

**MISSION**  
**AUSTRALIA** | together  
we stand

# Pre-budget submission 2016-17



## About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation that delivers evidence-based, client-centred community services. Our goal is to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities across Australia. In the 2014-15 financial year we supported over 307,000 Australians through 589 programs and services. We work with families and children, youth and people experiencing homelessness and also provide specialist services for mental health, disability and alcohol and drug issues.

# Summary of the year

2014-2015

Together, we supported more than a quarter of a million Australians on their journey to independence

**307,320**  
**Australians**  
**supported last year**



This was achieved through:

**2,981**  
dedicated  
staff members



**589**  
programs & services  
across Australia



**3,450**  
volunteers



**38,830**  
supporters



**41**  
government  
departments



**1,535\***  
partnerships



\* excludes employment services

## Summary of Recommendations:

Mission Australia recommends that the 2016-17 Federal Budget be framed to:

1. Affirm the principles of **equity and efficiency of the taxation system** taking account of:
  - impacts of tax settings on housing affordability and those on lowest incomes; and
  - the opportunity to harmonise taxation changes with progress on welfare reform.
2. Ensure the **welfare system provides adequate & targeted supports** to those on lowest incomes, by:
  - raising the base level of payments to be able to meet essential and basic living expenses;
  - setting Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to keep up with the real costs of housing and allow people to live where there are jobs and participation opportunities; and
  - providing intensive, flexible services and incentives to assist the most disadvantaged job seekers to overcome barriers to economic participation.
3. Increase capacity to **prevent and respond to homelessness**, in light of rising homelessness rates and level of unmet demand for support, by:
  - committing to a new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement with all State and Territory Governments including commitments to halve the homeless population by 2025 and halve youth homelessness by 2020;
  - committing to sustainable funding for housing and homelessness that is guaranteed for the next 5 years including an extension of the Reconnect program; and
  - extending and indexing funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) pending its replacement.
4. Address the **chronic shortage of housing for low and moderate income earners**, by:
  - replacing the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) with a new agreement that includes a national target to halve the number of people living in housing stress, a mechanism to facilitate and kick start investment by other partners in innovative and proven housing initiatives, a commitment to a net year-on-year increase in social and affordable housing in each state and territory and a national target of 200,000 new social and affordable housing properties by 2025.
  - committing to rectifying indexation for the NAHA and creating a new social and affordable housing growth fund while the new agreement is developed; and
  - providing funds for institutional investment trials which will emerge from the Council on Federal Financial Relations Affordable Housing Working Group.

5. Facilitate flexible pathways for **disadvantaged young people to transition to employment**, by:
  - establishing a new program of wrap-around supports for the young job seekers who face the most severe barriers to workforce participation (those in jobactive Stream C); and
  - supporting demand led employment initiatives, flexible learning options and targeted and relevant vocational training to meet local circumstances.
6. Strengthening communities to address **entrenched and concentrated disadvantage** in communities across Australia, by:
  - supporting new place-based long term community capacity building programs in communities of high disadvantage. expanding the Communities for Children model to additional communities and creating a parallel program for young people aged over 12; and
  - using social and affordable housing initiatives to foster stronger communities including through the renewal of legacy public housing.
7. Improve the wellbeing of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities**, by:
  - supporting locally based partnerships and initiatives to address disadvantage and meet Closing the Gap targets as well as committing to an additional justice target. This includes maintaining funding for successful programs as well as resourcing new models to ensure targets are on track;
  - addressing overcrowding, including through the funding of 4,200 new Aboriginal owned and controlled homes;
  - increasing efforts to reduce the disproportionate levels of domestic and family violence faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and
  - ensuring access to health care services of the level available to non-Indigenous Australia to address the continuing gap in life expectancy.

## Taxation

### Key recommendations

- Taxation settings should:
  - improve growth and productivity;
  - ensure equity and efficiency in the tax system;
  - raise sufficient revenue to provide adequate levels of income support and essential services, and underpin welfare approaches that assist the most disadvantaged progress towards independence;
  - take account of impacts on housing affordability; and
  - include appropriate incentives for economic and social participation for those able to participate in the workforce.
- Tax reform must not be pursued in isolation from welfare reform, given the complex interactions between the tax and transfer systems for the many welfare recipients who live in housing stress or at risk of homelessness or who are currently homeless. See below for welfare.

