

# A Way Home: Reducing Homelessness in NSW

*NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009 – 2014*



# Our commitment

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is a new approach to homelessness which includes working more closely with the non-government sector. The following set of principles reflect our commitment to addressing and preventing homelessness and have been developed in collaboration with our partners in the non-government sector.

- 1. Our response to homelessness requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-community partnership approach.** Our response will draw on the strengths of all levels of government, the not-for-profit, community and private sectors and will respect each other's experience, expertise, roles and ideas.
- 2. Our response to homelessness requires a continuum approach focused on prevention and the provision of long-term and sustainable housing solutions.** A continuum approach recognises the importance of addressing and preventing the causes of homelessness and providing sustainable responses as well as responding to crises. We understand the important role that both mainstream and specialist support systems have to play in intervening early to prevent homelessness.
- 3. Our response to homelessness requires a focus on critical points in people's lives.** Evidence tells us that people are more vulnerable to homelessness when they experience significant changes in their lives such as relationship or family breakdown, moving between education and employment and leaving institutional settings. Our responses will focus on supporting people who are at risk of becoming homeless at critical times in their lives to prevent homelessness from occurring.
- 4. Our response to homelessness will respect and protect the social, economic and civic rights of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.** People who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness have the same rights as every other member of the community and these rights must be protected and respected. Our responses to homelessness will treat people with respect and dignity and respect each person's right to participate fully in community life; access support through the service system; have safe and secure housing and support when it's needed; and be safe and to live lives free of violence and discrimination. We also recognise and value the right of the individual to participate in decision-making processes about their own future.
- 5. Our response to homelessness will be based on flexible approaches that meet the needs of the individual.** Not all people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are the same. Each person faces a unique set of circumstances and challenges and our responses must take into consideration the many factors that are specific to each individual such as a person's age, gender, family circumstances, language and cultural background.
- 6. Our response to homelessness must be delivered in the context of other policies and initiatives.** The NSW Government's response to homelessness will be linked to strategies and actions that are already in place under the *NSW State Plan*, the National Partnership on Homelessness and other State and Commonwealth policies and strategies. It is essential that our responses are linked to make the best possible use of the resources available to address homelessness.
- 7. Our response to homelessness must be guided and informed by evidence.** In order to make good decisions about service design and delivery, we need to develop and implement data collection and analysis systems that tell us whether our responses are effective, and how we might improve those responses.

## Premier's foreword



When I became Premier I signalled that we would be renewing our efforts to tackle homelessness, that after many years of prosperity, it simply wasn't good enough that people were sleeping rough just down the road from Parliament House. One of my earliest decisions was to redirect funds from my own administration to homelessness initiatives. The extra homes and support services we've provided to chronically homeless people in the inner city and to homeless young people in the Nepean have been a useful addition to the responses already in place.

The Government and its non-government partners are already doing a tremendous amount to deal with homelessness. The fact that the latest Census analysis showed numbers of homeless have held steady in spite of a growing population demonstrates that we can make an impact on this problem. The effects of the global financial crisis may make it challenging to keep up this trend. In any case, we need to make sure that our funding and our commitment are applied to the greatest effect if we are going to bring those numbers down.

This *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* shows how we intend to bring this about. A guiding principle in this has been putting the needs of the individual first. Homelessness is about more than a roof over your head. It's about the services people need to cope with the difficulties in their lives, helping them stay in housing for the long term. People come into contact with a broad range of government services before they become homeless and we can improve the way we work before people are without a home.

The Plan has been developed through a process of consultation with homelessness services and peak organisations from the non-government sector and has benefited from their frontline perspective. Homelessness can result from any number of experiences in people's lives, and there is a role for all parts of the community in helping to address the immediate problems and overcome the underlying causes. With this in mind, one of the key actions in the Plan is to improve our partnerships with non-government organisations and other stakeholders, including business.

The Australian Government is a key partner in our response to homelessness. The National Partnership on Homeless, agreed in 2008, signalled our joint commitment to reducing homelessness. The Plan is aligned with the objectives of the National Partnership.

One of the problems in tackling homelessness has been a lack of solid information about what works best. The Plan rests on a commitment to measuring our performance, evaluating the actions we undertake and building up the evidence base. This means that we will be learning as we go and that there is room to make changes if the evidence shows that there are better ways of going about it.

We've all seen some of the terrible impacts homelessness can have on people's lives. The Government is determined to work with all our key partners to turn this around. I look forward to us joining our efforts to try and end homelessness.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Rees".

**Nathan Rees**  
Premier

## Minister's foreword



Sadly homelessness is the harsh reality for too many people in NSW. As the Minister for Housing, I'm determined to help people who are homeless and I am pleased that this issue is being given the highest possible priority with all levels of government.

As you are aware, causes of homelessness are complex and varied – it may be linked to unemployment, mental illness, or family breakdown. What that means is that we have to make sure we are delivering the right services to each person to help them into homes.

There is no question that homelessness services in NSW are working very hard to help many, many people. Each year, thousands of people are assisted through crisis and long-term accommodation, health care, emotional and life skills support.

As a result of this care, in NSW we have successfully held the rate of homelessness steady, despite worsening economic circumstances. But this isn't enough.

I want to see a time when people have the right support in place to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place, where people in dire straights are placed straight into secure, stable accommodation while the services they need come to them. I want to see a time where crisis housing is just that – something that happens in a crisis rather than somewhere people live for long periods of time.

We must and we will reduce homelessness. This *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is our commitment to making these outcomes a reality.

It introduces new prevention and early intervention approaches that will stop people experiencing homelessness for the first time. It introduces new and better support for some of the most vulnerable people at risk of homelessness – young people leaving out of home care, people leaving mental health facilities and women and children escaping domestic violence.

The Plan is designed to be flexible. It means that there is scope for new projects and ideas such as the common ground model which provides stable long-term housing for chronically homeless people. It means we can learn more about homeless people from each year of the plan to the next year and respond with the right services to help them get their lives back on track.

A major change is a reform of how homeless services are delivered. With Government and non-government services working together we will shift the focus away from crisis services as our primary response towards services that prevent homelessness and provide long-term support to allow people to stay safely in their home.

In developing this Action Plan we have drawn from the best evidence available through research, the experience of our non-government partners and the breadth of knowledge across levels of Government.

I particularly want to acknowledge the importance of funding under the National Partnership for Homelessness provided by the Australian Government.

This commitment from Government and the community creates for us a once-in-a generation opportunity to turn homelessness around in NSW and for many homeless people, it creates a new way home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Borger'.

**David Borger MP**  
NSW Minister for Housing  
Minister for Western Sydney

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## About homelessness

Anyone can become homeless. It can happen because a person has lost their job and is struggling financially or because a relationship has ended. A person may become homeless because they are leaving a violent or abusive relationship. They may have just left prison or long-term care or have physical or mental health issues. They may find themselves unable to afford rising rents or mortgage payments or they may have a drug or alcohol problem. Some groups of people are more vulnerable to homelessness, such as young people leaving the care and protection system and Aboriginal people.

