



The role and importance of peak bodies

A peak body is a non-government organisation that has membership of entities with allied interests.

What does a peak body do?

- Provides a one-stop shop for government and the sector to **share information and experience**,
- Conducts timely and cost effective **research and development** for the sector,
- **Advocates** for change together with its membership,
- **Educates** the community about the sector.

Some Australian peak bodies are: Business Council of Australia, Housing Industry Association (HIA), National Farmers' Federation, Australian Medical Association (AMA) and ACOSS through to smaller organisations such as Alzheimer's Australia, Relationships Australia and Dairy Australia.

Homelessness Australia - the peak body for the homelessness sector

Homelessness Australian (HA) aims to represent the 1300 **organisations that work with people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness**, including domestic violence services.

HA is a peak body with a broad membership base that includes large national multi-focused providers, such as Mission Australia and St Vincent de Paul Society plus small local services like 'Doris' a women's refuge in the ACT. This diversity of members enables HA to identify trends and challenges faced by the sector as a whole and in sub-sectors (eg Youth, domestic violence, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

It would be impractical for government agencies to engage with each of these organisations without Homelessness Australia's **conduit role**. Importantly, given that HA is not a service provider, and that our membership is broad and diverse, the advice and information we provide to government and others is **without bias**.

Six key activities of Homelessness Australia:

- Provide informed **policy advice** to government and the sector about homelessness and associated topics. This includes strategic input into committees and other organisations,
- Facilitate **sector wide training and development for workers** (eg conferences attended by all levels of government, front-line workers and service providers),
- **Community engagement and education**, informing them about the issues of homelessness and how to support people experiencing it, and creating links between services and their communities,
- Provide a two-way **channel for information and experience** between the homelessness sector and government,
- **Increase sector capacity and develop key resources** for use by the sector in partnerships with other organisations (eg HOPE project – with JSA and *Tune in now* with *Beyondblue*),
- **Conduct strategic and timely research** into homelessness and its relation to other topics to support the above activities.

More information on how Homelessness Australia's delivers its peak body activities is on our website and in our Annual Report 2014-15