### Issues to be addressed

#### There is insufficient housing for people on low and moderate incomes

- Tax settings and incentives can be used to facilitate the conditions necessary for investment in new supply of below-market housing.
- Commonwealth and State tax settings impacting the housing market should be modelled and assessed to address distorting effects.
- Potential revenue from taxation reforms could be applied to direct investment in new supply of social and affordable housing, such as through a growth fund and/or models recommended by the Council on Federal Financial Relations' Affordable Housing Working Group.

## Welfare Reform

### Key Recommendations

- In progressing its commitment to welfare reform The Commonwealth Government should commission economic modelling to identify a level of base payment and indexation for income support that is adequate to meet basic living expenses;
- The tapering rates of income payments should be set to reduce effective marginal tax rates and remove financial disincentives of moving from income support into employment; and

- Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) should be set or redesigned to keep up with the real costs of housing and allow people to live in reasonable proximity to job markets.
- For the most disadvantaged groups – those with a disability including a mental illness, the long-term unemployed and young people who have exited school – flexible intensive support services are needed to overcome barriers to participation.

## Issues to be addressed

### Current payment levels are inadequate

- Income support is one of the most important and effective ways of preventing poverty and assisting people into employment.
- It is widely accepted that the current Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance payments are too low and are acting as an impediment to people looking for work. The payments need to keep pace with the cost of living and the growing gap with the aged pension.
- Proposals to increase the eligible age for Newstart are also concerning, as the Youth Allowance rates place vulnerable young people at extended risk of poverty.
- The proposed one month wait period for income support for young people is unreasonable. Not all young people have access to a stable home where they can live with their parents and if they are in the private rental market and become unemployed they are at high risk of homelessness.
- Program and benefit reductions that increase social dislocation and reduce participation will have long term costs for the budget and society.

### Commonwealth Rental Assistance has not kept pace with rent rises

- The National Housing Supply Council (NHSC) has calculated that 60 per cent of people who are on low incomes who rent are in housing stress<sup>1</sup> and therefore at risk of homelessness.
- Even for those receiving CRA, 42 per cent of people are still living in rental stress after the payment is taken into account.<sup>2</sup>
- If the welfare system is designed to enable participation and encourage independence, then support payments like CRA need to provide an adequate subsidy to help cover the costs of housing where people can find employment.
- A marker of housing stress should be included when setting CRA (generally accepted as 30 per cent of gross income for the lowest-income households) as part of indexation or rent setting policies.

### Childcare reforms, Paid Parental Leave and Family Tax Benefits

- Childcare reforms should support women's participation in the workforce and also guarantee a minimum of 2 days subsidised care per week for the most disadvantaged children.

<sup>1</sup> National Housing Supply Council (2012) Housing Supply and Affordability Key Indicators, 2012, NHSC, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013) Australia's Welfare 2013, AIHW, Canberra, p 114

- There should not be any reductions to the Government's paid parental leave scheme which helps lengthen the period of time a new parent can afford to care for and nurture their baby.
- Any changes to Family Tax Benefits (FTB) should not leave lowest-income families worse off.
- These policies impact on gender equality and pay equity for women including participation in the workforce as well as the welfare and wellbeing of children and families.

### Intensive support services and early intervention

- The long-term costs of income support payments can be reduced by upfront investment in meeting the needs of people to support their participation. This includes early intervention programs for children, youth transition programs, mental health and homelessness programs.

## Homelessness

### Key recommendations

- The Commonwealth should commit to a new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement with all State and Territory Governments to include:
  - national targets for reducing homelessness, including a commitment to:
  - halve the homeless population by 2025; and
  - halve youth homelessness by 2020;
  - a commitment to increased funding for housing and homelessness, guaranteed for the next 5 years - to avoid the churn and disruption that has been a feature of recent short-term funding extensions; and
  - a new outcomes measurement framework with clear responsibilities from the Commonwealth and States and Territories - to improve accountability across the different levels of government.
- While the new Agreement is being developed, immediate commitments are urgently required from the Commonwealth Government to be included in the 2016-17 Budget:
  - The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), which ends in less than 18 months, should be extended at current funding levels (indexed) for five years or until it is replaced by a new national Agreement; and
  - The Reconnect program, which assists homeless and at-risk young people to reconcile with, or stay connected to, their family should be extended for five years beyond June 2017.

