often excluded from participating in social, recreational, cultural and economic opportunities in their community.

On a national level people who are experiencing homelessness are more likely to interact with a number of government agencies, such as police, Department of Community Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrective Services, Courts, Legal Aid, Department of Ageing, Department of Health, Housing, and Centrelink^v. Research has found that the cost of rough sleeping to the community is in excess of \$27,000 per

year^v, with the cost increasing the longer a person is homeless.

The cost of homelessness to our community, economy and individuals is enormous, particularly if homelessness is not resolved quickly. The current shortage of affordable and available rental homes is continuing to make getting out of homelessness more difficult for people.



The prevalence of mental illness, particularly severe and persistent axis 1 disorders such as bi-polar and schizoid type disorders and axis 2 personality disorders is higher amongst people experiencing homelessness than it is in the general population^{vi}.

The homelessness service system in Australia

In Australia services to support people experiencing homelessness began in the early twentieth century. They began with accommodation for itinerant workers or families who were homeless because of mass unemployment during the great depression.

In the 1970's new social movements such as the women's liberation and the growing voices of young people saw new service models emerge and by 1985 the Hawke Government funded the establishment of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The SAAP drew together a wide range of services that provided accommodation and support to single men and women, families, young people, and women escaping domestic and family violence.

In 2008, the Australian Government released its first ever White Paper on homelessness entitled *The Road Home* which outlined a new approach to reducing homelessness in Australia based on three pillars turning off the tap (stopping the flow of homelessness),

improving and expanding services and breaking the cycle of homelessness^{vii}.

Currently, most funding for the homelessness sector is provided through the states and territories under two Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreements:

■ The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)

Under the NAHA, the Commonwealth Government provides funding to state governments, which manage the allocation of funds to achieve predefined outcomes. The NAHA provides approximately \$250 million per year for homelessness initiatives.

■ The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)

The NPAH provides additional funding for agreed activities and requires specific state/territory implementation plans, plus requires joint funding from the states/territories.

The current agreement, announced in March 2015, is for \$115 million annually, is set to expire in June 2017.

The Commonwealth Government is currently undertaking a 'Reform of the Federation' which seeks to improve the way the Commonwealth and the states and territories work together. The outcome of this process has the ability to change the way homelessness funding works.

Why are they homeless?

From polling of people seeking support from specialist homeless services:



24%	Domestic and family violence
20%	Financial difficulties
16%	Housing crisis
11%	Inappropriate or inadequate dwellings
8%	Other relationship issues
5%	Other accommodation issues
4%	Health issues
2%	Transition from custody agreement
1%	Itinerant
1%	Lack of family/community support
8%	Other

