The 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan

Key messages and submission guide

AUGUST 2023

Homelessness Australia

Introduction

On Monday 7 August the Federal Government released the <u>discussion paper</u> for the 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

This Plan will be developed in 2023 and is expected to be released in 2024. It represents an enormously important opportunity to achieve the changes needed to end homelessness.

However, not all government plans result in policy change. To avoid the 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan becoming a document that simply describes homelessness and the current set of homelessness responses, we need you to inform the process, and tell the Government about the **reforms that are needed to create a system to end homelessness; that is to make homelessness rare, brief and not repeated.**

This Submission Guide outlines messages, evidence and a structure of responding to the National Plan discussion paper to support you to tell a strong and powerful story about the changes needed to end homelessness.

These main points to include aren't exactly the same as the questions included in the Government's discussion paper.

We encourage you to tell the Government what they need to hear - that is 'how to end homelessness' - as well as responding to questions in the discussion paper that are relevant to your work.

In each section you are encouraged to make the core arguments for change and to add detail and examples drawn from your practice and insights as a service provider, or your experience and knowledge as someone who has experienced not having a home, to illustrate why each change is necessary.

The guide also includes links to data and research you can use to provide evidence for your arguments.

Having an ambition to end homelessness

In your submission the most important place to start is by stating the need for the plan to have an ambitious goal that outlines targets for reducing homelessness, and ultimately ending homelessness.

In a wealthy country like Australia it is possible to end homelessness. It requires us to look beyond the narrow confines of programs that respond to homelessness and take a 'systems perspective' that considers all policy and programs across all levels of government that have an impact on the level of homelessness. A 'systems perspective' can be described as:

A structural and operational shift in the governance of homelessness...from a system that manages homelessness to one that aims to eliminate it. (1)

A National Plan that was using a systems approach would:
- commit to targets to reduce homelessness by 50 per cent over five years and ending homelessness over ten years
- implement an initial set of policy changes informed by the best current evidence about the changes needed to achieve homelessness reduction targets
- establish a process to monitor and review progress towards the targets each 2-3 years
- develop a revised action plan each 2-3 years to tackle the gaps in the system that were revealed by the review process
- include people with lived experience in the processes of review and decision making

A 10-year national housing and homelessness plan is the ideal catalyst to bring together planning to address homelessness across government because it has a long-term horizon, and a governance process that spans the different levels of Australian government.

To read more about a systems approach to ending homelessness go to:
- Demos Helsinki, Housing First Europe Hub, A new systems perspective to ending homelessness
- Housing First Europe Hub: Achieving a new systems perspective to ending homelessness through Housing First: A policy and practice guide
- Homelessness NSW: Rare, Brief and Non-Recurring: A System Wide Approach to Ending Homelessness Together
- Eoin O'Sullivan, Key elements in homelessness strategies to end homelessness by 2023: A discussion paper

Summary of messages to include

1. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan needs an ambitious goal to end homelessness. This would involve setting targets and timelines for reducing homelessness, and ultimately ending homelessness.

2. The National Plan should drive an initial set of concrete policy changes to reduce homelessness, and also establish a process to improve and strengthen actions to end homelessness over time, so we keep moving closer to the target of eliminating homelessness.

(1) Demos Helsinki, Housing First Europe Hub, A new systems perspective to ending homelessness

