

An overview of The Road Home aka “The White Paper”

About this briefing:

This paper is written as a brief overview of “The Road Home” – A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (aka the White Paper on Homelessness). This paper was launched by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on the 21st

The short version:

As we already know SAAP is no more, absorbed (along with the CSHA) into the National Affordable Housing Agreement. In the short term it will be business as usual for SAAP funded specialist homeless services.

On top of this there is some new funding.

The Road Home is a strategic policy document for ‘new’ homelessness funding, known as the Homelessness National Partnership Payment (NPP) and the Social Housing NPP.

The new money announced for 2009 to 2013, totals \$1.2 Billion.

The three strategic directions for the Homelessness NPP are

1. **Turning off the tap: services will intervene early to prevent homelessness.**
2. **Improving and expanding services: services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation and end homelessness for their clients.**
3. **Breaking the cycle: people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.**

More detail.

The Pitch:

- The White Paper delivers a **55 per cent increase on the current investment in homelessness services.**
- This represents an additional \$800 million over four years and is a **down payment** on the 12 year reform agenda.
- It also includes a **commitment to additional social housing for homeless** people of \$400 million over the next two financial years.
- When – despite our best efforts – people become homeless, this White Paper sets out ways to strengthen the provision of services for these Australians.
- It will help services to provide people who become homeless with the full range of support that they need – rather than leaving individuals to try and navigate a complex system looking for help.
- Assertive outreach services will work with homeless people bringing people off the streets into the housing they need to end their homelessness permanently.

The White Paper Vision

Homelessness is everyone's responsibility. Ending homelessness requires sustained long-term effort from all levels of government, business, the not-for-profit sector and the community.

Headline Goals to 2020

The Australian Government, with the agreement of state and territory governments, has set two headline goals to guide our long term response to homelessness:

- 1. Halve overall homelessness by 2020**
- 2. Offer accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020.**

Interim targets (to 2013) will measure progress towards these goals.

To achieve this, the key interim targets (or PI's) for 2013 are:

- Overall homelessness is reduced by 20 per cent.
- Primary homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent.
- The proportion of people seeking specialist homelessness services more than three times in 12 months is reduced by 25 per cent.
- To track progress, the following interim targets for 2013 will be developed with the states and territories:
 - The number of people engaged in employment and/or education/training after presenting at specialist homelessness services is increased by 50 per cent.
 - The number of people exiting care and custodial settings into homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent.
 - The number of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following domestic or family violence is increased by 20 per cent.
 - The number of people exiting from social housing and private rental to homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent.
 - The number of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with improved housing stability and engaged with family, school and work is increased by 25 per cent.
 - The number of children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness provided with additional support and engaged in education is increased by 50 per cent.
 - The number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive financial advice, counselling and/or case management is increased by 25 per cent.
 - The number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive legal services is increased by 25 per cent.

Principles:

1. A national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels of government and from non-government and business sectors is needed. Homelessness must be seen as a shared responsibility.

2. Preventing homelessness is important. We need to understand the

causes of homelessness and use this knowledge to stop people becoming homeless.

3. Social inclusion drives our efforts. Tackling homelessness is about more than shelter and support. The focus must be on building the capacity of people and communities to maximise everyone's potential to participate economically and socially.

4. Clients need to be placed at the centre of service delivery and design. People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness need to be included in decision-making processes.

5. The safety and wellbeing of all clients is essential. Responses to homelessness need to focus on keeping people safe – including protecting women and their children who are escaping domestic and family violence and people experiencing other forms of abuse. Special attention must be given to the unique needs of children at risk.

6. The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families need to be protected. Assistance should be balanced to reflect the social and economic objectives appropriate to age, capacity and aspirations.

7. Joined-up service delivery needs joined-up policy. An overarching policy framework is needed to guide all government approaches to addressing homelessness. Program funding and accountability boundaries must be changed to allow governments and funded organisations to take a multidisciplinary approach to addressing people's needs.

8. Transition points are a priority. People are more vulnerable at times of change: becoming a parent, adolescence, school-to-work, retirement, family breakdown, leaving statutory care and leaving prison. These changes can be more difficult if compounded by poor health, mental health issues, caring responsibilities, bereavement, limited education and geographic or social isolation. Support at these points can prevent problems later on.