Homeless people are men and women, adults and children, from all cultural backgrounds and from all parts of the state. What all people who are homeless have in common is that they do not have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

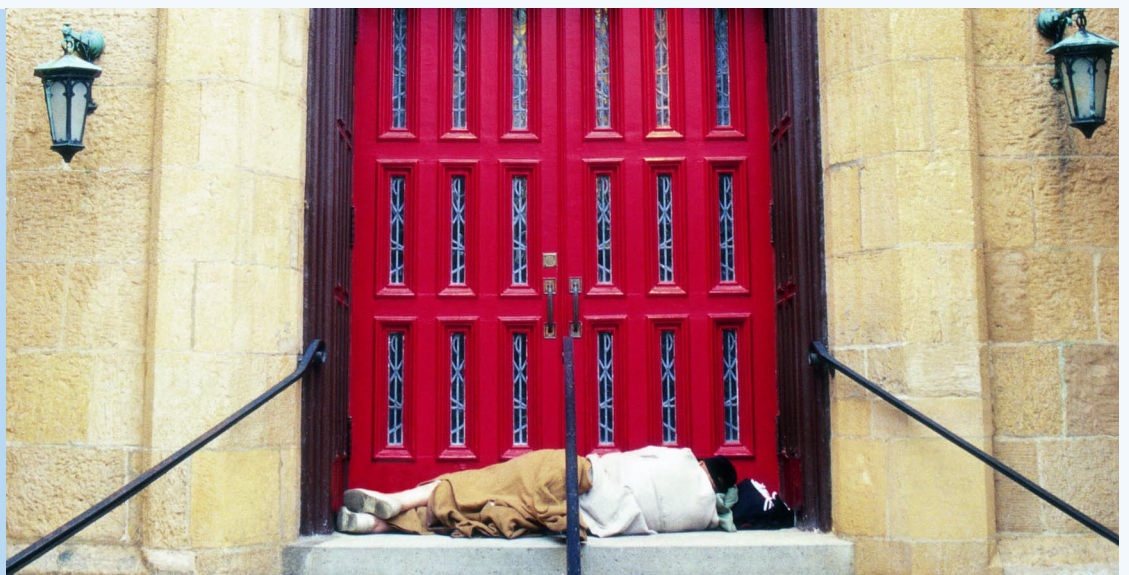
Homelessness also means a lack of connectedness with community. Often, people who are homeless do not have the opportunity to join in community life and activities and they can experience profound isolation and disengagement. Homelessness is also characterised by a lack of security, privacy and personal safety. Homelessness has an impact on people's sense of belonging and value, and on their physical and mental health. It affects their ability to study, to find and keep a job, to provide a stable environment for their children, or to take advantage of the opportunities, rights and entitlements that other people in our community enjoy.

Defining homelessness can be challenging – people and organisations have diverse ideas about what constitutes homelessness and, over time, different definitions have been proposed to try to capture the range of circumstances that might be considered 'homelessness'.

The most common definition is the one used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2001). This definition identifies three types of homelessness.

- **Primary homelessness.** Primary homelessness applies when a person lives on the street, sleeps in parks, squats in derelict buildings, or uses cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.
- **Secondary homelessness.** Secondary homelessness is used to describe people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. Secondary homelessness applies to people using emergency accommodation, youth refuges or women's refuges, people residing temporarily with relatives or with friends (because they have no accommodation of their own), and people using boarding houses on an occasional or intermittent basis (up to 12 weeks).
- **Tertiary homelessness.** Tertiary homelessness is used to describe people who live in premises where they don't have the security of a lease guaranteeing them accommodation, nor access to basic private facilities (such as a private bathroom, kitchen or living space). It can include people living in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis (more than 13 weeks) or in caravan parks.

Whilst this definition provides a useful understanding of homelessness, research tells us that many people experience homelessness over a long period and move between different forms of accommodation – sometimes in crisis accommodations or refuges, sometimes staying with friends and sometimes in rented accommodation. It also tells us that some people may only experience homelessness once in their lives and may require only short-term or minimal assistance to resolve this situation. Others may move in and out of homelessness on a more regular basis and may become entrenched in a cycle of homelessness if they are not provided the support they need to get out and stay out of this cycle. It is for this reason that responding to homelessness requires a broad approach, focusing on preventing people who are at risk from ever becoming homeless, on resolving homelessness where it does occur as quickly as possible, and on supporting people who have been homeless to prevent them becoming homeless again.



# Homelessness in NSW

It is difficult to get an accurate picture of how many people are homeless in NSW. Our best statistics come from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data and from Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) data.

On the night of the 2006 Census, there were more than 27,000 homeless people in NSW. Fifty-nine per cent of homeless people in NSW were male and 41 per cent were female. Twenty-eight per cent were aged 12 to 24 and 11 per cent were children under 12. Seven point two per cent of homeless people were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (compared with 2.2% of the general NSW population). Thirteen per cent of homeless people in NSW were rough sleepers or living in improvised dwellings; 40 per cent were living with friends and relatives; and 28% were in boarding houses.

Homelessness is a problem in both urban and regional communities. The Census found that inner-city parts of Sydney had the highest rate of homelessness in NSW with 164 homeless people per 10,000 of the population. Coastal NSW had a rate of 61 homeless people per 10,000 of the population and rural and remote parts of NSW had a rate of 46 homeless people per 10,000.

Overall the rate of homelessness in NSW remained unchanged between the 2001 and 2006 Census counts.

On the night of the 2006 Census, 19 per cent of homeless people in NSW were in SAAP accommodation. SAAP data provides useful information about service usage and reasons people seek assistance. In 2007/08, the SAAP provided approximately 90,000 support periods to clients in NSW. This comprised almost four million days of SAAP support periods and over one million nights of accommodation provided. In that year, SAAP supported 37,700 clients. In addition, 19,000 accompanying children (children who accompanied an adult who was homeless) were supported during 2007/08.

Of the total SAAP support periods provided in 2007/08, 19 per cent of clients were women with children, 33 per cent were single women and 42 per cent were single men. Over 50 per cent of SAAP support periods were provided to people younger than 30 years of age with 23 per cent aged between 15 and 19 years.

The main reasons for people seeking assistance from a SAAP service included:

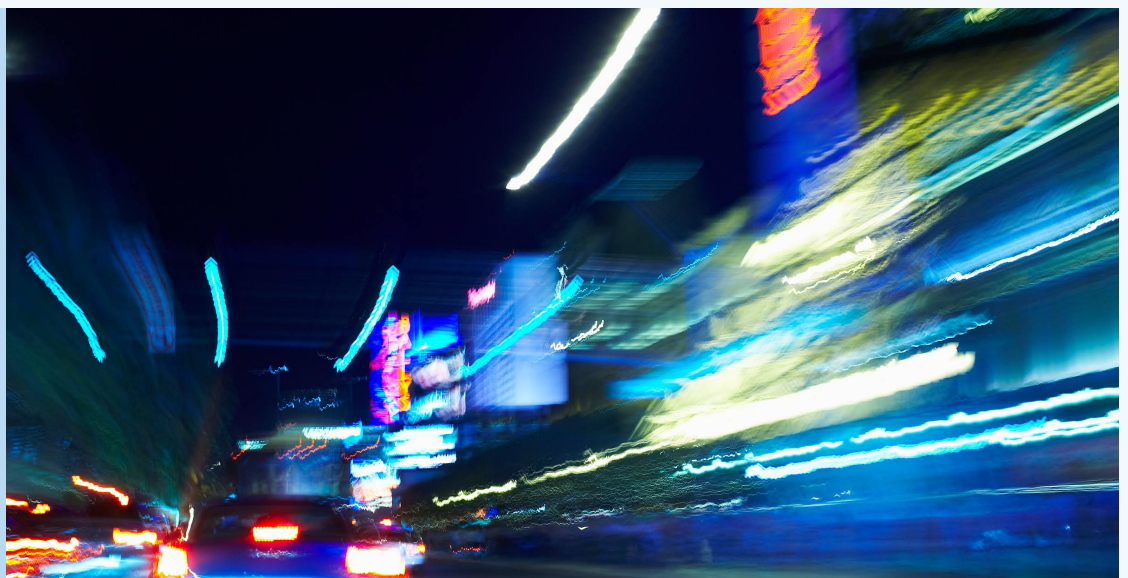
- domestic and family violence (20%)
- relationship and family breakdown (12%)
- problematic alcohol and substance use (12%)
- time out from family (9%)
- financial difficulty (10%) and
- emergency/previous accommodation ended (8%).