Ending homelessness - by preventing people from becoming homeless

The most effective and important change we can make to end homelessness is preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place.
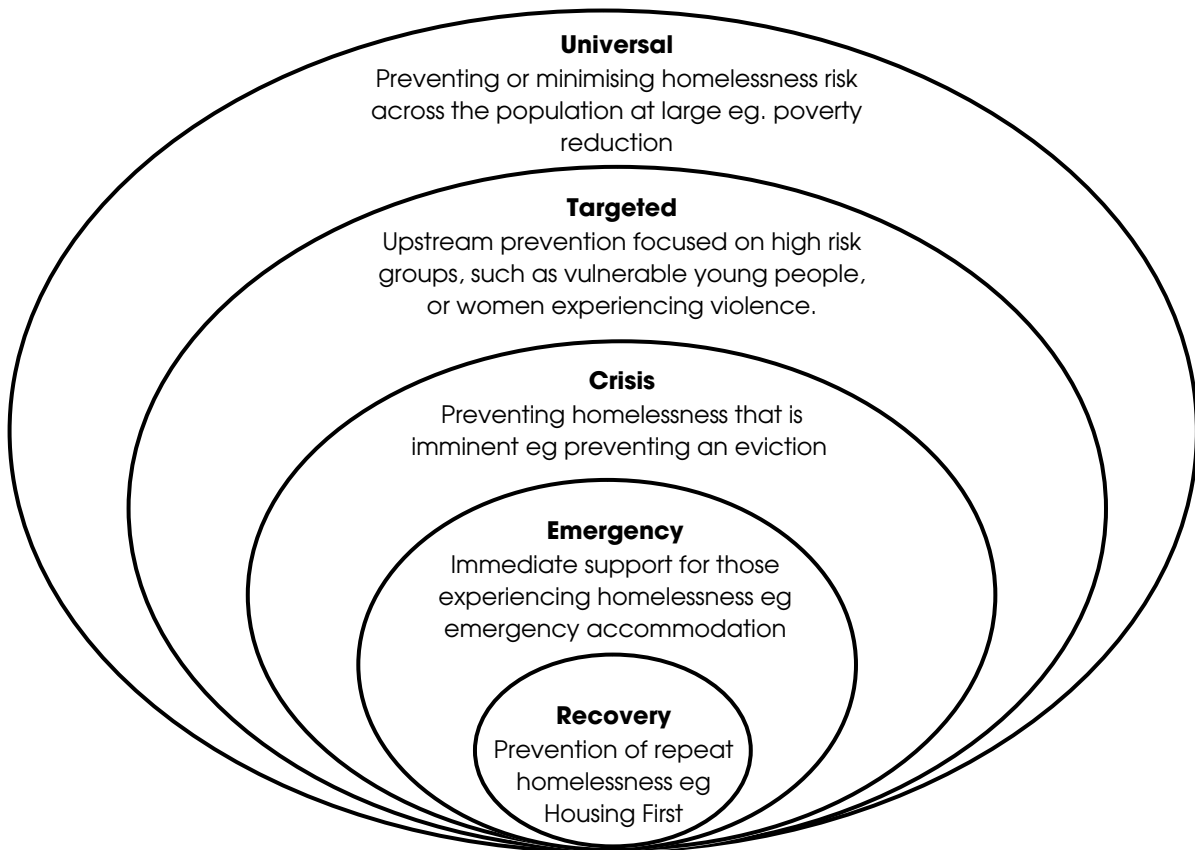
This is because the process of losing a home and becoming homeless is enormously disruptive to people's lives, and causes immense stress and hardship.

The tight rental market, and serious shortage of social housing, also means that re-homing people who have lost their home is extremely difficult. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that many more people become homeless and seek homelessness services than can be responded to by the homelessness services available.

In 2021-22, homelessness services were unable to assist 71,962 people who came seeking help (2), an average of 288 people per day (3).

To provide people with the help they need, homelessness services need to have less people coming through the door.

Prevention of homelessness can occur at different points in a system and involve policy beyond homelessness service delivery. Different forms of prevention include (4):

Universal
Preventing or minimising homelessness risk across the population at large eg. poverty reduction

Targeted
Upstream prevention focused on high risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, or women experiencing violence.

Crisis
Preventing homelessness that is imminent eg preventing an eviction

Emergency
Immediate support for those experiencing homelessness eg emergency accommodation

Recovery
Prevention of repeat homelessness eg Housing First

(2) AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Annual Report 2021-22, Table UNASSISTED.2: Unassisted requests, by age and sex, and by state and territory, 2021–22
(3) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22, Table UNASSISTED.1: Daily average unassisted requests, by state and territory, 2021–22
(4) Crisis UK, 75 ways to prevent homelessness, 2022

In Australia, universal prevention generally relates to policy outside of homelessness services, such as the adequacy of income support payments and social support systems such as health care, disability supports and family supports, and availability of affordable housing.

Targeted prevention can include programs delivered by other human services systems outside of homelessness, such as youth services or family violence programs, as well as programs delivered by homelessness services.

