

Consequences of defunding the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

Australia is at a critical juncture in how it funds and provides for some of its most vulnerable people. A decision by the Federal Government to defund the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), if enacted, will result in significant impact on State and Territory ability to provide dynamic services that strive to prevent or end homelessness for people in need.

What is the NPAH?

Responses to homelessness are funded under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The NPAH contributes to the NAHA outcome that 'people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion' and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Government and state and territory governments in relation to reducing and preventing homelessness. Funding associated with the NPAH was provided for the period 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2013, with an interim funding arrangement agreed between the Australian and state and territory governments for 2013–14 and 2014–15. In 2015–16, the Australian government committed further funding of \$230 million over 2 years, under the NPAH, which was matched by states and territories.

What does the NPAH deliver in partnership with the States and Territories?

Governments across Australia fund a range of services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Services support both those that are homeless as well as those at risk of homelessness and include generalist services as well as those for more specific target groups including women and children escaping domestic and family violence and youth.

Many Australians experience events in their life that may place them at risk of homelessness. It is estimated that around 44% of low-income households experience affordability issues due to rental stress (paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent)¹, and around 1 in 6 women have experienced some form of domestic and family violence in their lifetime, putting them at risk of homelessness².

In the 2011 Census, 105,000 Australians were classified as homeless. This figure includes people in supported accommodation for the homeless, people in temporary accommodation, those 'sleeping rough' and people living in severely crowded dwellings (those that required 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the residents)³.

In 2014-15, Specialist Homeless Services delivered the following across Australia⁴:

- 256,000 people were assisted by specialist homeless services
- 20 million days of support were delivered
- 6.6 million nights of accommodation were provided

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2013a. Housing and occupancy costs, 2011-12. ABS cat no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS

² ABS 2013b. Personal safety, Australia, 2012. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS

³ ABS 2012. Census of population and housing: estimating homelessness, 2011. ABS cat no. 2049.0. Canberra: ABS

⁴ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/>

The data collected provides a description of the issues dealt with. These include:

- 1 in 3 clients seeking support for domestic and family violence
- 1 in 10 clients presented with a disability
- 1 in 4 clients had a current mental health issue
- 1 in 10 young people presenting alone were sleeping rough

On any given day across Australia, 1,500 specialist homeless services were supporting nearly 54,000 clients. Over 9,000 of those clients were young people presenting alone with more than 13,000 children presenting with their family seeking support.

What impact will de-funding of NPAH have on States and Territories capacity to respond to and prevent homelessness?

The following gives some measure of the impact the defunding of NPAH will have on each state and territory. Whilst the numbers provided are not exact, they give some measure of the impact on both vulnerable people and tax payers more broadly. Cuts to homeless programs will see an increase – in dollar terms – across the criminal justice system, welfare agencies, mental health services, schools and in health centres and hospitals.

New South Wales

New South Wales (NSW) receives \$30 million as its part of the NPAH. The NSW Government contributed an additional \$148 million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness. The total number of people receiving support across New South Wales from Specialist Homeless Service in 2014-15 equalled 48,262 individuals⁵.

188 services deliver the Specialist Homeless Service response across NSW.

Funding enhancements were delivered through NPAH to 24 domestic and family violence services to deliver an enhanced response at known crisis times and 29 youth services to enable a 24/7 crisis response.

The loss of the NPAH funding in NSW would create service gaps for women and children escaping domestic and family violence and quality support for young people in 24/7 crisis accommodation.

Victoria

Victoria receives \$22.8 million as its part of the NPAH. The Victorian Government contributed an additional \$ 42.7 million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness. The total number of people receiving support across Victoria from Specialist Homeless Service in 2014-15 equalled 102,793 individuals⁶.

Services funded through NPAH include:

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- 16 families at risk of homelessness services
- 3 domestic and family violence case management services
- 14 domestic and family violence after-hours services
- 11 specialist Indigenous domestic and family violence services
- 24 domestic and family violence Safe at Home services

⁵ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/supplementary-tables/>

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- 9 domestic and family violence services for men who use violence
- legal assistance for Indigenous women experiencing family violence
- 11 specialist assistance to children services
- 9 family reconciliation programs for young people
- 21 A Place to Call Home services
- 22 services funded as part of Family Violence Support Stage 2
- 8 Youth Foyer programs
- 14 young people leaving care services
- 8 young people with dual diagnosis services
- 26 enhanced youth refuge response services
- 39 workforce development initiatives
- 2 tenancy support services for people with mental health issues
- 12 mental health programs for people experiencing homelessness with serious mental illnesses
- 3 supportive housing services
- 7 Innovation Action Programs
- 14 support to maintain tenancies services
- assertive outreach and intensive case management for rough sleepers
- 3 support for people exiting prison services
- 20 Opening Doors access points

The loss of \$22.8 million in NPAH funding would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in Victoria to both end and prevent homelessness.

Queensland

Queensland receives \$28.7 million as its part of the NPAH. The Queensland Government contributed an additional \$ 28.8million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness. The total number of people receiving support across Queensland from Specialist Homeless Service in 2014-15 equalled 44,213 individuals⁷.

Services funded through NPAH include:

- Common Ground Brisbane
- Outreach Support
- 6 Street to Home services
- 4 Homeless Health Outreach projects
- Homeless Emergency Department Liaison Officers at 4 hospitals
- 15 HomeStay Support services
- 3 Resident Recovery Programs
- A range of services to support women and children escaping domestic and family violence including safety upgrades, enhanced immediate services and mobile support services
- Logan Youth Foyer
- 7 Youth Housing & Reintegration Services
- Support for young adults exiting care of the state
- 3 transition post care support services for people with disability
- Supported Independent Living Services
- Mobile support services for young people

⁷ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/supplementary-tables/>

The loss of \$28.7 million in NPAH funding would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in Queensland to both end and prevent homelessness.