One of the most significant challenges facing governments and organisations trying to tackle homelessness is the lack of reliable data about the nature and extent of homelessness in the community. While the Census provides us with a one-night snapshot, it doesn't give us a picture over time of how homelessness affects the individual and the community; nor does it provide us with good information about all of the services that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness need. While SAAP data tells us about how specialist homelessness services are used, there is a lot we don't know about the needs and experiences of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We lack good information about the impact of the services we provide and whether they are meeting people's needs.

To better inform the development of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*, the NSW Government commissioned the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) to develop a synthesis of available research on homelessness, services and interventions that show promise in addressing the issues associated with homelessness. Key findings from the synthesis indicate that having support designed around individuals needs, rather than having individuals getting their support from a number of different services, makes a real difference to people's lives. The research also shows that one of the most effective ways to resolve homelessness is to offer homeless people long-term housing with the support they need to address their issues and sustain that housing into the future.

References to the research and evidence provided through the AHURI research synthesis have been included throughout the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.

While the AHURI research synthesis provides us with valuable information about some of the approaches that show promise in addressing homelessness, we have also recognised the need to contribute to and build evidence to improve our knowledge about homelessness. A key element of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is the development of a stronger data and evidence base against which we can assess our progress in meeting the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and on which we can plan and deliver services towards specific groups of people. Several activities designed to build this evidence base are incorporated in the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.



# Responding to homelessness in NSW

Homelessness is a complex issue – its causes and effects are diverse. Accordingly, a response to homelessness needs to be equally diverse, with a range of services available to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In NSW, no one agency is responsible for delivering responses to homelessness. Instead, services and support are provided by government agencies, non-government organisations and community organisations.

Responses to homelessness in NSW can be broadly grouped into three types of services.

## **Specialist homelessness services**

Specialist homelessness services provide crisis and ongoing support to homeless people and have expertise in supporting homeless people. Most specialist homelessness services have been funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), a Commonwealth-State funded program now incorporated within the National Affordable Housing Agreement. SAAP aims to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to achieve self-reliance and independence by providing supported accommodation and related programs. In NSW, SAAP is delivered through more than 380 funded projects managed primarily by non-government organisations.

## **Specialist services**

Specialist services provide services and support for people with particular issues such as those living with mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues or a disability. Other specialist services work with people who need tenancy assistance or support to escape domestic or family violence. Specialist services provide support to groups of people within the wider community, many of whom are homeless or at increased risk of homelessness because of their support needs. Specialist services are provided by a range of NSW government agencies and non-government organisations.

## **Mainstream services**

Mainstream services are those services used by everyone in the community and are predominantly provided by government agencies. They include:

- hospitals and health services
- Centrelink and universal employment services
- educational facilities
- the legal, policing, correctional and juvenile justice systems
- family and children's services and
- aged care services.

Staff in mainstream agencies are often the first people to become aware that a client is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and so have a unique opportunity to provide support to the individual and referral to specialist services or specialist homelessness services if required.

## Working together

The research synthesis prepared by AHURI to assist in the development of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* identified that there are substantial benefits in mainstream agencies, specialist homelessness services and specialist services providing coordinated and collaborative responses to homelessness. This research suggests that improving the coordination between these three service streams, and the connections with other key stakeholders, is critical to improving outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In developing this Plan, the NSW Government has prioritised cross-agency collaboration. One of the major outcomes of the Plan will be the reform of the specialist homelessness, specialist and mainstream service systems to ensure that services identify people early who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and provide them with joined-up and flexible services that meet their needs.

NSW is already making progress in this area, with a number of initiatives to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness access and retain appropriate long-term accommodation through cooperation across agencies. This includes the Housing and Human Services Accord (the Accord) and the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI). The Accord provides a framework for cross-agency agreements that improve access to social housing with support for people with complex housing needs. Ten NSW human services and justice agencies are signatories to the Accord. HASI is a partnership program between NSW Health, Housing NSW and the non-government sector, which provides housing linked to clinical and psychosocial rehabilitation services for people with a range of levels of psychiatric disability.

The success of initiatives like the Accord and HASI will be applied and adapted through the implementation of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.



## The building blocks for change

In 2007, the NSW Auditor-General released the *Responding to Homelessness* report that examined the NSW Government's responses to homelessness. The report highlighted the broad range of services available to support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. One of the key findings of this report, which reflects the AHURI research, was the need to improve collaboration and coordination across the homelessness service system.

The Auditor-General also found that determining just how well the Government was performing in this area was difficult because of limited statewide performance measures and benchmarking. The Auditor-General recommended as a key priority the development of a strategic framework for responding to homelessness.

As a result of this recommendation, a thorough consultation process was undertaken to develop the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. The process included government agencies and non-government organisations that provide services to homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless across the state, as well as homeless people themselves.

During the development of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*, the NSW and Commonwealth governments have negotiated and implemented a range of partnerships that will help strengthen responses to homelessness. The primary partnership is the National Partnership on Homelessness which commits the Commonwealth and States to working together to significantly reduce homelessness by 2013. The high-level benchmarks agreed by the Council of Australian Governments under the National Partnership are incorporated as the headline targets for the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* incorporates the NSW Implementation Plan under the National Partnership on Homelessness. Individual initiatives agreed to in the NSW Implementation Plan form an important component of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. Under the National Partnership on Homelessness, the Commonwealth has allocated \$101.4 million over four years to projects designed to prevent and respond effectively to homelessness in NSW. The NSW Government is providing matched funding of \$104.4 million. This investment provides an important opportunity to trial new approaches and ways of working to achieve the objectives of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.

To distinguish the initiatives funded under Year 1 of the NSW Implementation Plan of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, each initiative has been shaded gray in the strategic directions and actions table which is located at Appendix 2.

## Reform

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* sets the direction for statewide reform of the homelessness service sector to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* the NSW Government will realign existing effort, increasing the focus of the service system on prevention and long-term accommodation and support, rather than crisis intervention.

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* will change the way we understand homelessness and its impact on the community; change the way we design and deliver services to homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless; and change the way we work across government, with the non-government sector and with the broader community to improve our responses to homelessness.

# A vision for reducing homelessness in NSW

## Vision

- > People never become homeless
- > People who are homeless don't become entrenched in the system
- > People who have been homeless don't become homeless again

### Our vision will be realised when...

#### **In the community**

The community understands that homelessness is a life circumstance that could happen to any of us, and understands the links between homelessness and other social issues such as domestic and family violence, mental health issues and involvement with the child protection system.

Our responses to homelessness recognise the effect of homelessness on the individual, their family and friends, and the community as a whole. Our services support social and economic participation by people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

#### **Effective and coordinated services**

Regardless of the point at which they come into contact with the service system, people have access to all relevant homelessness services without having to negotiate complex pathways through multiple systems. Seamless referrals and linkages will be quickly made to other services they may need, such as health and community services systems.

Responses to homelessness are based on the principles of early intervention and prevention, and focus on building capacity and resilience in individuals.

Government agencies and non-government organisations design their services to work in coordinated and collaborative ways so that all of a person's support needs are addressed without people slipping through gaps.

A flexible approach to service design means people have access to a range of support and accommodation models so responses can be tailored to individual needs. Programs support people to move into long-term housing with appropriate support if required.

People who leave statutory care, custodial care, and disability or health services who are at risk of homelessness receive assistance from staff to secure appropriate accommodation and support before they leave those services.