Crisis prevention can include programs outside of homelessness such as legal services providing tenancy advice and advocacy, as well as programs delivered by homelessness services.

Emergency and recovery prevention involve the work of homelessness services in responding to people who are homeless to make their experience of homelessness brief and non-recurring. While we have included these in the typology of prevention, so you can see where they fit into a system of ending homelessness, we discuss messaging related to this area of work in the section on responding to homelessness.

Creating a system that aims to end homelessness would mean putting far more emphasis and investment into homelessness prevention, so that we shift homelessness policy from the current crisis orientation to a system that makes homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring (5).
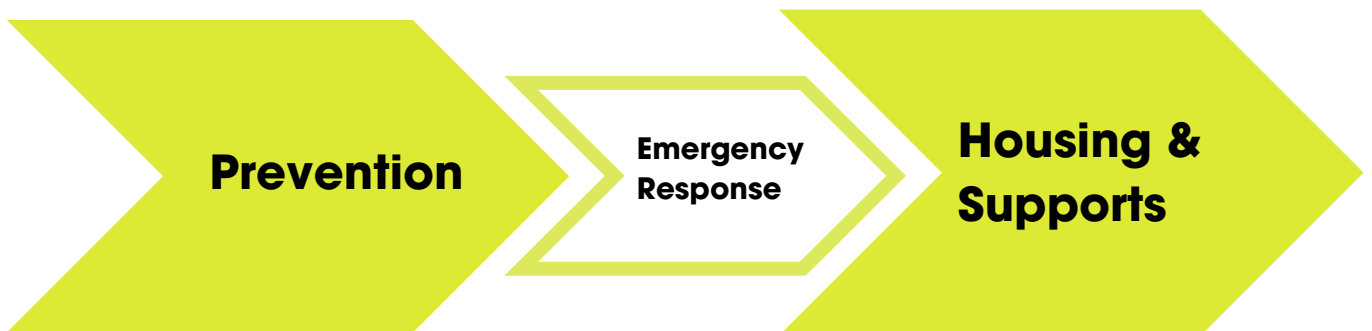
It would also mean that responsibility for preventing homelessness would be shared across government.

A system to end homelessness

To move from this...

Prevention → **Emergency Response** → Housing & supports

...to this

Prevention → Emergency Response → **Housing & Supports**

(5) Canadian Homeless Hub, The Canadian Framework for Homelessness Prevention

AIHW data on the main reasons that people become homeless gives us a useful starting point of priorities for homelessness prevention. (6) This data is available by State and by cohort.

In summary, this data shows:

Main reason for seeking homelessness assistance	% of all clients
Housing issues (including housing crisis, eviction, inappropriate housing and housing situation ended)	35
Financial issues (including financial difficulty and housing affordability stress)	17
Family violence and other violence and abuse	28
Other family relationship issues	5
Health and other issues	15

The Australian research study Journeys Home also gives insight into which personal and structural factors have the most influence on risk of homelessness.

Both sets of evidence demonstrate that a mix of structural issues, like housing affordability, poverty and discrimination combine with individual vulnerabilities, such as health, mental health and disability, experiences of trauma or violence, and drug or alcohol issues to drive homelessness. While the overall structural issues increase the number of people becoming homeless, those with more vulnerability are most likely to be the people who do become homeless.

To read more about homelessness prevention go to:
- Eoin O'Sullivan, Key elements in homelessness strategies to end homelessness by 2023: A discussion paper
- Canadian Homeless Hub, The Canadian Framework for Homelessness Prevention
- Crisis UK, 75 ways to prevent homelessness

Summary of messages to include

3. The most effective and important change we can make to end homelessness is preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place.

4. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan needs to include policy areas in scope that can achieve:

    a. universal prevention to reduce the overall number of people at risk of homelessness
    b. targeted prevention to reduce risk of homelessness for people who are more vulnerable to becoming homeless
    c. crisis prevention to prevent homelessness for people at imminent risk of homelessness

as well as the important work of homelessness services in providing emergency responses and support for people to gain and sustain housing.

(6) AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2021-22. Table CLIENTS.22: Clients, by main reasons for seeking assistance, and by state and territory, 2021–22

Universal prevention

Universal prevention aims to reduce the number of people becoming homeless overall.