## Issues to be addressed

- Preventing and reducing homelessness depends on: leadership from the Commonwealth Government; joint action from all governments, community organisations, businesses and individuals; welfare reform (discussed above); housing reform (discussed below); and long-term homelessness service funding.

## Homelessness rates remain unacceptable

- Census data from 2011 shows that 105,000 Australians were homeless, while a further 78,000 Australians were living in marginal housing and at possible risk of homelessness.<sup>3</sup>
- The national homelessness rate rose by 8% since the previous Census.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2014-15, some 256,000 people were assisted by specialist homelessness services. This number increased by an average annual growth rate of 2.6% since 2011-12.<sup>5</sup>
- It is estimated that, every day, 329 requests for help were made that specialist homelessness services could not meet.<sup>6</sup>
- The figures for child and youth homelessness are of particular concern:
  - Almost 44,000 children and young people in Australia are homeless, according to the 2011 Census. Of these, some 18,000 are children under 12 years old.
  - Over 112,000 young people sought assistance in 2014-15 from specialist homelessness services, according to the AIHW. Of these, about 42,000 were children under the age of 10.
  - Both the Census and the AIHW data are a significant under-estimate, particularly because young people's couch surfing is poorly recorded.

## Without NPAH funding, more people will become homeless

- The NPAH funds around 800 specialist homelessness services around Australia which assist people who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. These services assist 80,000 people each year and employ more than 3,000 staff.
- The NPAH funding agreement expires in June 2017. Without extension or replacement, \$250 million per annum of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments funds for specialist homelessness services will be withdrawn.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 2049.0 - *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2011*, Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics

<sup>4</sup> Being 49 persons for every 10,000, up from 45 in 2006. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 2049.0 - *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2011*, Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/clients-services-outcomes/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2014-15/unmet-demand/>

## The Reconnect family reconciliation program should be continued

- The Federally-funded Reconnect program uses community-based early intervention services to assist young people aged 12 to 18 years who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and their families. It assists young people stabilise their living situation and improve their level of engagement with family, work, education, training and their local community.
- Reconnect results in significant positive outcomes for young people and their families, particularly in terms of housing stability and family reconciliation.

## Continued commitment is needed, in the 2016-17 Budget

- Without funding certainty 800 NPAH-funded and 102 Reconnect programs will progressively need to be reduced from early 2017 as staff seek other employment opportunities.
- Longer-term funding arrangements and the respective roles of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in housing and homelessness will be considered in the context of the Government's White Paper on Reform of the Federation. Time frames for this process are unclear.
- A new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement needs to be negotiated between the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments to replace the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA); the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH); and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH).

## Housing for people on low and moderate incomes

### Key recommendations

- To address the chronic shortage of housing for low and moderate income earners (both social and affordable private rental housing), a new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement to replace the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) should be negotiated with the States and include the following measures:
  - a national target to halve the number of people living in housing stress - to reduce the number of people falling into homelessness;
  - a mechanism to facilitate and kick start investment by other partners – including the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors and the community - in innovative and proven homelessness and housing initiatives;
  - a commitment to a net year-on-year increase in social and affordable housing in each state and territory; and
  - a national target of 200,000 new social and affordable housing properties by 2025.
- While the new Agreement is being developed, the following immediate commitments are required from the Commonwealth Government to be included in the 2016-17 Budget:
  - rectify indexation for the current NAHA;
  - create a national Social and Affordable Housing Growth Fund; and

- provide funds for the institutional investment trials which will emerge from the Council on Federal Financial Relations housing working group.

## Issues to be addressed

### There is a chronic shortage of housing for people on low and moderate incomes

- Some 657,000 low income households live in rental stress (that is, pay more than 30% of their income on housing-related costs) which puts them at risk of becoming homeless.<sup>7</sup>
- The proportion of low income households in housing stress increased from 35% in 2007-08 to 42% in 2013-14.<sup>8</sup>
- Housing is unaffordable for jobseekers in all of the 40 regions across the country where they are most likely to find employment.<sup>9</sup>
- Australia has a shortfall of over 500,000 rental dwellings which are both affordable and available to the lowest income households.<sup>10</sup>

### Housing underpins economic growth

- Housing is vital national infrastructure. A well operating housing market is a pre-requisite for productivity and social cohesion.
- A workforce that is stably and affordably housed is a pool of people able to save for retirement and invest in the future, including education for their children.
- Housing construction and maintenance also boosts productivity through more jobs.