Women, children and young people at risk of homelessness because of domestic and family violence receive support to escape violence while remaining in their homes or obtaining secure, safe housing according to their circumstances and needs. They receive the support they require from health and community services to build their confidence and safety.

Aboriginal people in NSW have access to both mainstream services and tailored responses that recognise the complex issues facing Aboriginal people. Staff within the service system understand the issues associated with Aboriginal homelessness and have the skills to meet the needs of the individual and their extended family.

All people seeking assistance are treated with respect and have their rights protected.

# Targets

## **Workforce development**

Staff in health, justice and community services have the skills to identify clients who are at risk of becoming homeless and can make referrals to the right sort of housing support service.

People working in the homelessness service sector have access to training and development opportunities, effective management structures, and sound career paths ensuring a strong and stable workforce.

## **Monitoring and building the evidence base**

We develop policy and services based on a thorough understanding of the evidence. We have access to data and research that supports decision-making; allows us to make good decisions about where and how to allocate resources; and lets us see where and how our services are making a difference.

As a result of our vision we will achieve the following headline targets.

- > A reduction of 7% in the overall level of homelessness in NSW by 2013
- > A reduction of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW by 2013
- > A reduction of one third in the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless in NSW by 2013



# The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* establishes a series of concrete priorities, strategies and actions to achieve the three strategic directions that comprise our vision:

- 1. Preventing homelessness: to ensure that people never become homeless**
- 2. Responding effectively to homelessness: to ensure that people who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched in the system**
- 3. Breaking the cycle: to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again.**

For each of our strategic directions, we have identified key performance indicators and performance measures. Reviewing these indicators and measures will help us determine whether our actions are having an impact on homelessness in NSW.

The three strategic directions are interrelated – the actions taken under one strategic direction will help support the achievement of the others. This relationship is outlined in the schema (see Appendix1).

## Strategic Direction **1**

### **Preventing homelessness: to ensure that people never become homeless**

Historically, efforts to address homelessness have focused on helping people who are already homeless to find and secure accommodation. However, evidence supports the idea that intervening when people are at risk of becoming homeless and preventing homelessness from occurring improves outcomes for individuals as well as being a more effective use of resources.

According to the research:

- people who become homeless make more use of emergency services including crisis accommodation, hospitals and the justice system than the mainstream population
- experiencing homelessness under the age of 18 is a significant risk factor for long-term homelessness
- domestic and family violence combined with a lack of affordable housing is a major cause of women's homelessness
- domestic and family violence has a strong impact on women's sense of self-worth and value which can ultimately undermine their ability to participate in the workforce and achieve financial independence – putting them at further risk of homelessness
- programs that support young people who are leaving care can improve education, employment and housing outcomes
- for people leaving prisons, being homeless and not having suitable accommodation are strongly linked to returning to prison
- Aboriginal women experienced the highest rate of re-incarceration and homelessness after leaving prison
- support to prevent eviction from social housing can prevent homelessness including Aboriginal homelessness
- the potential savings to government of intervening early and preventing homelessness may be as much as double the cost of providing assistance once a person has become homeless.

In order to reduce the overall level of homelessness in NSW (and in doing so, prevent the negative impact it has on individuals and the community) we need to focus our efforts on preventing people from ever becoming homeless.

## NSW priorities

Our three priorities are:

1. prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures
2. transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation
3. provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points.

To achieve these priorities over the next five years we will:

- identify people at risk of eviction in social housing, the private rental market, boarding houses and caravan parks and link them to support
- support people with a disability, mental health issues and or/substance abuse issues to maintain their accommodation
- support people under mortgage stress to maintain their homes
- resource the development of discharge/case plans at point of entry that lead to appropriate, long-term accommodation for people leaving care, custody or health facilities
- provide accommodation and support, where relevant, to people leaving care, custody or health facilities
- reconcile young people with their families, where possible
- support young people to maintain connection with education, training and employment
- support women and children who experience domestic and family violence to remain safe in their homes and communities where possible
- provide women and children who experience domestic and family violence with access to appropriate, long-term accommodation
- make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal people
- increase the prevention role of specialist homelessness services.

**The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* identifies 38 actions that will commence in 2009/10 and are designed to support these strategies. Eighteen of these actions are initiatives funded under the National Partnership on Homelessness.**

## Strategy in action

### *Providing tenancy support*

In parts of NSW, growing numbers of people are accessing SAAP from long-term accommodation. Under the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*, we will implement tenancy support projects on the Mid-North Coast and in the Richmond/Tweed area. These projects will primarily focus on preventing homelessness, with a particular emphasis on helping Aboriginal people to maintain their tenancies.

### *No exits into homelessness*

Young people leaving statutory care or juvenile justice centres, patients being discharged from medical and mental health facilities, and people being released from correctional facilities will be discharged under a policy of 'no exit into homelessness'. This means that agencies will develop discharge plans that address the housing and accommodation needs of the individual and ensure that connections to support services are provided, where needed.

### *Increasing housing options for women and children who have experienced domestic violence*

The *Safe Start* Rental Subsidy Scheme will assist women escaping domestic and family violence. The project aims to increase housing options for women and children who have experienced domestic violence by providing rental subsidies in the Illawarra and Hunter regions so that they can access the private rental market.

## Strategic Direction 2 **Responding effectively to homelessness: to ensure that people who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched in the system**

Every individual who is homeless has a different story. People who are homeless have walked different pathways and find themselves homeless for different reasons. Our responses need to focus on providing the support and assistance that each person requires to find and maintain secure accommodation.

It is vital that we intervene early to ensure that people who do find themselves homeless spend as little time as possible homeless. The longer a person is homeless, the more difficult it is to help that person to achieve housing stability and connection with the community. The evidence also tells us that effective social interactions are essential if a person is to leave homelessness – highlighting the importance of supporting people to reconnect with the community when formulating effective responses to homelessness.

Early intervention programs to prevent people becoming entrenched in the system are most effective when they do not involve the use of high-density accommodation without support.

We also know that people who are homeless are not all alike. We need a range of responses that can be employed to ensure that particular groups of people who are vulnerable to becoming entrenched in the system find pathways out of homelessness. The evidence tells us that:

- housing affordability is a significant issue for many groups, but particularly for women who are trying to leave violent relationships. Without permanent housing options, women may feel they have to choose between returning to the violent relationship or homelessness
- our responses to Aboriginal homelessness must be strengthened, as Aboriginal people disproportionately experience homelessness

- young people can benefit from services that link secure accommodation with support so that the young person can maintain their involvement in education, training and employment. More intensive support may be more appropriate for young people with complex needs
- service administrative systems can inadvertently make life even harder for people who experience homelessness.

To prevent people from becoming entrenched in the system, we will ensure our responses effectively meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our responses will respect the diversity of the people who access our services, and respond to their needs in ways that maximise an individual's chances of moving quickly out of homelessness and connecting with the community.

## NSW priorities

Our four priorities are:

1. improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services
2. deliver integrated service responses
3. streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services
4. transition people who are homeless to appropriate long-term accommodation and support.

To achieve these priorities over the next five years we will:

- include the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the planning of mainstream and specialist support services
- ensure staff from mainstream and specialist support services identify homeless people, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals
- recognise and respond to the needs of specific target groups, including Aboriginal people
- provide access to legal and medical support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- provide access to financial advice, and counselling services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- establish consistent cross-agency assessment and case management practices
- develop regional homelessness action plans
- build the capacity of the overall service system and workforce to deliver integrated responses
- share relevant data across the overall service system
- make it easier for homeless people to enter the specialist homelessness service system and flexible service models
- improve coordination and referral within the specialist homelessness service system to ensure that any person entering the system is assessed and receives appropriate assistance
- deliver outreach services, particularly assertive outreach, for rough sleepers
- provide ongoing assistance to ensure stability of clients post crisis
- strengthen the capacity of the overall service system to deliver flexible service models
- facilitate homeless people's access to the private rental market
- improve access to social housing for those who are homeless.