You can provide evidence for the need for different forms of universal prevention by referring to the data on the reasons people become homeless. For example:

- Building more social and affordable housing, and strengthening tenancy protections and supports will reduce housing crisis and eviction.
- Increasing the adequacy and security of income support payments and low wages will reduce financial crises driving homelessness.
- Taking action to reduce gendered violence and to provide families with the support they need to thrive will reduce family violence and child abuse and neglect.
- Taking action to reduce racism and discrimination will improve employment, housing and health outcomes for marginalised communities that result in homelessness.

Summary of messages to include

5. We cannot end homelessness without changes that address major drivers of homelessness across the population, including racism and discrimination, the adequacy and security of income support, people's access to affordable housing and family wellbeing.

Targeted prevention

The data on who becomes homeless demonstrates which groups are most at risk. Targeted prevention focuses on reducing homelessness risks for groups who are currently overrepresented among those without homes and people experiencing a life transition that puts them at risk of homelessness. Different supports will be needed for different groups.

Groups vulnerable to homelessness include:

Vulnerable group	Proportion of all homelessness
Women and children and other victim/survivors experiencing domestic and family violence	50% women and children using homelessness services have experienced domestic and family violence (7)
Children and young people who have been excluded from their home or who have removed themselves from home	More than 1 in 6 people using homelessness services are children or young people (aged 10-24) presenting alone (18.5% of all clients) (8)
People in rental arrears or conflict with their landlord	37% clients are in housing crisis (9) 39% are having financial difficulties 31% are in housing affordability stress
People experiencing a sudden drop in income	17% clients have issues with employment
First Nations Australians	27% of all clients are Indigenous (10)
People exiting institutional settings, such as prison, acute mental health care or statutory care	Only 2% of homelessness clients are leaving care, but this group represent a higher proportion of repeat service users

(7) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22. Table FDV.1: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by age and sex, 2021–22
(8) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22. Table YOUNG.1: Young people presenting alone, by age and sex, 2021–22 plus data cubes
(9) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22. Table CLIENTS.21: Clients, by reasons for seeking assistance, and by state and territory, 2021–22
(10) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22. Table INDIGENOUS.1: Clients and support periods, by Indigenous status and by age and sex, 2021–22

In your submission, point to the targeted prevention that is needed to make the most difference to the people you are working with. If you are someone who has experienced homelessness, you might include your reflection on what support would have made the most difference to you to reduce your risk of homelessness six months to two years before you became homeless.

An effective system of targeted prevention includes interventions that sit outside of the specialist homelessness service system, as well as early interventions within the homelessness service system. Some common interventions can be provided by both homelessness services and other providers.

Where different early intervention responses are connected or networked at a local area level they tend to provide a more seamless system of supports and referrals.

Some examples of targeted prevention outside the homelessness service system include:

Group at risk	Targeted prevention outside the homelessness system
Women and children experiencing violence	• Support for women and other victims of gendered violence • Safe at home models • Family violence brokerage for housing/accommodation
Children and young people who have begun couch surfing or removing themselves from their home environment	• Family support services • Support in schools to identify and respond to children and young people at risk of homelessness • Brokerage to support kinship or other alternative care • Child and adolescent mental health services • Child and adolescent D&A supports • Support for children and young people who are victims of violence or who use violence • LGBTIQ+ support services
People in rental arrears or conflict with their landlord	• Tenancy/legal advice
People experiencing a sudden drop in income	• Centrelink emergency payments • Provision of support by Centrelink staff/social workers for people to access their full entitlements, avoid unfair breaches or penalties, and connect with other services • Financial counselling
First Nations Australians	• Self determination to support First Nations communities to thrive and to strengthen the effectiveness of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • Targeted supports focussed on life transitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians • Adequate funding for First Nations housing
People exiting prison or acute mental health care	• Housing planning from intake through to discharge/ exit • Provision of specialist 'step-down' supported housing models • Access to mental health and drug and alcohol supports
Young people exiting statutory care	• Continuing support for children exiting out-of-home care or youth justice

Some examples of early interventions within homelessness services include:

Group at risk	Early intervention within the homelessness system
Women and children experiencing violence	• Rapid rehousing models to support access to private rental
Children and young people who have begun couch surfing or removing themselves from their home environment	• Family mediation services and programs like Reconnect • Brokerage to support kinship or other alternative care • Support for children and young people who are victims of violence or who use violence
People in rental arrears or conflict with their landlord	• Private rental brokerage • Tenancy support workers
People experiencing a sudden drop in income	• Rental brokerage • Homelessness workers to support people to maximise Centrelink entitlements
First Nations Australians	• Support to connect with Aboriginal community controlled services and other services • Private rental brokerage • Tenancy support workers
People exiting prison or acute mental health care	• Homelessness workers based in prisons • Housing First models

NB. These are not an exhaustive list of targeted prevention and early intervention programs but aim to illustrate how action is needed outside the specialist homelessness service system at critical touch points for people at risk of homelessness, as well as within the homelessness service system to prevent homelessness.

Lots of examples of homelessness prevention is included in:
• Crisis UK, 75 ways to prevent homelessness

Summary of messages to include

6. There are important opportunities to prevent homelessness by addressing gaps in other human service systems that cause homelessness, such as provision of family support, adolescent mental health supports, and tenancy and legal advice.

7. Homelessness services also need to be resourced to provide interventions that can prevent homelessness at the earliest stage that risk of homelessness is identified.

Crisis prevention

Crisis prevention aims to prevent an experience of homelessness for someone at imminent risk of homelessness, such as someone who has received an eviction notice, been told to leave their family home, or who is leaving a health or justice facility and has nowhere to go. While some crisis prevention is provided by legal services providing tenancy support, other crisis prevention is provided by specialist homelessness services.

Growing demand on homelessness services is putting pressure on the capacity of homelessness services to assist people who need help to avoid imminent homelessness.

In 2021-22, 31.5% of all homelessness clients (85,915 people) were seeking homelessness assistance to sustain a tenancy or prevent eviction. Services were unable to provide that support or a referral to 15.7% of those (13,528 people). Homelessness services recorded that they were unable to assist a further 71,962 people, and a greater number would have been unrecorded because they couldn't get through to a worker on the phone, or in a homelessness entry point.

You might have data from your service that highlights growing demand on the service or that highlights the changing nature of demand, for example different population groups now presenting in crisis.

Missing opportunities to prevent homelessness further exacerbates pressures on services, as people who lose their home then need even more support to find another home.

Crisis prevention work is typically time consuming and requires specialist skills and knowledge. Workers may be supporting someone to access all their Centrelink entitlements, helping to navigate a neighbourhood dispute or conflict with a landlord that is threatening a client's tenancy, or doing complex work resolving family conflict or legal matters.

Throughout the process of preventing an eviction, skilled workers also need to support the client and their family to manage other issues accompanying the threat of imminent homelessness. This may include mental health crisis or other health issues, financial crisis and safety planning.

In your submission highlight the important work done by homelessness services to prevent homelessness for people at imminent risk , and the resources and skills needed to do this work most effectively. If you have experienced homelessness, you might highlight what support in the 4-6 weeks before you lost your home would have helped you most.

Summary of messages to include

8. Homelessness services need to be resourced to provide interventions that can prevent homelessness for people at imminent risk of homelessness.

Responding to homelessness - by making it brief and non-recurring

While prevention is the most effective way to reduce the numbers of people who become homeless, specialist homelessness services also need to respond to people who do lose their homes. This includes work to minimise the harm of homelessness by providing support to people in crisis, support to achieve a pathway out of homelessness and support to sustain housing.

Describing the capacity constraints in homelessness services

Much of the work of specialist homelessness services involves responding to people who have already lost their homes. The demand for this support far exceeds the capacity of services to respond, and the growing housing crisis is making demand pressures worse.

The consequence is that services often need to ration support and access to housing and accommodation and other support and as a result many people in need of support are unable to get the support they need.

To highlight the unmet demand for homelessness services you can refer to the AIHW data on unassisted requests, and to information on what services people were seeking and whether they received that service or not (11).

The 2020-21 data reveals the greatest challenges for services in providing access to the accommodation and housing needed by clients.

