



Homelessness
Australia



Fixing Australia's homelessness emergency

Election 2025

Australia's homelessness emergency needs to be a first-order priority

Australia's broader housing crisis has created a national homelessness emergency. We are seeing the worst homelessness numbers in our lifetimes – and one of the highest rates of homelessness across the OECD.

More people are being pushed into homelessness, the average duration of homelessness has got longer and the likelihood of experiencing repeat homelessness is higher.

This has a devastating personal toll and has huge and wide ranging social and economic costs for local communities, service systems and our nation.

Homelessness services across the country are overwhelmed, and can't provide support to everyone needing help.

People in desperate need of homelessness support can't get the help they need.

Forced to turn away hundreds of people each day who are in desperate need - including women and children – the system regularly switches into bypass mode. Where support is provided, it is often too little, too late.

A focus on prevention, early action, rapid rehousing and upscaling proven models for groups at high risk of homelessness would deliver significant returns. Australia's homelessness emergency demands urgent action.

Homelessness Australia is calling on the incoming Australian Government to tackle homelessness as a first-order priority and commit to the following actions.

Homelessness is well above pre-pandemic rates.

[Australian Homelessness Monitor 2024](#)

People experiencing homelessness are dying at almost twice the rate of people with a home

[\(AIHW 2024\)](#)

First Nations people experience homelessness at nine times the rate of other Australians.

Making homelessness in Australia rare, brief and non-recurring

Help when it's needed

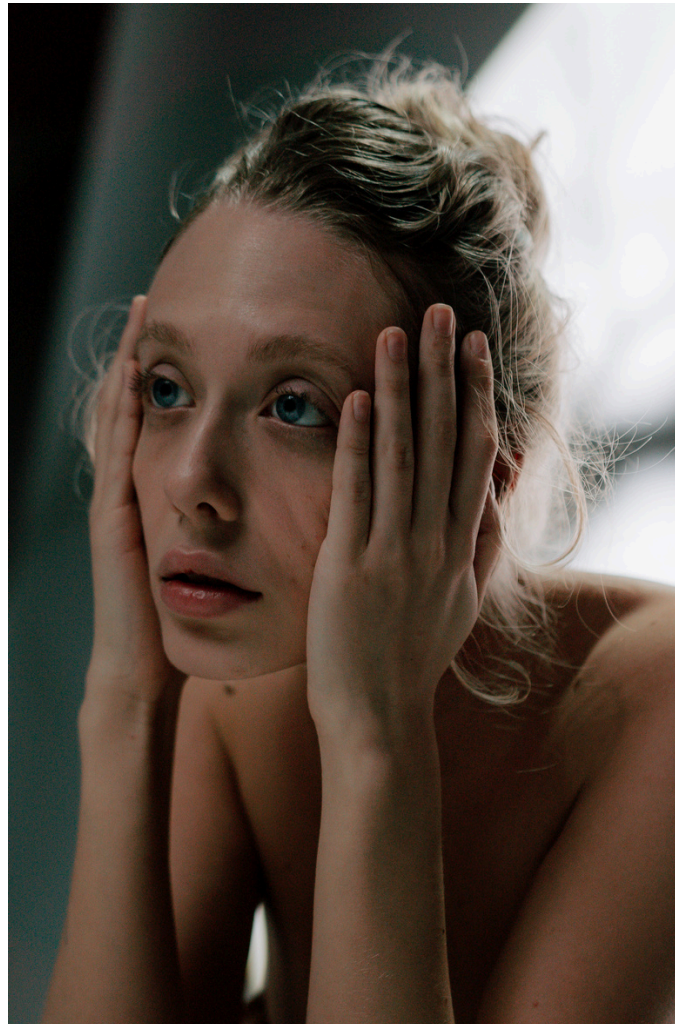
Increase investment in homelessness services by \$670 million per year so that no one is turned away

Prevention: a basic safety net

Drive a sustained increase in social housing towards a target of 10% of housing stock

Boost key social protections that prevent homelessness:

- increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance and index it to lower end rental price growth
- raise the rate of income support



Making homelessness in Australia rare, brief and non-recurring

Targeted early action: catch people before they fall into homelessness

Establish a Homelessness Prevention Transformation Fund

Create a national action plan to prevent child and youth homelessness.

Establish a national tenancy sustainment program for people with more complex needs

Effective responses to support quick exits from homelessness

Provide an escaping homelessness payment to make rapid rehousing the central response to homelessness

Expand proven models of housing with support for young people

Rapidly expand Housing First and supportive housing programs for people at risk of chronic homelessness

Provide strong foundations for Australia's homelessness response

Develop and resource a First Nations led National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Enact national Homelessness Prevention Legislation

Support the operation of a strong national homelessness peak

Help when it's needed: resource services so people receive support

Australia's homelessness emergency has caused a marked increase in demand for homelessness services. Caseloads are rising and the task of assisting people into secure housing has got increasingly harder. At least 123,000 people are not getting the help they need to avoid or escape from homelessness.

Increase investment in homelessness services so that no one is turned away

Impact Economics' 2024 Report [Call Unanswered: unmet demand](#) for specialist homelessness services reveals a system that regularly goes on bypass.

Services are so overwhelmed with new people needing help that they often need to close their door or stop answering calls to help existing clients. An estimated 48,000 people are unable to reach help during the hours that services are on bypass,

Another 75,000 people do make it through the door, but are then turned away by services that lack the resources they need.

While recent commitments to fund more crisis and temporary accommodation for older women and family and domestic family survivors are welcome, investment in expanded service capacity is desperately needed.

Providing support to the 123,000 people who are currently not getting the help they need to avoid or escape homelessness at the average cost per client would cost \$670 million per year.