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan identifies 22 actions that will commence in 2009/10 and are designed to support these strategies. Thirteen of these actions are initiatives funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

### Strategy in action

#### *Improving identification and referral of homeless people who access mainstream and specialist services*

We will train staff in mainstream and specialist services to better identify homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals. This action is designed to strengthen the capacity of the system to work in a more integrated and joined-up way, and to improve the effectiveness of the responses provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

#### *Outreach services to rough sleepers*

In Newcastle, an assertive outreach service will be provided to support those who are chronically homeless and living on the streets. The service will provide health and generalist support, legal support and links to long-term supported housing for the chronically homeless.

#### *Assisting people to maintain tenancies in the private rental market*

Rentstart helps improve access to the private rental market and also assists people to maintain their tenancies in the private rental market. The scheme provides financial help with housing related costs to clients in need, particularly those facing homelessness, and assists tenants who are no longer eligible for public housing because of their income and assets.

## Strategic Direction 3

### Breaking the cycle: to ensure that people who have been homeless do not become homeless again

People who have been homeless are more likely to become homeless again. They need targeted support that can help them remain in secure, long-term accommodation.

According to the AHURI research synthesis, research from the United States suggests that it takes young people six attempts to find and sustain stable housing. The evidence base consistently shows that providing long-term support and assistance – and, in particular, case management – is critical to helping people who have been homeless avoid more episodes of homelessness.

Australian research supports this. A study of SAAP clients found that the length of time that clients had been getting help from the service was critically linked to achieving positive outcomes. Given the high rate of drug and alcohol use and mental health issues among homeless people, the provision of long-term and ongoing support is essential if the cycle of homelessness is to be broken. While case management can be time and resource intensive, it enables the development of a relationship between the service provider and the client that can encourage self-development, resilience and self-care capacity. It is extremely important that the duration of the support provided be determined on a case-by-case basis if lasting results are to be achieved for individuals.

We also know that:

- persistent, outreach support is vital for engaging and working with people who experience long-term homelessness. This support should include but not be limited to health services and legal advice

- multi-disciplinary case management, involving mainstream and specialist services, leads to positive housing and social outcomes for people who are homeless
- permanent supportive housing has greater benefits than transitional accommodation for people who are homeless
- building a trusting and cooperative relationship between a service provider and a client takes time, so it's important that systems are flexible enough to tailor support duration and type to meet individual needs.

To break the cycle of homelessness (where people who have been homeless find it difficult to remain in stable accommodation and find themselves homeless again), we will deliver accommodation programs and products that meet the specific needs of individuals in the long term. Our services will be flexible enough to deliver support to clients in the medium to long term to enable real changes to be effected in their lives. We will strengthen the links between service providers so that people don't 'fall through the net'. This means we also need to know more about homelessness in NSW, what our clients need, whether our services meet those needs and how we can improve the services we provide to people who are homeless.

## NSW priorities

Our four priorities are:

1. provide models of supported accommodation suitable for different target groups
2. increase the supply and improve the condition of affordable social housing
3. promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector
4. improve our data collection and make better use of data and evidence about homelessness and effective responses to it.

To achieve these priorities over the next five years we will:

- explore new models of delivering accommodation linked to support
- support participation in the community, education and employment
- increase the supply of social housing
- upgrade existing social housing
- implement the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* in collaboration with the non-government and business sectors
- strengthen the capacity of all levels of government, non-government and other stakeholders to form effective partnerships
- include people who are homeless in the development of effective responses
- implement a data development agenda and data collection strategy to assess and measure interventions and outcomes
- undertake collaborative research that leads to best-practice models
- map and disseminate best practice.

**The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* identifies 19 actions that will commence in 2009/10 and are designed to support these strategies. Five of these actions are initiatives funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.**

## **Strategy in action**

### ***Aboriginal Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative (HASI)***

People with mental health issues can experience difficulties in accessing affordable, safe and stable housing. The Aboriginal Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative (HASI) is a project designed to help Aboriginal people with mental health issues to live successfully in the community. This project will involve the trial and evaluation of the Aboriginal HASI program in specific locations across the state.

### ***New social housing dwellings***

The availability of long-term social housing is critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness. 6,500 new social housing dwellings will be built in NSW by 2012.

### ***Implementing effective governance structures***

Critical to preventing repeat homelessness is the development of effective partnerships at all levels of government and between the government and non-government sectors. An important initiative under the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is the establishment of governance structures and planning processes at state, regional and local level that facilitate collaboration between all levels of government, relevant non-government organisations and other stakeholders.

### ***Improve our evidence base***

To help us continually build on our understandings about homelessness and the impact of our activities, we will implement an evaluation and research strategy. This project will be linked to the Commonwealth Government evaluation and research agenda with a particular focus on assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the NSW initiatives undertaken as part of the National Partnership on Homelessness. This includes gathering baseline data on all indicators and performance measures in the National Partnership on Homelessness and the development of an evaluation methodology to assess the cost-effectiveness of responses to homelessness.

## **About the plan**

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is a plan for all of NSW.

It is designed to guide NSW Government action on homelessness, to facilitate better ways of working across agencies and with our non-government partners, and to promote addressing homelessness as a responsibility of the community as a whole – all with the goal of improving outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

It is a plan for our non-government partners to achieve the reforms we have collaboratively agreed upon including changes to the way we plan, design, deliver and evaluate our services and the partnership approach we want to take to making these changes.

It is a plan that recognises our commitment to action under the National Partnership on Homelessness and integrates those activities with a range of strategies and actions designed to achieve our three strategic directions.

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is designed to be a dynamic document and currently contains actions that will commence in 2009/10 only. Progress against the strategies and actions identified in the Plan will be monitored, with annual reports produced on activities undertaken under the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. We have also built into the *NSW Homelessness*

*Action Plan* a program of evaluation and research that will inform us about the effectiveness of our activities and enable us to make decisions about where our future efforts need to be placed.

To support our commitment to annual reporting and evidence-based decision making, the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* includes key performance indicators for each of the strategic Directions. Each performance indicator has a number of supporting performance measures aligned with measures under the National Partnership on Homelessness. These indicators and measures have been chosen because they will allow us to effectively monitor progress against this Plan, including the headline targets, over time. A clear data development agenda has been established where data is not currently available to support these measures.

New governance mechanisms will be established to oversee and support the implementation and ongoing development of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. These governance structures will facilitate collaboration between all levels of government, the non-government sector, consumer groups and other stakeholders.

During 2009/10 regional homelessness action plans will be developed. The regional plans will be a key mechanism for implementing the broad directions and intent of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. The regional plans will be a source of information about existing successful initiatives and will help us identify future activities under the broader *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. The governance of each regional plan will be clearly linked to the governance of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*.

## Partners

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan will be supported by the following partner agencies through the governance mechanisms:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Treasury
- Department of Human Services (Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Community Services, Housing NSW, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Aboriginal Affairs)
- NSW Health
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Justice (Attorney General's Department, Department of Corrective Services, Legal Aid Commission of NSW)
- Department of Police and Emergency Services (NSW Police)
- Department of Communities (Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation)

Other NSW government agencies will provide input through individual actions within the NSW Homelessness Action Plan. The Plan will be implemented in consultation with the non-government and community sectors.