9. Evidence-based policy helps to shape our priorities for action. Strong evidence on outcomes should drive policy and program design. Achievements will be measured to assess the economic and social returns on investment. Action research is important as it helps improve policy and ensures that best practice and experience can be shared.

10. Targets are set to reduce homelessness and hold ourselves accountable. Rigorous and regular reporting against targets will ensure the Australian, state and territory and local governments and service providers are accountable.

The \$\$

Under the NAHA, the Council of Australian Governments has approved additional funding of \$1.2 billion over the next four years as a down payment on the 12 year reform agenda outlined in this White Paper.

\$800 million of this funding will be spent on services to prevent and reduce homelessness - delivered through the National Partnership on Homelessness. NPP

A further \$400 million will increase the supply of affordable and supported housing for people who would otherwise be homeless - delivered through the National Partnership on Social Housing.

Detailed Implementation Plans for each National Partnership will be agreed between the Australian Government and each state and territory in the first half of 2009 (By the end of March)

More detail on the three Strategies

The response to homelessness will be implemented through three strategies:

1. *Turning off the tap: services will intervene early to prevent homelessness* Half of the Australian Government's new funding commitments over the next four years will be directed to the prevention of homelessness. Local initiatives have demonstrated that homelessness can be prevented. Significant effort should be focused on delivering evidence-based services across the country to stop people – especially children, families and young people – becoming homeless in the first place.

When homelessness does occur, mainstream services have a bigger role to play. The time people spend in specialist homelessness services should be minimised. The process of supporting people to obtain long-term housing and social and economic participation in the community should start as early as possible. Increasing the supply of affordable housing and supported accommodation will mean people can quickly move out of crisis into stable housing

Initiatives under this strategy include:

- Increasing support for people in public and private rental housing to maintain their tenancies
- Assisting up to 9,000 additional young people between 12 and 18 years of age, to remain connected with their families
- Assisting up to 2,250 additional families at risk of homelessness to stay housed
- 'No exits into homelessness' from statutory, custodial care, health,

- mental health and drug and alcohol services
- Helping women and children who experience domestic violence to stay safely in the family home
- Delivering community based mental health services under the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMs) to 1,000 difficult to reach Australians, including people who are homeless
- Establishing a network of 90 Community Engagement Officers to improve access to Centrelink services for people at risk of homelessness.
- Compulsory rent payments for Centrelink customers in public and community housing.
- Enhanced Tenancy support across all tenures
- Regulate residential tenancy databases and improve tenancy laws.

2. Improving and expanding services:

services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation and end homelessness for their clients

All people who are vulnerable to homelessness will need help from mainstream services such as **Centrelink** and health and employment services.

Those who become homeless may also seek help from the specialist homelessness sector.

People will get much better help if mainstream and specialist homelessness services work better together. Improving information technology systems across services will also help.

Developing advanced practitioner positions in specialist homelessness services will drive this integration and provide enhanced career opportunities for skilled staff.

Legislation will underpin the national response to homelessness, setting standards to deliver the best quality services possible.

Initiatives under this strategy include:

- A workforce development strategy for specialist homelessness services
- Testing new funding models that reflect the complexity of client's needs
- Improving information technology systems for services
- Developing quality standards for specialist homelessness services.

Mainstream services – as critical 'first to know' agencies - include:

- state and territory housing authorities
- Centrelink
- universal employment services
- schools and other education and training services
- health services, including hospitals, mental health and drug and alcohol services
- legal, policing, correctional and juvenile justice systems
- family and children's services, including child protection services and immigration
- programs
- aged care services

On the ground, improved collaboration between services will mean that there will be 'no wrong door' into the service system for a person who is homeless. There will be multiple entry points to services: any entry point will be the right entry point for people who are homeless to be assessed and receive appropriate assistance.

Features of a 'no wrong door' system will include:

- mainstream services assessing the housing needs of clients
- specialist homelessness services assessing other needs beyond housing like education and employment needs of clients
- strong service networks and agreements between all human service providers at a local level
- joint assessment, planning, coordination and case management sharing information about clients.

Specialist homelessness services must build strong working partnerships with each other and with mainstream services. They must connect clients to mainstream programs such as housing, health services and employment services that can deliver ongoing support, improve outcomes for clients and reduce the likelihood of homelessness happening again.