1 in 13
operating
hours



1 in 22
operating
hours



Targeted early action: catch people before they fall into homelessness

Early action to avert homelessness is infinitely better than waiting until someone is experiencing a homelessness crisis. A systemic approach to targeted prevention for groups at heightened risk and early assistance for those facing imminent risk would make a significant dent in homelessness numbers.

Invest in action to avert homelessness: a Homelessness Prevention Transformation Fund

Where specialist homelessness services can get in front of a crisis, they effectively prevent homelessness in over 80% of cases ([Productivity Commission 2025](#)).

However, demand pressures on the SHS system mean that people who are already homeless are increasingly being prioritised over those at high or imminent risk of homelessness. The result is people losing their home when they could have avoided homelessness.

A dedicated pool of funding for targeted prevention and early intervention by SHS services would deliver huge returns.

Prioritise prevention of homelessness among children and young people

People who have a first experience of homelessness before the age of 16 are most likely to experience homelessness as an adult. Children and young people (aged up to 24 years) account for around 37% of Australia's homelessness numbers. Around 15% of those accessing homelessness services are unaccompanied children and young people. The distinctive

needs of this group warrant a dedicated national action plan to ensure children and young people (and where appropriate their families) get the care and support needed to prevent homelessness.

The nationally funded Reconnect program aims to prevent children (aged 12 and over) and young people becoming homeless but is available at very small scale in limited locations. A [2024 Review of the Reconnect program](#) undertaken for the Department of Social Services recommends strengthening and scaling up the program, including for younger children.

Establish a national tenancy sustainment program

People with psychosocial disability or with other complex needs are grossly overrepresented in Australia's homelessness data and when housed, are highly vulnerable to losing their tenancies. Proactive tenancy support promotes recovery and participation, prevents evictions and reduces the need for admissions to care. A national program to support tenancy sustainment ought to form a key plank of a national response to addressing the [unmet need for psychosocial supports](#) as part of promised mental health and disability reforms.

Effective responses to rapidly rehouse and stop repeat homelessness

The longer that people experience homelessness the greater the cumulative harm to their physical and mental health and wellbeing, education, economic participation and social connections. Different approaches to rapidly respond to homelessness are needed that reflect the different aspirations, needs, experiences and risks people face.

While most people facing homelessness can sustain ordinary housing with little or no support, some need more intensive or longer term assistance to sustain a home.

Over 10% of those housed through homelessness services in 2023-24 have since returned to homelessness
(Productivity Commission 2025)

Rapid rehousing: an escaping homelessness payment

The quicker people can get through an experience of homelessness the better the outcome. However, the dire shortage of low-cost rental vacancies makes it extremely difficult to rehome people. Resulting bottlenecks in crisis and transitional accommodation are getting worse. Options to secure longer-term placements in the private market are needed. An escaping homelessness payment to subsidise rental costs would help enable this.

Expand proven housing models for young people

Young people experiencing homelessness need a dedicated response to help overcome adversity and make a successful transition to adulthood. Youth homelessness services are predominantly funded for short crisis interventions. Proven models that combine longer term housing and support need to be expanded.

The number of people experiencing persistent homelessness has surged 25% over the last five years
(Productivity Commission 2025)

Housing First and supportive housing for people at risk of long term homelessness

Australia has a known group of around 30,000 people that are experiencing chronic and repeated homelessness. Many have psychosocial disability, cognitive impairment or complex support needs. They represent the bulk of repeat, long-term users of homelessness services despite being a small proportion of those that experience homelessness.

Proven models – including Housing First - provide housing with security of tenure, alongside recovery and wellbeing supports, to enable people to sustain their housing, spend less time in care and institutional settings and be involved in community life. Despite delivering strong returns on investment, these approaches are few and far between.

A National Partnership Agreement and related nation policy framework are needed to create a national-wide response. Queensland's 2024 Supportive Housing Policy provides good inspiration.

Strong foundations for Australia's homelessness response

Close the Gap in First Nations Homelessness

29% of First Nations people aged 15 and over have experienced homelessness at some stage.

First Nations people are nine times more likely to experience homelessness than other community members. Almost one in three people accessing homelessness services are First Nations people.

We know that First Nations people benefit most when First Nations communities and community-controlled organisations are given the power to decide which policy approaches are required, and how and where to allocate funding and resources.

To drive down First Nations homelessness, the government needs to work with First Nations communities and organisations to develop and resource a First Nations led National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

National Homelessness Prevention legislation

A national response to homelessness that is underpinned by legislation has been widely and long called for as a means to drive a coherent, coordinated and sustained approach. Creating statutory requirements for a national plan with targets, embedding recognition of housing as a universal right and establishing a duty to assist is crucial to addressing our housing and homelessness crisis.

Homelessness Australia calls for a refreshed version of the [National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024](#) to be passed by the Australian Parliament in 2025.

A strong and effective national homelessness peak

Homelessness Australia has served the sector and community for over 30 years and is largely powered by philanthropic, sector and volunteer contributions. Now more than ever the sector and government has much to gain from a well-equipped, properly funded, national homelessness peak.

Equip the national homelessness sector peak to:

- **strengthen sector capability**
- **promote evidence-based approaches**
- **foster workforce development**
- **inform national policy and programs**
- **partner in systems governance.**

ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AUSTRALIA

Homelessness Australia is the national peak body for homelessness in Australia. We provide systemic advocacy for the homelessness sector. We work with a large network of organisations to provide a unified voice when it comes to preventing and responding to homelessness.

Visit homelessnessaustralia.org.au

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Homelessness Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all of the lands on which we meet and work. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples and elders past, present and future. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.