# Appendix 1

## NSW Homelessness

<b>PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS</b> People <u>never</u> become homeless				<b>EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO</b> People who <u>are</u> homeless receive effective responses to entrenched		
<i>Indicator:</i> Rate of first-time homelessness				<i>Indicator:</i> Rate of homelessness		
1. Prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures	2. Transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation	3. Provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points	4. Improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services	5. Deliver integrated service responses	6. S... acc... and hom... serv...	
# of people exiting social housing and private rental into homelessness	# of people exiting care and custodial settings into secure and affordable housing	# of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following family violence	# of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who are re-engaged with family, work and school	# of children homeless or at risk of homelessness who are provided with additional support to maintain contact with their school	# of families who are homeless or at risk who receive financial advice, counselling and/or case management	# of people who are homeless or at risk who are provided with legal services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify people at risk of eviction in social housing, the private rental market, boarding houses and caravan parks and link them to support</li> <li>Support people with a disability, mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues to maintain their accommodation</li> <li>Support people under mortgage stress to maintain their homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource the development of discharge/case plans at point of entry that lead to appropriate, long-term accommodation for people leaving care / custody / health facilities</li> <li>Provide accommodation and support, where relevant, to people leaving care/ custody/health facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconcile young people with their families, where possible</li> <li>Support young people to maintain connection with education, training and employment</li> <li>Support women and children that experience domestic and family violence to remain safe in their homes and communities where possible</li> <li>Provide women and children that experience domestic and family violence with access to appropriate, long-term accommodation</li> <li>Make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal people</li> <li>Increase the prevention role of specialist homelessness services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide access to legal and medical support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness</li> <li>Provide access to financial advice and counselling services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the planning of mainstream and specialist support services</li> <li>Ensure staff from mainstream and specialist support services are able to identify homeless people, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals</li> <li>Recognise and respond to the needs of specific target groups, including Aboriginal people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish consistent cross-agency assessment and case management practices</li> <li>Develop regional homelessness action plans, and local plans in priority locations</li> <li>Build the capacity of the overall service system and workforce to deliver integrated responses</li> <li>Share relevant data across the overall service system</li> </ul>	

# Action Plan Schema

<p><b>HOMELESSNESS</b></p> <p>Responses so that they do not become</p>	<p><b>BREAKING THE CYCLE</b></p> <p>People who <u>have been homeless</u> do not become homeless again</p>				<p>Strategic Directions/ Outcomes</p>	
<p>ness</p>	<p><i>Indicator:</i></p> <p>Rate of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness</p>				<p>Indicators</p>	
<p>streamline ess to crisis ommodation specialist homelessness services</p>	<p>7. Transition people who are homeless to appropriate long-term accommodation and support</p>	<p>8. Provide models of accommodation with support that are suitable for different target groups</p>	<p>9. Increase and upgrade supply of affordable and social housing</p>	<p>10. Promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector</p>	<p>11. Improve and better utilise homelessness data and evidence-based responses to homelessness</p>	<p>Priorities</p>
<p># of staff of specialist homeless services provided with formal training and development opportunities</p>	<p>Rate of homeless people who transitioned to accommodation with support who are in stable accommodation after 6 months</p>	<p>Number of social housing dwellings</p>	<p>Average occupancy in Aboriginal housing</p>		<p>Performance Measures</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it easier for homeless people to enter the specialist homelessness service system</li> <li>• Improve coordination and referral within the specialist homelessness service system to ensure that any person entering the system is assessed and receives appropriate assistance</li> <li>• Deliver outreach services, particularly assertive outreach for rough sleepers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing assistance to ensure stability of clients post crisis</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of the overall service system to deliver flexible service models</li> <li>• Facilitate homeless people's access to the private rental market</li> <li>• Improve access to social housing for those who are homeless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore new models of delivering accommodation linked to support</li> <li>• Support participation in the community, education and employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and upgrade public housing dwellings</li> <li>• Expand community housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Govern the Action Plan in collaboration with the non-government and business sectors</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of all levels of government, non-government and other stakeholders to form effective partnerships</li> <li>• Include people who are homeless in the development of responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a data development agenda and data collection strategy to assess interventions and outcomes</li> <li>• Undertake collaborative research that leads to best-practice models</li> <li>• Map and disseminate best practice</li> </ul>	<p>Strategies 2009-2013</p>

## Appendix 2 – 2009/10 actions

### Strategic Direction 1

#### Preventing Homelessness

**Our goal: People never become homeless**

Our three priorities are:

- prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures
- transition and maintain people exiting statutory care correctional and health facilities into, appropriate long-term accommodation
- provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points.

#### Priority 1: Prevent eviction from all kinds of tenures

- Identify people at risk of eviction in social housing, the private rental market, boarding houses and caravan parks and link them to support
- Support people with a disability, mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues to maintain their accommodation
- Support people under mortgage stress to maintain their homes

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>1.1</b> Distribute information about risk factors for homelessness and available services to relevant government agencies, hospitals, doctors, community health centres, counsellors in educational settings, hotels, real estate agents, boarding houses, caravan parks and other relevant points	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW NSW Health Department of Education and Training Other NSW Homelessness Action Plan partner agencies	Statewide
<b>1.2</b> Reduce evictions due to unpaid rent by introducing compulsory rent deductions for public housing tenants	Housing NSW	Commonwealth Government	Statewide
<b>1.3</b> Assess the effect of Commonwealth policies on homelessness in NSW and engage with the Commonwealth Government in processes of policy reform in these areas	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services	Statewide
<b>1.4</b> Train relevant field staff to implement the Squalor Guidelines across NSW	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care	Housing NSW Mercy Arms (NGO)	Statewide
<b>1.5</b> Deliver tenancy support in Richmond/Tweed and the Mid-North Coast to maintain tenancies and stop people transitioning into homelessness. Target groups will be those currently using specialist homelessness services from long-term accommodation and Aboriginal people	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW Office of Fair Trading Department of Aboriginal Affairs	Richmond/ Tweed Mid-North Coast

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The colour of the Priority box is linked to the schema in Appendix 1

**Priority 2: Transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation**

- Resource the development of discharge/case plans at point of entry that lead to appropriate, long-term accommodation for people leaving care, custody or health facilities
- Provide accommodation and support, where relevant, to people leaving care, custody or health facilities

<b>How we will do it</b>	<b>Lead agency</b>	<b>Partner agencies</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>2.1</b> Develop multi-agency service delivery discharge plans for people leaving care, custody or health facilities, including exits into social housing and provision of support	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health Department of Corrective Services Department of Juvenile Justice	Statewide
<b>2.2</b> Strengthen mainstream services to develop discharge plans for Aboriginal people through consultation with specialist Aboriginal services wherever possible	Department of Aboriginal Affairs	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
<b>2.3</b> Develop discharge plans at the point of entry into facilities or institutions, wherever possible, to support a policy of 'no exits into homelessness. Target groups are young people leaving statutory care, patients being discharged from health facilities and people discharged from juvenile justice and correctional facilities	Department of Community Services Department of Corrective Services Department of Juvenile Justice Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care NSW Health		Statewide
<b>2.4</b> Educate and train staff involved in developing discharge plans	Department of Corrective Services Department of Juvenile Justice Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care NSW Health		Statewide
<b>2.5</b> Develop a protocol between NSW Health and Department of Corrective Services to better provide mental health services for people leaving custody	NSW Health (Justice Health)	Department of Corrective Services Department of Juvenile Justice	Statewide