Service sought by the client	How many people needed the service	Service provided	Service not provided or referred
Short-term or emergency accommodation	108,822	59%	32%
Long-term housing	107,728	4%	72%
Help to sustain a tenancy or prevent eviction	85,915	81%	16%
Medium-term accommodation	80,406	26%	56%

In your submission, supplement this data with the evidence from your service, or your personal experience, to illustrate the shortfall of service capacity in terms of staffing, brokerage and access to accommodation and housing.

(11) AIHW, SHS annual report, Table CLIENTS.24: Clients, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, and by state and territory, 2021–22

You should also highlight the impact of the shortfall in service capacity. The impact can include:

- Impacts on homelessness and other human services systems, such as
  - increases in the numbers of people turned away
  - growing waiting lists or waiting times to access a worker
  - increased need to use demand management strategies, such as limits imposed on support periods, accommodation stays, or access to intake appointments, and
  - costs being pushed to other service systems, such as acute health and mental health, child protection and justice services.

- Impacts on client wellbeing, such as
  - women and children returning to violent homes because they can't get the support or safe accommodation needed
  - exacerbation of mental health challenges where housing stability is not gained
  - impacts on children of extended periods in crisis accommodation or sleeping in cars, or child protection becoming involved because families are unable to achieve housing stability
  - becoming entrenched in a cycle of repeated homelessness
  - having no alternatives to rough sleeping or unsafe couch surfing or rooming house accommodation, with the consequent risks of violence, and challenges accessing basic needs.

These impacts can be described using research evidence where it is available, evidence gathered by your service, and/or by including quotes from service users and/or workers on what they have experienced or observed.

Summary of messages to include

9. Homelessness services do not have the resources to respond to everyone who needs help and this:
   a. has devastating consequences for people who are turned away from support
   b. has system consequences including missed opportunities for prevention of homelessness and for prevention of re-entry to homelessness, and
   c. creates significant costs and pressures on other service systems, such as acute health, child protection and justice services.

Describing the solutions needed to achieve rapid and sustained exits from homelessness

In your Submission describe what is needed to deliver a best practice response to people so that their experience of homelessness is as brief as possible, the harm caused by losing a home is minimised, and people don't return to homelessness.

It's important for people to exit homelessness as quickly as possible because the impacts of homelessness on health and wellbeing and social and economic exclusion increase the longer that people live without a secure home.

To be effective, services need to be able to respond to people's individual needs, rather than provide a one size fits all response.

In describing the responses needed to quickly end homelessness you will need to describe the different responses needed by people in different circumstances. For example, an unaccompanied 15 year old child fleeing a violent home needs a different set of supports than a person over 55 whose primary issue is that they can no longer afford renting in the private rental market.

Support for families might look different to support for adult singles, and support will also look different depending on the complexity of the issues faced by a person without a home.

It isn't necessary for every submission to cover every group. It is more important to have evidence and experience to illustrate your arguments about what a best practice response looks like. If you are working with a particular cohort or group of people without homes, or you have your own individual experience of homelessness, then use this experience to describe what is needed to quickly end homelessness for that group.

Key messaging related to best practice responses include:

The need for housing led responses

Lack of housing options mean that Australia's homelessness service system generally provides a 'staircase' of crisis accommodation options, including shelters, refuges, and motels, medium-term accommodation, such as transitional housing, and very limited access to long term housing.

In the 'staircase' approach, people progress through crisis accommodation to transitional housing, and then move into long term housing. But as the housing crisis has intensified and exits into long-term housing options have become more difficult to achieve for people without homes, the bottlenecks in this system have intensified.

The consequence is many people in crisis accommodation cannot exit into medium term options like transitional housing and consequently exit to homelessness, and people in transitional housing cannot exit to long term housing and either exit to homelessness or stay long term in housing intended as a medium term option, exacerbating the bottleneck in crisis accommodation, and increasing primary homelessness.

The result is that people become stuck in a damaging merry-go-round of accommodation and homelessness that re-traumatises them, resulting in an intensification of mental ill health and economic exclusion. Too often this further entrenches homelessness, rather than providing a pathway out of homelessness.

Housing led approaches seek to minimise the harm of homelessness by rapidly rehousing people, and providing the support needed to address issues that increase future risk of homelessness. At a system level this can only be achieved with adequate access to affordable and appropriate housing, and sufficient capacity to provide the support people need when they need it.