### Government can harness private and institutional investment

- There is appetite from individual private and institutional investors including superannuation funds to invest in below-market residential property in Australia.
- In the UK and US, a variety of mechanisms have been implemented to overcome barriers, resulting in institutional funds having created significant numbers of new below-market properties. These mechanisms include: bonds, tax credits, guarantees, direct subsidies, release of government-owned land at a discount, and no or low interest loans. In Australia, such mechanisms have been subject to expert analysis, including extensive research on the experience in other countries.
- The Council on Federal Financial Relations has established an Affordable Housing Working Group which is consulting on innovative financing models to harness investment and has

<sup>7</sup> ABS 4130.0 Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2013–14 – Table 15. Accessed at:

[www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4130.02013-14?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4130.02013-14?OpenDocument)

<sup>8</sup> Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services*, Table GA.5 <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2016/housing-and-homelessness>

<sup>9</sup> Australians for Affordable Housing, (2013) *Opening Doors To Employment: Is housing affordability hindering jobseekers?* <http://housingstressed.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Opening-doors-to-employment-2013.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> National Housing Supply Council, *State of Supply Report 2012*. Cited in [http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/Housing\\_paper\\_summary\\_March\\_2015\\_final.pdf](http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/Housing_paper_summary_March_2015_final.pdf)

recently released a Discussion Paper for comment. It has also foreshadowed possible trials, and the 2016-17 Budget should provision funds for the establishment of new models and/or such trials.

### A consolidated approach is necessary

- The consideration of roles and responsibilities for housing and homelessness through the Reform of Federation process must feed into the development of the new national Agreement. If there is a redistribution of accountabilities, the net level of funding must not be decreased from existing levels.
- Supply of social and affordable housing relies on a complex intersection of different policy and funding settings. In addition to consideration in this year's Budget, social and affordable housing should also be considered through each of the following processes currently underway:
  - taxation reform;
  - welfare reform;
  - reform of Federation; and
  - the Council on Federal Financial Relations Affordable Housing Working Group.

### A national Growth Fund will seed more supply

- The supply of social and affordable housing to address the chronic shortage relies on a mix of measures including taxation settings, welfare reform, harnessing institutional investment, growth of the community housing sector and planning reform especially inclusionary zoning.
- Even were such measures to be implemented at reasonable levels, a "yield gap" will still make below-market housing unsustainable. Government investment, through a Social and Affordable Housing Growth Fund, could meet this gap.
- The NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund is a promising model to leverage institutional and housing sector expertise. However, investment facilitation is needed from the Commonwealth Government to achieve the scale of affordable housing needed.
- A national Growth Fund could leverage investment from other sources in both new supply and renewal of existing poor quality public housing, including in areas of concentrated disadvantage with run-down housing estates.

## Youth transitions to employment

### Key Recommendations

- The Transition to Work program announced in the last budget should be complemented by a program for the most disadvantaged young job seekers, which would:
  - be aimed at Stream C young job seekers aged 15-24;

- operate under a new case management approach that is holistic, strengths-based and has the flexibility to work with young people’s families where necessary; and
  - include careers advice, mentoring, skills training, assistance to re-engage with education and work experience as well as working on the underlying issues that present barriers to employment.
- Flexible learning options need to be available so young people can finish their education in different settings – this requires either direct funding from the Commonwealth or a change to the way education is funded between the Commonwealth and States to give States an incentive for the education funding to move with the child.
  - Support should be provided to demand led employment initiatives such as the Industry Employment Initiative (IEI) which is a partnership between Social Ventures Australia, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Mission Australia that aims to support long term unemployed young people transition to employment, through industry commitments of specific roles. More information can be found [here](#).
  - Targeted and well regulated vocational education and training needs to be a national priority.