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>2.7</b> Create a new admissions/discharge position within an inner-city hospital emergency department to coordinate discharge planning for patients who are homeless, particularly rough sleepers	NSW Health		Inner Sydney
<b>2.8</b> Provide long-term support and accommodation for people exiting prisons to prevent homelessness	Department of Corrective Services	Housing NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care Department of Community Services NSW Health	Western Sydney
<b>2.9</b> Create new positions in Western Sydney remand centres to identify and secure accommodation options for eligible remandees	Department of Corrective Services	Housing NSW	Western Sydney
<b>2.10</b> Create new transitional/community support workers to provide case management and support to offenders in transition from custody back into the community. This project will have a focus on Aboriginal people	Department of Corrective Services	Housing NSW Department of Community Services Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal Housing Office NSW Health	Far Western NSW
<b>2.11</b> Create new positions in an Aboriginal Leaving Care service provider to support Aboriginal young people leaving care to return to independent living	Department of Community Services	Department of Aboriginal Affairs Housing NSW NSW Health	Nowra
<b>2.12</b> Implement Community Offender Support Programs which provide support and accommodation to people before their exit from the correctional system	Department of Corrective Services		Eastern Sydney: Malabar Western Sydney: Emu Plains Windsor South Western Sydney: Campbelltown Wollongong Rural areas: Kempsey Tombago, Cooma, Dubbo/ Wellington, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Grafton, Tamworth

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<b>How we will do it</b>	<b>Lead agency</b>	<b>Partner agencies</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>2.13</b> Provide housing and support to clients with complex housing needs through the Disability Housing and Support Initiative	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care		South West Sydney
<b>2.14</b> Provide long-term support and accommodation to young women with a history of offending or at risk of re-offending and entering the Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre through the Juniperina Shared Access Trial	Housing NSW	Department of Juvenile Justice Department of Community Services NSW Health (Justice Health) Department of Premiers and Cabinet (Office for Women's Policy)	Sydney Metro Northern NSW Statewide
<b>2.15</b> Expand the Joint Tenancy Assistance Program model to support young women on the Juniperina Shared Access Trial	Department of Juvenile Justice	Housing NSW non-government partners Department of Premiers and Cabinet (Office for Women's Policy)	Sydney Metro Northern NSW
<b>2.16</b> Assist Aboriginal young people make the transition from contact with the justice system to independent living by providing a range of accommodation and support services under the Transitions Program for Aboriginal people	Department of Juvenile Justice	Relevant non government organisations	Western Sydney
<b>2.17</b> Assist young people who have been in care to have a smooth transition into independent living with an expanded Out-Of-Home Care Program – a supported independent living model that integrates accommodation and support services	Department of Community Services		Various locations
<b>2.18</b> Assist young people (15–25 years old) who have left care make the transition to independent living and/or reconnect with family by expanding the Out-Of-Home Care Program, leaving care/after-care model	Department of Community Services		Statewide

**Priority 3: Provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points**

- Reconcile young people with their families, where possible
- Support young people to maintain connection with education, training and employment
- Support women and children who experience domestic and family violence to remain safe in their homes and communities where possible
- Provide women and children who experience domestic and family violence with access to appropriate, long-term accommodation
- Make services more accessible and responsive to Aboriginal people
- Increase the prevention role of specialist homelessness services

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>3.1</b> Improve identification of those most vulnerable or at greatest risk of homelessness (such as women and children who are leaving violent homes) by reviewing the current ranking and allocation system for priority housing	Housing NSW		Statewide
<b>3.2</b> Roll out Staying Home Leaving Violence projects across NSW to assist women who have experienced violence remain safely in their homes without the violent partner	Department of Community Services		Various locations
<b>3.3</b> Provide training and support to magistrates about ways of supporting women and children at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence	NSW Judicial Commission		Statewide
<b>3.4</b> Improve the provision of safe accommodation for families escaping violence using lessons learnt from the Orana Far West Safe House Project model in western NSW. The Project has a focus on supporting Aboriginal women and children in these communities	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW	Statewide
<b>3.5</b> Improve access to existing medical and allied health services for people leaving correctional facilities. Emphasis on mental health and substance abuse issues	Department of Corrective Services	NSW Health (Justice Health) Commonwealth Government	Statewide
<b>3.6</b> Provide legal services to people at risk of eviction as a result of mortgage stress including legal advice and representation as well as legal education and information services	Legal Aid NSW		Statewide

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>3.7</b> Give people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness information about legal services by distributing an information card	Attorney General's Department		Statewide
<b>3.8</b> Expand the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program to improve referrals to housing and support services, and referrals to legal services, for women seeking Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders	Legal Aid NSW		Various locations
<b>3.9</b> Develop and implement the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework	Department of Premier and Cabinet		Statewide
<b>3.10</b> Expand the Brighter Futures program to target 200 additional vulnerable families	Department of Community Services		
<b>3.11</b> Pilot intensive family preservation services for children and young people at risk of entering out-of-home care and evaluate its potential as a statewide program	Department of Community Services		
<b>3.12</b> Provide long-term accommodation and support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence	Department of Community Services Housing NSW	Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Health	Western Sydney
<b>3.13</b> Assist women escaping domestic violence to maintain tenancies by providing support services, and increase housing options for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence by giving them better access to the private rental market	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW Department of Premiers and Cabinet (Office for Women's Policy) NSW Health	Illawarra Hunter
<b>3.14</b> Assist approximately 213 women escaping domestic and family violence gain access to the private rental market through the Safe Start Rental Subsidy Scheme	Housing NSW	Department of Premiers and Cabinet (Office for Women's Policy)	Illawarra Hunter
<b>3.15</b> Provide accommodation and intensive support services linked to education, training and employment for young people	Housing NSW Department of Community Services	Department of Juvenile Justice NSW Health	South Western Sydney Illawarra

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# Strategic Direction 2 Responding effectively to homelessness

## Our goal: People who are homeless don't become entrenched in the system

Our four priorities are:

- improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services
- deliver integrated service responses
- Streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services
- Transition people who are homeless to appropriate long-term accommodation and support

### Priority 4: Improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services

- Include the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the planning of mainstream and specialist support services
- Ensure staff from mainstream and specialist support services identify homeless people, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals
- Recognise and respond to the needs of specific target groups, including Aboriginal people
- Provide access to legal and medical support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Provide access to financial advice, and counselling services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
4.1 Train staff in mainstream and specialist support services to identify homeless people, assess their needs and make appropriate referrals	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care Department of Education and Training Legal Aid And other HAP partner agencies	Statewide
4.2 Implement the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places across NSW to ensure that the rights of homeless people in public spaces are respected by the community and mainstream services	Housing NSW	Other HAP partner agencies	Statewide
4.3 Strengthen the Financial Counselling Services Program which allocates funding to non-profit organisations for the provision of free accredited financial counselling/consumer legal casework services	Office of Fair Trading		Statewide
4.4 Identify effective responses to Aboriginal homelessness caused by overcrowding by researching the issue in remote locations and across tenure types	Housing NSW	Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal Housing Office Department of Community Services NSW Health	

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### Priority 5: Deliver integrated service responses

- Establish consistent cross-agency assessment and case management practices
- Develop regional homelessness action plans and local plans in priority locations
- Build the capacity of the overall service system and workforce to deliver integrated responses
- Share relevant data across the overall service system

