

Our election **priorities**

About us

Mission Australia's goal is to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia.

We are a national non-denominational Christian organisation with more than 155 years' of experience in standing together with Australians in need on their journey to independence.

Our programs range from early intervention to intensive wrap-around services. They include: services targeting homelessness; providing integrated family support; parenting programs; early childhood education; mental health services; residential

drug & alcohol programs; youth programs; access to safe and secure housing; and programs to build capacity, resilience and opportunity for local communities.

We work in partnership with others to achieve our goal. This includes communities, supporters, government, businesses and other organisations. We measure our impact, collecting evidence of what works to inform our service design and delivery, and to advocate for change.



Australia in 2016

Australia is a prosperous country that prides itself on fairness, however eight years on from the global financial crisis too many individuals and families struggle to meet their basic needs and participate fully in society.

In this election, we are looking to the next government to implement policies and programs to alleviate the burden on the most vulnerable and to facilitate the supports they need to be active economic and social participants in our communities.

Rates of homelessness remain stubbornly high and there is no national plan to reduce homelessness over the long term. While there have been laudable efforts to address some of the major drivers of homelessness including domestic and family violence, substance abuse and poor mental health, greater investment is needed in evidence-based programs to stop homelessness before it happens and to house people experiencing homelessness.

A severe lack of affordable housing continues to place people of all ages at risk of homelessness due to rental stress and makes it difficult for them to exit from homelessness into a permanent home. We believe that everyone has the right to safe, secure and affordable accommodation and a place to call home. A sustained reduction in homelessness requires leadership from the Federal government.

Addressing disadvantage and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable Australians starts early, with access to high quality and affordable early education and care, as well

as targeted early intervention and prevention with tailored family support programs. Youth unemployment remains unacceptably high and young people need to be given the opportunities, guidance and support to successfully navigate the pathways from adolescence into employment. Our welfare system must provide an adequate safety net for the unemployed, be easier to navigate and encourage economic participation through an early investment approach.

Concentrated pockets of severe disadvantage persist across our nation, so efforts to assist individuals need to be complemented by an investment in strengthening communities. While there are positive movements towards constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the majority of Close the Gap targets remain unmet. Greater efforts are needed to achieve reconciliation and overcome disadvantage.

The next government will have the challenge of tackling social and economic disadvantage. Mission Australia stands ready to work in a collaborative and evidence based approach to address these challenges. We list below our priorities in this election and the policy responses required of an incoming government.

Our election priorities

What needs to be addressed:

1 Homelessness is increasing

- Every night, 105,000 Australians don't have a place to call home. That's one in every 200 people.
- 17,845 children under 10 are homeless.
- Homelessness services are unable to keep up with demand – In 2014-15, homelessness services had to turn away over 230 people each day without the support or accommodation they needed.
- Domestic and family violence, mental illness and drug & alcohol abuse continue to afflict families and communities compounding homelessness.

What the incoming government should do:



- Commit to a target to halve homelessness by 2025.
- Commit to a renewed plan to end homelessness.
- Provide ongoing and adequate funding for evidence based homelessness services.
- Expand prevention and early intervention services to 'turn off the tap' of homelessness and address its causes.
- Extend for five years the Reconnect program, which assists homeless and at-risk young people to reconcile with, or stay connected to, their family.

2 Rental stress is at record levels and a lack of affordable housing is placing people at risk of homelessness and making it harder for people to exit homelessness

- Over 150,000 people in private rental are paying more than 50% of their income on housing costs, even after receiving rent assistance.
- Single people living on Newstart and Youth Allowance can afford fewer than 0.1% of properties listed at market rental in Sydney (from Anglicare's 2016 Rental Affordability Snapshot).



- Facilitate investment in affordable and social housing to address the critical supply shortage.
- Commit to a net year-on-year increase in social and affordable housing in each state and territory.
- Set national targets to halve the number of people living in housing stress and to create 200,000 new social and affordable housing properties by 2025.
- Set Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to keep up with the real costs of housing and allow people to live in reasonable proximity to job markets.

Our election priorities

What needs to be addressed:

3 Youth unemployment remains unacceptably high and too many of our young people struggle to make successful transitions from school to employment

- 1 in 4 young people aged 18-24 are not fully engaged in education or work.
- Unemployment for young people aged 15-24 years old is above 12% and over 20% in some areas.

What the incoming government should do:



- Complement the Transition to Work program with a program tailored to the needs of the most disadvantaged young job seekers.
- Make flexible learning options available to young people at risk of disengaging from school.
- Support and encourage demand-led employment initiatives to get young people into real jobs.
- Make targeted and well regulated vocational education and training a national priority.

4 Progress on welfare reform has been too slow and payment levels are inadequate

- The current Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance payments are inadequate and act as an impediment to people looking for work.
- The long-term costs of income support payments can be reduced by upfront investment in supporting people to be able to participate in the workforce.



- Provide a sustainable and adequate safety net to meet basic living expenses - Income support is one of the most important and effective ways of preventing poverty and assisting people into employment.
- Progress fundamental welfare reforms as recommended by the McClure review.
- Any changes to Family Tax Benefits (FTB) should not leave lowest-income families worse off.

Our election priorities

What needs to be addressed:

Indigenous Australians remain the most disadvantaged group in our country

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to experience poverty and high rates of unemployment.
- They are the most economically disadvantaged and excluded members of our community on almost any measure.
- Little progress has been achieved towards Closing the Gap with most targets remaining off track.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.5 per cent of the Australian population, but 25 per cent of all homeless persons. Of those classified as homeless, 75 per cent were in severely overcrowded dwellings.



What the incoming government should do:

- Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to design and lead solutions to the complex problems facing their communities including poverty, disadvantage and the lack of appropriate housing.
- Commit to long-term investment in community controlled services to address disadvantage and progress Closing the Gap targets.
- Address overcrowding as a priority, including funding 4,200 new Aboriginal owned and controlled homes in remote communities and regional centres.

Childcare funding reforms are required

- Reforms to the funding of Early Childhood Education and Care are needed to:
- support women's participation in the workforce; and
 - provide affordable and high quality education and care for the most disadvantaged children.



- Implement early childhood education and care reforms that provide affordable access to children in families that need it most.

Our election priorities

What needs to be addressed:

7 Pockets of concentrated and entrenched disadvantage remain in communities across Australia

- High levels of unemployment, low levels of income and education, housing stress and a high level of criminal offending are features of these communities, severely limiting individual opportunity.
- Secure and affordable housing can foster healthier, stronger and more productive communities, supporting social connections and economic participation.

What the incoming government should do:



- ➔ **Commit to address entrenched and locational disadvantage at the community level over the long term, in conjunction with state and local governments. Solutions need to be community owned and driven and responsive to the multiple and complex needs within these communities.**
- ➔ **Take action to address the social and economic consequences of concentrated legacy public housing in locations of persistent and concentrated disadvantage.**



For more information

Visit www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications to read Mission Australia's Pre-budget submission and Homelessness action plan.

Mission Australia helps people regain their independence - by standing together with Australians in need, until they can stand for themselves.

Contact us

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