Many people who have lost their homes require minimal support to sustain housing once a new tenancy is established, but some people have more complex needs and need ongoing and more intensive multi-disciplinary support, such as a Housing First model, to break the cycle of homelessness.

To read more about Housing led approaches read:
- Eoin O'Sullivan, Key elements in homelessness strategies to end homelessness by 2023: A discussion paper

Summary of messages to include

10. Ending homelessness relies on much greater investment in housing led approaches which means much greater investment in social and affordable housing and the support needed for people to rapidly gain and to sustain housing.

The need to embed Housing First as a core response to people with complex needs

Housing First is now recognised as the most successful model to end homelessness for people with high support needs.

The Housing First model prioritises getting people quickly into stable homes. From this point, any other support needs they might have – such as alcohol and drug dependency, physical and/or mental health problems – are addressed through coordinated and intensive support.

Central to the concept of Housing First is that permanent housing is provided without a test of having to be 'housing ready'. Furthermore, maintaining the tenancy is not dependent on the tenant using support services. Housing First is built upon the principle that housing is a human right.

Housing First responses are a housing led approach, but not all people who have no home need the intensity or breadth of support provided in a housing first model.

To read more about Housing First read:
- Homelessness Australia Housing First resources, including the Australian Housing First principles
- Housing First Europe Hub resources, including the Housing First Guide - Europe

Summary of messages to include

11. Housing First is recognised as the most successful model to end homelessness for people with high support needs.
12. Without a Housing First approach people with high support needs are highly vulnerable to becoming entrenched in repeated cycles of homelessness.
13. Provision of Housing First at scale requires much greater investment in:
    a. support to provide the intensity and length of support that people need to sustain housing
    b. capacity building in governments that are commissioning homelessness services and in the homelessness sector to develop high fidelity Housing First models
    c. social housing to provide the housing needed for Housing First programs

The need for trauma informed responses

Research has consistently demonstrated the high rates of trauma experienced by people without homes, with trauma both contributing to likelihood of experiencing homelessness and being a consequence of living without a home.

The processes of accessing overstretched homelessness services can exacerbate the trauma people experience while homeless. Providing "trauma-informed" services relies on services having the housing and supports available to meet people's needs when they reach out for help, but also involves services incorporating knowledge about trauma and its impact into all aspects of service delivery.

Providing trauma informed responses involves (12):
- providing services and support that are compassionate, empathetic, and focused on people's needs and choices
- creating safe environments where individuals can feel understood and supported in their journey towards stability and healing
- training staff to be trauma-informed, incorporating trauma knowledge into service design, and involving people with lived experience in decision-making processes.

To read more about trauma informed homelessness service delivery read:
- Dr Catherine Robinson, Trauma: a Cause and Consequence of Homelessness
- Feantsa, Recognising the link between trauma and homelessness
- Milaney et al, Recognizing and responding to women experiencing homelessness with gendered and trauma-informed care
- Chris Hartley, Implementing Trauma-Informed Care in the Proposed National Housing and Homelessness Plan

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Summary of messages to include

10. Ending homelessness relies on homelessness services being resourced to provide trauma informed models of care to people without homes.

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(12) Rare, brief and non-recurring: a system wide approach to ending homelessness together, Homelessness NSW, August 2023

Meeting the needs of different groups experiencing homelessness

Responding to people sleeping rough

People sleeping rough comprise only 6% of those homeless on any given night, and 16% of people accessing homelessness services. However, despite being a small proportion of people who are homeless, this is a highly vulnerable group.

Rough sleepers are also very visible and consequently generate relatively more public attention and political interest than other groups whose homelessness is more hidden. Ineffective and band-aid solutions are one consequence of the visibility of rough sleeping and resultant political emphasis on strategies focused on rough sleeping.

While many people sleeping rough simply have unmet housing needs that can be resolved with a rapid housing solution, others have more complex needs.

Considerable international evidence has identified that effective strategies to end rough sleeping need to (13):
- be housing led
- offer person-centred support and choice
- take swift action
- employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer
- ensure services address wider support needs, and
- collaborative effectively between agencies and across sectors

In Australian, several jurisdictions and communities have implemented strategies focused on rough sleeping that emphasise strengthening collaboration between services working with people sleeping rough. Where these strategies have also included investment in Housing First models, they have succeeded in reducing rough sleeping. In the absence of Housing First programs service coordination has not significantly reduced rough sleeping, but may have achieved some improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of local responses.