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>5.1</b> Develop and implement a common assessment tool for services working with homeless people to identify their support and accommodation requirements. Identify the best way to share assessment information between agencies	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health	
<b>5.2</b> Distribute best-practice guidelines regarding the case management of children who accompany adults in SAAP	Department of Community Services		
<b>5.4</b> Develop a regional and remote staff retention and recruitment strategy to attract and retain more staff to work in regional and remote areas, consistent with the Keep them Safe Plan responses in this area	Department of Premier and Cabinet		
<b>5.5</b> Develop regional homelessness action plans through consultations, data analysis, development of local models, building local partnerships to identify regional projects and reforms	Housing NSW	Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Police Force Department of Community Services NSW Health Department of Aboriginal Affairs NSW Treasury	Statewide
<b>5.6</b> Provide long-term accommodation linked to support for chronically homeless people in rural areas and coordinate services to identify and support people at risk of homelessness	Department of Community Services	NSW Health Housing NSW Legal Aid NSW	New England Albury/ Wagga Wagga
<b>5.7</b> Build the capacity of the sector to respond in new ways to homelessness by developing and implementing tools that support the shift in focus from helping people on-site to providing assistance in long-term housing	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Police Force NSW Health Department of Aboriginal Affairs NSW Treasury	Statewide

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### Priority 6: Streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services

- Make it easier for homeless people to enter the specialist homelessness service system
- Improve coordination and referral within the specialist homelessness service system to ensure that any person entering the system is assessed and receives appropriate assistance
- Deliver outreach services, particularly assertive outreach, for rough sleepers

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>6.1</b> Improve coordination between specialist homelessness services and temporary accommodation so that clients use the most appropriate service for their circumstances	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services	Statewide
<b>6.2</b> Improve coordination between the various NSW crisis phone lines for homeless people including the Homeless Persons' Information Centre, the Youth Emergency Accommodation Line, the After Hours Temporary Accommodation Line and the Domestic Violence Line	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW	Statewide
<b>6.3</b> Make assessment and referral processes to homelessness specialist services and mainstream services more efficient with a 'homelessness assessment and referral gateway' that provides key coordination points for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW	Statewide
<b>6.4</b> Implement a new Assertive Outreach and Supported Housing program for rough sleepers in inner Sydney that includes generalist and health components and is linked to long-term supported housing	Housing NSW NSW Health	Department of Community Services	Inner Sydney
<b>6.5</b> Implement a new Assertive Outreach program for chronically homeless people in Newcastle that includes generalist, legal and health components linked to long-term accommodation	Housing NSW NSW Health	Department of Community Services Legal Aid Commission	Newcastle
<b>6.6</b> Increase the temporary accommodation provided by Housing NSW to assist homeless people and those in housing crisis	Housing NSW		Statewide

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### Priority 7: Transition people who are homeless to appropriate long-term accommodation and support

- Provide ongoing assistance to ensure stability of clients post crisis
- Strengthen the capacity of the overall service system to deliver flexible service models
- Facilitate homeless people's access to the private rental market
- Improve access to social housing for those who are homeless

How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>7.1</b> Audit the full range of existing programs that provide accommodation across NSW, including state, federal and non-government programs to improve access to services by homeless people	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Health	Statewide
<b>7.2</b> Improve identification of homeless people and streamline their transition into appropriate long-term accommodation by reviewing the eligibility criteria for social housing (including priority housing)	Housing NSW		Statewide
<b>7.3</b> Expand services to assist people establish and maintain a tenancy in the private rental market	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services	Statewide
<b>7.5</b> Increase the Special Assistance Subsidy for people living with disabilities or people living with HIV/AIDS who rent in the private market to help maintain their tenancies	Housing NSW		Statewide
<b>7.6</b> Increase Rentstart to provide assistance to improve access to the private rental market and maintain those tenancies	Housing NSW		Statewide
<b>7.7</b> Implement A Place to Call Home initiative to provide long-term accommodation which is linked to support for people who are homeless	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health	Statewide

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# Strategic Direction 3 Breaking the cycle

**Our goal: People who have been homeless do not become homeless again**

Our four priorities are:


- provide models of accommodation with support that are suitable for different target groups
- increase and upgrade, supply of affordable and social housing
- promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector
- Improve and better utilise homelessness data and evidence based responses to homelessness

Priority 8: Provide models of accommodation with support that are suitable for different target groups			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore new models of delivering accommodation linked to support</li> <li>• Support participation in the community, education and employment</li> </ul>			
How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
<b>8.1</b> Implement the Aboriginal Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative (HASI) in trial sites and conduct an evaluation	NSW Health	Housing NSW	Western Sydney Northern Rivers
<b>8.2</b> Evaluate the Homelessness Intervention Project	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health Department of Premier and Cabinet	Inner Sydney Western Sydney
<b>8.3</b> Maintain the Integrated Services Project	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care	NSW Health Housing NSW	
<b>8.4</b> Deliver housing and support to young people and chronically homeless people through the Homelessness Intervention Project including the Nepean Youth Homelessness Project and the Homelessness Intervention Team project	Housing NSW	Department of Community Services NSW Health	Inner Sydney Western Sydney
<b>8.5</b> Extend the Nepean Youth Homelessness Project which works with young people sleeping rough and transitions them into long-term accommodation with support. NYHP also helps young people at risk of homelessness with an early intervention and prevention approach	Department of Community Services	Housing NSW NSW Health	Western Sydney
<b>8.6</b> Implement the Inner City Supportive Housing and Support for Young People Project. This project builds on the successful Kings Cross Youth at Risk initiative, which provides coordinated case management and supportive housing for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	NSW Health	Housing NSW Department of Community Services Department of Juvenile Justice	Inner Sydney

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Priority 9: Increase and upgrade supply of affordable and social housing			
Increase the supply of social housing			
Upgrade existing social housing			
How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
9.1 Build up to 9000 new social housing dwellings by 2012	Housing NSW		Statewide
9.2 Grow community housing from 13,000 to 30,000 homes by 2017	Housing NSW		Statewide
9.3 Repair and maintain work on 31,000 dwellings by 2010	Housing NSW		Statewide
9.4 Increase social housing capital. Funding will be used to expand the available social housing stock in NSW for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness	Housing NSW		Statewide

Priority 10: Promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Govern the NSW Homelessness Action Plan in collaboration with the non-government and business sectors</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of all levels of government, non-government and other stakeholders to form effective partnerships</li> <li>• Include people who are homeless in the development of effective responses</li> </ul>			
How we will do it	Lead agency	Partner agencies	Location
10.1 Include homeless people's views and advice in future policy and/or program planning	Housing NSW	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
10.2 Create governance structures and planning processes at state, regional and local levels that ensure collaboration between all levels of government, relevant non-government organisations and other stakeholders	Housing NSW	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
10.3 Explore the potential for relationships between the provision of <i>pro bono</i> legal services and procurement of legal services by government	Attorney General's Department	Legal Aid NSW	Statewide
10.4 Produce an annual public report on progress of the <i>NSW Homelessness Action Plan</i>	All agencies with responsibilities under the <i>NSW Homelessness Action Plan</i>		Statewide

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**Priority 11: Improve and better utilise homelessness data and evidence-based responses to homelessness**

- Implement a data development agenda and data collection strategy to assess interventions and outcomes
- Undertake collaborative research that leads to best-practice models
- Map and disseminate best practice

<b>How we will do it</b>	<b>Lead agency</b>	<b>Partner agencies</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>11.1</b> Develop a means to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of responses to homelessness.	Housing NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
<b>11.2</b> Gather baseline data on all indicators and performance measures	Housing NSW	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
<b>11.3</b> Work with the Commonwealth to develop a common client identifier and data linkage key and appropriate protocol to improve our understanding of service usage to inform future service planning and delivery	Housing NSW	HAP partner agencies	Statewide
<b>11.4</b> Distribute information on the NSW Government's responses to homelessness, policy work and research on homelessness through the Homelessness Information Clearinghouse website	Housing NSW		Statewide
<b>11.5</b> Implement an evaluation and research strategy. This project will support and link in with the Commonwealth Government evaluation and research agenda including assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the NSW initiatives undertaken as part of the National Partnership on Homelessness	Housing NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	HAP partner agencies	Statewide

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