## Issues to be addressed

### Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high

- 1 in 4 young people aged 18-24 are not fully engaged in education or work.
- Unemployment for young people aged 15-24 year olds is above 12% overall and above 20% in some particularly disadvantaged areas.
- The ‘scarring’ that occurs when someone is out of work for a lengthy period can have negative impacts on the person’s health and reduces the likelihood of future employment.

### Transition to Work

- Mission Australia welcomed the \$212 million Transition to Work program announced in the 2015 Budget, and believes that it will significantly improve the employment prospects of Stream B jobseekers facing moderate barriers to the job market.
- We note and welcome the provision in the Transition to Work program, for a proportion (10% of all places) of Stream C job seekers with severe vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment, limited to young job seekers who have capacity to benefit from the transition to work services, having already addressed underlying issues such as health or housing.
- There remains a significant service gap for Stream C job seekers who are ineligible for the Transition to Work program, who are some of the most disadvantaged young people in our community but have high potential with the right supports to join the workforce.
- This cohort of young job seekers in Stream C includes those with complex presentations including young people experiencing poor mental or physical health, with substance abuse issues, living within dysfunctional families and with a history of contact with the juvenile justice system.
- These young people remain at high risk of long-term unemployment and will struggle to compete with the 18 applicants who on average apply for each lower skilled vacancy.

- While the Transition to Work program is limited to 15-21 year olds, a new program could encompass an age range of 15-24. This would provide much needed assistance to young people who are not straight out of school, but have no structured program to assist in securing work.
- Eligibility should also extend to those at risk of disengagement from education or employment, not just those who are currently unemployed, as early intervention is crucial to addressing disadvantage before barriers are compounded.

## Strengthening communities

### Key recommendations

- That the Commonwealth Government commits to address entrenched and locational disadvantage at the community level, in conjunction with state and local governments.
- Solutions need to be based on strong local consultation, be flexible in adapting to changes and lessons learnt and be community owned and driven. They should be based on an understanding of the multiple and complex needs within these communities.
- This could include:
  - A national partnership agreement between the Commonwealth and States focussed on the most disadvantaged communities with clear improvement targets over a 20 year period;
  - Expanding the Communities for Children (CfC) model to new communities where there is demonstrated disadvantage as understood through the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and Dropping Off The Edge (DOTE) report<sup>11</sup>;
  - The addition of a CfC style model to work with young people over the age of 12;
  - Using social and affordable housing initiatives to foster stronger communities including the renewal of legacy public housing;
  - Funding non-government organisations to run community strengthening programs in identified areas of disadvantage with rolling evaluations to demonstrate outcomes;
- This should be supplemented by access to quality early childhood education and care and adequate funding of schools and youth services across Australia and particularly in disadvantaged areas to increase opportunity and reduce inequality.
- Communities should also be strengthened through support for settlement and multicultural communities, including adequate funding for programs such as Skills for Education and Employment (SEE).

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<sup>11</sup> Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia (2015) *Dropping Off the Edge 2015*, accessed at [www.dote.org.au](http://www.dote.org.au)

## Issues to be addressed

### Persistent and entrenched disadvantage must be addressed

- DOTE2015<sup>12</sup> identified the 3% of communities across Australia that bear the greatest burden of disadvantage and require immediate and sustained commitment from all levels of government.
- High levels of unemployment, low levels of income and education, housing stress and a high level of criminal offending are features of these communities. This limits opportunities for individuals living in these communities.
- Locational disadvantage is a complex problem requiring systems change and innovation. Interventions are required at the community level in addition to macro reforms and individual service responses. A coordinated place-based collective impact approach is required.

### Communities for Children is a good model worth expanding

- CfC provides a good model of intervention for children up to 12 years old, but there remains a lack of coordinated community level intervention for adolescents.
- The combination of a facilitating partner, local planning and evidence based programs has proven to be successful and can be expanded. CfC has been shown to increase the engagement of hard-to-reach families, increase the number of services available to families and increase collaboration between services.
- However services for vulnerable adolescents remain piecemeal and more is needed to address barriers and build resilience to allow for a successful transition to adulthood.
- A youth hub could be contracted separately to CfC to cater appropriately for adolescent issues, and could be closely coordinated with CfC to ensure a smooth transition where continued supports are required.
- While early intervention is key, vulnerable young people aged 13-25 also need a model of place-based flexible service delivery to ensure a positive trajectory towards becoming socially and economically participating adults.
- Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) is also a positive development which should be expanded to other areas of high need with large Aboriginal populations.