Western Australia

Western Australia receives \$15 million as its part of the NPAH. In 2015-16 the combined West Australian and Federal Government investment saw approximately \$81 million contributed to the response to homelessness.

A two-year evaluation on the implementation of 14 different NPAH programs highlighted the success and effectiveness of programs delivered under NPAH including a restoration of dignity, self-respect, confidence and independence for many clients, and success in preventing and reducing homelessness through provision of affordable and adequate accommodation along with sustained and intensive support⁸. The total number of people receiving support across Western Australia from Specialist Homeless Service in 2014-15 equalled 23,021 individuals⁹.

Services funded through NPAH include:

- 5 support for children in homeless family's services
- Street to Home service
- 1 homeless accommodation and support night shelter
- 2 remote rough sleeper assertive outreach services
- 2 remote rough sleeper accommodation services
- 13 homeless accommodation support worker programs
- 5 housing support workers targeting people in corrective services
- 3 housing support workers targeting people with drug and alcohol issues
- 7 housing support workers targeting people with mental health issues
- 2 housing support workers
- 3 private rental tenancy support services
- 8 public rental tenancy support services
- 1 homeless accommodation and support service
- 1 homeless assessment and referral service
- 9 services providing a coordinated domestic and family violence response
- 6 Safe at Home services
- 5 domestic and family violence outreach services
- 3 domestic and family Violence accommodation and support services
- 1 youth foyer
- 1 young women leaving child protection service
- 1 at risk youth accommodation service

The loss of \$15 million in NPAH funding would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in Western Australia to both end and prevent homelessness.

South Australia

South Australia receives \$8.9 million as its part of the NPAH. The South Australian Government contributed an additional \$8.62 million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness.

⁸ National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Evaluation of Western Australian Programs, Final Report, March 2013

⁹ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/supplementary-tables/>

Services funded through NPAH include:

- Assistance for older people
- Common Ground
- 3 Homeless Gateway services
- 1 Street to Home service
- 28 homeless generalist homeless services located across South Australia
- 15 domestic and family violence services located across South Australia
- 1 domestic and family violence service for women from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- 1 domestic and family violence service for Aboriginal women
- Adolescent community brokerage funds
- 16 youth homelessness services across South Australia

The loss of \$8.9 million in NPAH funding would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in South Australia to both end and prevent homelessness.

Tasmania

Tasmania receives \$2.8 million as its part of the NPAH. The Tasmanian Government contributed an additional \$ 2.8million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness.

Services funded through NPAH include:

- Common Ground
- 2 long term supported accommodation services
- 2 dedicated youth supported accommodation services
- 2 youth head lease programs
- Housing Connect

The loss of \$2.8 million in NPAH funding is predicted to see a 20% reduction in service capacity at Housing Connect's Front Door service with 3,500 fewer cases able to be handled each year. A loss of same day service and outreach support to rural communities through Front Door services will see people in regional and rural Tasmania need to travel to major towns and cities to get support.

Around 800 fewer people a year will be offered tenancy support through Housing Connect which will result in a 40% reduction in the number of people who can be supported to stay housed.

\$1.35 million of NPAH funding goes towards supporting 213 young people, vulnerable adults and people with a disability in long-term supported accommodation facilities. In addition to providing housing, these services help residents learn to live independently, participate in education and access jobs.

Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) receives \$1.5m million as its part of the NPAH. This funding supports an estimated 2,500 individuals. The ACT Government contributed an additional \$1.5million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness.

In the ACT, the NPAH accounts for just over 15% of the total budgetary allocation to homelessness services. It funds services that are primarily supporting people to either prevent homelessness or end homelessness.

Services funded through NPAH include:

- 1 Supportive Tenancy Service
- 1 Managed Accommodation Program
- Street to Home service
- 6 Transitional Support and Head Tenancy services
- 4 Housing and Support Initiative packages
- Heira domestic and family violence supported accommodation service
- Our Place youth foyer
- First Point (matched funding until 30 June 2016) whose function is now provided through One Link, an expanded housing, homelessness, child, youth and family services gateway.

The loss of \$1.5 million in NPAH funding equates to \$30 per week per person supported across the ACT. This would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in the ACT to both end and prevent homelessness.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory receives \$5.3 million as its part of the NPAH. The Northern Territory Government contributed an additional \$ 5 million in 2015-16 to the response to homelessness.

Services funded through NPAH include:

- South Terrace Managed Accommodation
- Katherine Family Accommodation & Support service
- 3 tenancy support services
- 2 supported accommodation services
- 1 service providing assistance for people leaving Corrections
- 1 transitional housing program
- 1 long-term accommodation hostel
- 2 tenancy support programs
- 2 men's crisis accommodation services
- Street2Home
- 1 head lease program
- 1 domestic and family violence service in Alice Springs
- 1 domestic and family violence transitional housing service in Alice Springs
- 1 crisis youth refuge
- 1 youth housing advocacy program
- 5 youth accommodation & support services
- 1 youth housing options & pathways program
- 1 young people leaving care program
- Spin 180 Youth Homelessness Program

The loss of \$5.3 million in NPAH funding would have a devastating impact on the capacity of services in the Northern Territory to both end and prevent homelessness.