



OPEN LETTER TO THE HON. JULIE COLLINS, FEDERAL HOMELESSNESS MINISTER AND THE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Funding urgently needed to respond to Australia's homelessness emergency

Overwhelmed homelessness services across Australia are turning away 295 people per day because they don't have the resources to respond.

Instead of increasing resources to keep people off the streets, the last Federal Government revealed a \$73 million funding cliff for homelessness from 30 June 2024.

The risk and uncertainty presented by this funding cliff means homelessness services are already unable to commit to continuing staff contracts beyond June.

If the funding cut proceeds, homelessness service capacity will be slashed by more than 700 homelessness workers nationally, supercharging pressure on an already overwhelmed homelessness system.

A recent survey of 252 workers across frontline homelessness support services revealed:

- a staggering 56 per cent of respondents rated the emotional toll of having to turn people away or provide less support than needed at a maximum score of ten.
- an overwhelming majority (84%) scored 10 when asked about the impact of \$70 million worth of potential cuts to the sector proceeding.

Homelessness funding from July 2024 will be discussed in negotiations for the new five-year National Housing and Homelessness Agreement with the States and Territories at the Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council on 23 February.

Following this meeting services need an immediate guarantee that funding will not be cut.

The Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council should also plan to increase service capacity to meet demand from Australians facing homelessness.

When Australian families are at risk of losing their home, or are faced with a night on the streets, they expect homelessness services to be able to help. The current reality is that resources are so stretched, families and children are ending up on the streets or sleeping in cars. With nowhere to go women and children fleeing violence are returning to violent homes.

Homelessness Australia has estimated that an additional \$450 million in homelessness support is needed to respond to new people needing homelessness assistance because of the housing crisis, and people currently being turned away.

As representative bodies across Australia, we are calling on the Federal Government to:

- guarantee that funding for homelessness services will be increased by \$450 million annually to meet demand
- extend the existing \$73 million of funding which expires on 30 June 2024, and
- index homelessness funding to keep up with rising costs

State and Territory Governments must also increase their funding to match any increased Federal investment.

It is time for an urgent and compassionate response to the homelessness crisis.