Case mix: The Australian Government will work with the states and territories to establish a 'case-mix' pilot trial to better quantify the actual costs of supporting high-needs clients and test whether additional outcome-based performance payments can improve both employment and housing outcomes for people who are homeless.

Rural / Metro services funding distribution: The Australian Government will work with the states and territories to review the current distribution of specialist homelessness services against the geographic distribution of people who are homeless, particularly those sleeping rough.

Advanced Practitioners: The Australian Government, with state and

territory governments, will consider the development of 'advanced practitioners' within the awards covering employees in specialist homelessness services.

National Accreditation: The Australian Government and state and territory governments will work with homelessness services and people who are homeless to develop national homelessness service standards and a system for accrediting services focused on improving quality.

National service charters for mainstream services and accreditation for funded specialist homelessness services will lead to a service system that maintains high-quality service delivery and has appropriately skilled and qualified staff. It will also help develop partnerships that encourage consistency and best practice service delivery across the sector.

A national service standards and accreditation system that focuses on quality improvement will contribute to:

- placing consumers at the centre of the response in both the mainstream and homelessness service settings
- a greater ability to attract and retain a highly trained, multi-skilled and well-educated workforce
- career paths for the workforce, with skills and expertise that are easily transferable within the sector
- continuous service improvement to ensure that clients receive a service offer focussing on achieving sustainable housing and employment outcomes
- stronger connections between government, business and non-government services

A new Act: The Australian Government will enact new legislation to ensure that people who are homeless receive quality services and adequate support. In addition, service standards encouraging best practice and achievement of outcomes would be set out in the legislation, ensuring national consistency and quality of the services offered to people experiencing homelessness. The best features of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 and the Disability Services Act 1986 would be incorporated into new legislation on homelessness.

3. ***Breaking the cycle:***

People who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

The report says that services targeting people sleeping rough in Australia are underdeveloped. Assertive outreach programs are needed to get them into stable housing, to address their health issues and to assist them to stabilise their lives.

Specialist homelessness services provide a vital safety net for people in crisis who have no other options. They also have a key role to play in ending homelessness by identifying people whose long-term prospects are poor without intensive assistance.

Specialist homelessness services need to be able to *wrap services* around their clients. This involves using their expertise to assess all of the clients' needs, identifying the services required, brokering these services and coordinating their delivery

Under the National Affordable Housing Agreement, due to commence in 2009, the Australian Government will work with states and territories to increase the supply of affordable housing and deliver specialist accommodation for people who are homeless. These initiatives will help to move people from specialist homelessness services into long-term housing that meets their needs, ensuring they stay permanently housed.

Initiatives and ideas under this strategy include:

- Building up to 2,700 additional public and community housing dwellings for low income households
- Allocating aged care places and capital funds for at least one new specialist facility
- for older people who are homeless in each of the next four years
- Building up to 4,200 new houses and upgrading up to 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities
- Providing assertive outreach programs for rough sleepers
- Additional specialist support for homeless children
- Improving services for older people experiencing homelessness.
- The Australian Government will provide an additional \$1.9 billion over ten years to build 4,200 new houses and upgrade up to 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.
- The Australian Government, through Centrelink, will trial the co-location of state and territory housing services in other Centrelink Customer Service Centres to improve services to people who are homeless.
- To assist people who are homeless to participate in these kinds of activities, the Australian Government has provided \$2.3 million to RecLink to deliver their sporting and cultural programs

like the Choir of Hard Knocks across Australia.

- As part of the Government's new employment service system, the Australian Government has committed \$41 million to an Innovation Fund designed to address the needs of the most disadvantaged jobseekers, including people who are homeless.
- Funding will be provided to projects which foster innovative solutions to overcome barriers to employment. Organisations will be selected to be part of the Innovation Fund Panel and invited to propose their ideas for new projects.
- Improved legal services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Increasing voting and civic participation among people who are homeless

Specialist models of accommodation

Increasing the supply of affordable housing will assist in reducing homelessness. Some people who are homeless will benefit from specialist long-term accommodation models that easily allow for the integration of support and accommodation.

The 'Foyer model' figures in this thinking.

Specialist supported housing facilities in diverse communities should target:

- families who are homeless
- people who are ageing and chronically homeless
- young people who are homeless.