Given these outcomes there is value in including the need for effective service collaboration in your submission, but it's important not to overstate the gains that can be achieved via collaborative processes outside of investment in essential housing and support.

To read more about best practice in end rough sleeping read:
- Mackie, Johnsen and Wood, Ending Street Homelessness: What Works and Why We Don't Do It, European Journal of Homelessness _ Volume 13, No. 1, 2019

Summary of messages to include

14. Effective strategies to end rough sleeping need to:
- be housing led
- offer person-centred support and choice
- take swift action
- employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer
- ensure services address wider support needs, and
- collaborative effectively between agencies and across sectors

(13) Mackie, Johnsen and Wood, Ending Street Homelessness: What Works and Why We Don't Do It, European Journal of Homelessness _ Volume 13, No. 1, 2019

Responding to unaccompanied children and young people without homes

Children under 18 who flee or are excluded from the family home are usually homeless as a result of violence, abuse or neglect in the home, or unresolved support issues for the child.

In 2021-22, 3,199 children aged 10-14 and 9,613 children aged 15-17 presented unaccompanied at homelessness services. These children represent almost 1 in 20 of all homelessness clients. (14)

In addition to not having a home, unaccompanied homeless children lack the guardianship and adult care and support that is critical to their stage of development. They are likely to lack access to money needed for basic nutrition, and to be experiencing poor sleep, psychological distress and are at risk of, or will be experiencing violent victimisation, including sexual abuse. They will struggle to attend school regularly and get health care. And they are unlikely to know where to turn for help.

This set of issues creates unique challenges for homeless children and the services that support them, and necessitates specialist interventions and supports appropriate to children's developmental stage and needs (15).

In addition to providing support for homeless children within the homelessness service system, services responding to homeless children also need to be connected to, or able to navigate services outside of homelessness, including schools, adolescent health services, youth services, child protection and family services.

A different set of responses is also needed to prevent homelessness for children that mobilises the networks and services where children's risk of homelessness is identified. Children are often identified as at risk of homelessness in schools, or in interactions with police, or in the family support or child protection system. This creates unique opportunities to intervene early to prevent children becoming homeless.

Similarly to children, young people 18-24 have support needs that differ from the supports appropriate to adults. Young people without homes are often experiencing trauma, have lower incomes than adults and consequently even greater problems with the affordability of renting, and usually need support to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The need to mobilise a unique set of systems and services to prevent and respond to child and youth homelessness, that are different to the system response needed to respond to adult homelessness, is the primary reason that Homelessness Australia and many youth homelessness services and youth homelessness advocates have called for a stand-alone national child and youth homelessness plan.

To read more about resolving homelessness for unaccompanied children refer to:
- Dr Catherine Robinson, 'Yes, we see you. Why a national plan for homelessness must make thousands of children on their own a priority', The Conversation
- Trish Connolly, Shorna Moore and Dr Catherine Robinson, Calling for a standalone national child and youth housing and homelessness strategy, Parity Magazine
- National Child and Youth Homelessness Conference report, It's time for a plan to end child and youth homelessness, Youth Development Australia

(14) AIHW SHS Annual Report 2021-22. Table YOUNG.1: Young people presenting alone, by age and sex, 2021–22 plus data cubes
(15) Catherine Robinson, 'Yes, we see you. Why a national plan for homelessness must make thousands of children on their own a priority', The Conversation

Other groups with specific needs

Many other groups that are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness have specific needs when they become homeless, and may need different interventions to prevent homelessness, including women and children and other victim/survivors of violence, First Nations Australians, LGBTIQ+ people, older people, and people with serious mental illness.

Over the coming weeks, Homelessness Australia will host discussions and consultations to explore cohort specific homelessness responses to inform your Submission and get your input into the Homelessness Australia submission, and is planning to provide more messaging guides specific to cohorts.

Watch out in the our advocacy and resources pages of the website or join as a member to get regular updates.

To inform the Homelessness Australia submission, please contact:

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