### Social and affordable housing is a building block for stronger communities

- Secure and affordable housing can foster healthier, stronger and more productive communities, as well as connecting residents to jobs and services by public transport or other alternative means such as bikes or walking, and broadening people's economic opportunities.
- Action is urgently needed to address the social and economic problem of concentrated legacy public housing in locations of persistent and concentrated disadvantage.
- The Commonwealth should cooperate with state governments to help break the cycle of entrenched disadvantage through infrastructure renewal linked to community strengthening, over at least ten years.

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<sup>12</sup> Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia (2015) *Dropping Off the Edge2015*, accessed at [www.dote.org.au](http://www.dote.org.au)

- A place-based model that co-ordinates services and targets intergenerational disadvantage through education and employment requires long term funding.
- An assets-based approach to community development uses methods such as capacity building, community building, neighbourhood renewal and asset mapping to fortify social capital.

### Pilots and measurement

- While successful community development and collective impact frameworks can be learned from, they cannot be transposed directly and approaches will need to be locally tailored. The Commonwealth should fund several community strengthening pilots to address entrenched and persistent disadvantage coupled with a strong evaluation framework.
- Mission Australia with support from the Tasmanian Government is piloting and evaluating a community strengthening pilot in Burnie.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs

### Key recommendations

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be empowered to design and lead solutions to the complex problems facing their communities including poverty, disadvantage and the lack of appropriate housing. This includes consideration of the Empowered Communities proposal and other approaches.
- Investment should be directed as a priority to address overcrowding as the major contributor to homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should facilitate funding of 4,200 new Aboriginal owned and controlled homes in remote communities and regional centres, to double the impact of the current National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Housing.
- Bipartisan and long term commitment to provide well-resourced and community controlled services to address disadvantage and progress Closing the Gap targets needs to continue. Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs should be directed to meeting closing the gap targets.
- The Federal, State and Territory Governments should address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system as an urgent priority with a goal of Closing the Gap in rates of imprisonment by 2040. This includes investment in prevention, early intervention and diversion.
- Increase efforts to reduce the disproportionate levels of domestic and family violence faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Indigenous children in all areas should be given adequate access to early childcare to bridge the gap in learning prior to the commencement of school. We join with SNAICC in advocating for a \$100 million Indigenous community-based program designed to support Indigenous services for populations experiencing significant vulnerability.

## Issues to be addressed

### Empowerment is essential

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities need to lead change so that social and economic development can occur alongside retention of identity, language and culture.

### Indigenous housing and homelessness requires specific responses

- On Census night 2011, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 2.5 per cent of the Australian population, but accounted for 25 per cent of all persons who were homeless.
- Of those who were classified as homeless, 75 per cent were in severely overcrowded dwellings. Most of the severely overcrowded dwellings are based in very remote areas.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also continue to be over-represented among specialist homelessness service clients. Almost one quarter of clients who provided information on their Indigenous status identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

### Indigenous programs

- IYCP funding ended in 2015 with no replacement program. This program delivered strong results in assisting Indigenous youth identify career and employment pathways and we would support funding being made available to a similar program. The Indigenous Remote School Attendance program is due to expire on 30 June. Mission Australia supports continued funding for this program to close the gaps in attendance and literacy and numeracy.
- An asset-based community development approach that recognises strengths, resources and assets of Aboriginal individuals, families and communities should be adopted with funding for long-term approaches that are integrated, holistic and accessible.

### Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage

- While there has been some progress towards achieving the Closing the Gap goals of reducing infant mortality and narrowing the gap in year 12 attainment the goals in relation to life expectancy, literacy and numeracy and employment outcomes remain off track.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to experience poverty, experience higher rates of unemployment and are the most economically disadvantaged and excluded members of our community on almost any measure.

### Change the record

- A serious concern is the 88% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people imprisoned over the past 10 years including a sharp increase in juvenile detention.
- Imprisonment has drastic flow on effects including family dislocation, poor health outcomes and unemployment, adding to the costs for government and to intergenerational disadvantage.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also 34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence than non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.