Under the National Partnership on Homelessness states and territories will provide additional specialist support to children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This specialist support for children could include:

Regional child development workers to work with specialist homelessness services to provide training and secondary consultation; develop and coordinate formal relationships between specialist homelessness services and early childhood services, child counselling services and schools; and coordinate programs to support children at different developmental stages and needs.

Brokerage funding for homelessness services to meet the specific needs of children. The funding could be used to purchase school supplies and uniforms, counselling and health services, education,

tutoring and mentoring services and sporting and recreational equipment. This will ensure children experiencing homelessness can have access to the basic support and supplies they need to stay at, or return to, school and to settle in to new homes.

Closer links between homelessness and child protection services to ensure that the most vulnerable children do not exit specialist homelessness services to unsafe living conditions. This work will build on the National Child Protection Framework currently being developed for implementation in 2009.

An overview of the governance and accountability

- Council of Homelessness (appointed by PM to monitor the white paper goals)
- The COAG Reform Council to monitor the outcome and PI's of NAHA
- Social Inclusion Board will establish principles for the Council
- Bea Miles Foundation (business and corporate sector)
- Legislation

The National Partnership

The COAG reforms make it clear that the states and territories are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of services.

The new approach under COAG has a number of critical features:

It institutes a new national approach to homelessness with *tighter* controls placed on the achievement of improved outcomes for homeless Australians and *looser* controls on inputs, allowing state and territory governments and community organisations who are closer to clients to specify the design of services that work.

The achievement of outcomes will not be narrowly confined, with a focus on improving delivery of services across government to prevent and respond to homelessness.

Through the National Affordable Housing Agreement there will be a greater focus on the achievement of long-term housing outcomes.

Under the Agreement, Australian and state and territory governments are investing:

- an additional \$632 million under the National Rental Affordability Scheme to provide incentives to organisations to build 50,000 new rental properties for rent to low income tenants at 20 per cent below

- market rent
- an additional \$300 million under *A Place to Call Home* to provide an ongoing pool
- of at least 600 homes over a five year period for individuals and families who are homeless
- an additional \$400 million to deliver more public and community housing for low income Australians, as well as specialist models of housing for people who are homeless under the National Partnership on Social Housing
- an additional \$1.9 billion over 10 years to boost the quality and supply of housing in remote Indigenous communities and address significant overcrowding, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.

Detailed Implementation Plans for the National Partnerships on Social Housing, Homelessness and Remote Indigenous Housing must be developed between the Australian Government and each state and territory by 1 April 2009.

Research

The Australian Government will develop a national homelessness research strategy to support the White Paper. It will build on existing research and data collection efforts. It will strengthen the current evidence base to inform policy and practice and guide research priorities for researchers and funding bodies.

As a starting point, the Australian Government will work with states and territories to pilot data linking projects in order to gain a clearer picture of the pathways through service systems for people who are homeless. Initial projects will focus on clients most at risk, particularly children, and will explore data linkages across child protection, housing, homelessness and criminal justice systems as well as Centrelink.

As part of the national homelessness research strategy, the Australian Government will work with state and territory governments and specialist homelessness services to reform the National Data Collection process.

Priorities for reform will be:

- improving analysis of turn away data
- improving analysis of outcomes for people following periods of support from homelessness services
- improving the period of time between collection of data and reporting
- enhancing access to AIHW data for other research purposes.

The national homelessness research strategy will also focus on these additional research priorities:

- population-based research: classifying, diagnosing and measuring the prevalence and incidence of homelessness across various population groups
- identifying risk and protective factors, causal mechanisms and the housing, health and employment outcomes of homelessness
- the effectiveness of interventions designed to prevent and respond to
- homelessness inter-sectoral research on how people (especially children) cope with homelessness and the importance of resilience
- the lifelong consequences of homelessness, with a particular focus on becoming homeless and moving on from homelessness.

The Australian Government will undertake a scoping study to explore information technology options to better integrate homelessness specialist with each other and with mainstream services.

WHAT DO YOU RECKON ?

FEEDBACK TO YAA: We are interested in your initial thoughts on the white paper. If you have any comments please email George Mudford at george@yaa.com.au.

Trigger questions:

What looks good in the white paper for young people or for your service (opportunities)?

What worries you about the white paper with regards to young people or for your service (concerns)?

What do you think of the three strategies?

Do you have any questions?

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