

Housing and Homelessness Strategy for South Australia 2019



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Introduction

Mission Australia is a national, non-denominational Christian charity that has been helping vulnerable Australians move towards independence for more than 160 years. In the 2017-18 financial year we supported over 120,000 individuals through 461 programs and services.¹ Mission Australia delivers a range of community and family services in SA and supported close to 6,000 individuals through 40 services across South Australia (SA) during the last financial year.²

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Housing and Homelessness Strategy for South Australia 2019. This submission is based on a combination of research and insights from our direct service provision in SA and across Australia. It includes direct testimony from some of our practitioners and the participants they work with.

Recommendations

- The homelessness strategy should be underpinned by a robust action plan with clear and measurable outcomes. This action plan should be supported by necessary financial and human resources over the course of the strategy to ensure that the outcomes are achieved or adjusted where necessary.
- Increasing the stock of social and affordable housing should be integrated into the planning system through the housing and homelessness strategy, including through inclusionary zoning and value capture mechanisms.
- Specific housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be identified through direct consultation with the community and representative organisations and they should be consulted on an ongoing basis throughout the lifetime of the strategy. The strategy should include sustainable measures to increase housing stock in rural and remote parts of SA.
- Early intervention services to support people who are in institutionalised settings such as hospitals, prisons or other settings such as Out of Home Care (OOHC) should be identified and funded to prevent them from becoming homeless or exiting into homelessness. Services that are currently providing these supports successfully should be replicated across the state.
- The needs of diverse cohorts such as older women, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

¹ Mission Australia, Annual Report, 2018, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2018>

² Ibid

(LGBTI) people and young people should be clearly acknowledged in the strategy supported by concrete action to address their specific needs.

- The strategy should identify methods to sustainably capitalise the federal government funding, including through measures such as transfer of state managed property to community housing service sector.

Home and community

Homelessness is a much broader issue than mere rooflessness and in order to effectively reduce homelessness, people must feel safe, secure and connected and this requires stable, adequate and appropriate housing. This includes housing which is safe, not overcrowded, in a suitable condition to live, close to infrastructure, meets any cultural needs and has secure tenure. Housing must also be sustainable in terms of both affordability and maintenance.

Encouragingly, *Towards a Housing, Homelessness and Support Strategy – Strategic Intent* report identifies the majority of the issues within the South Australian housing landscape and provides evidence of the magnitude of the problem.

Concerted and strategic planning coupled with long-term and sustainable funding is required to address housing issues. It must also be noted that a diverse range of solutions are required to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness at different points in their life.

People who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness are best placed to communicate their aspirations, strengths and needs, and to determine what solutions are best suited for their needs. Responses to homelessness should focus on the strengths of people who are homeless and work with them to further develop their sense of agency in effecting change in their lives. The future strategy should ensure there are mechanisms in place to co-design and collaborate on housing solutions by consulting and meaningfully engaging people with lived experience.

Responses must be multi-dimensional, since for many people exiting homelessness is about more than just housing, and should address support needs across a range of areas including health and mental health, education, employment, and family and community connection. The provision of integrated, wrap-around services to people across a range of life domains can help them to achieve positive outcomes in housing, health and wellbeing, and social and economic participation. Housing first and youth foyers are models that have been effective in meeting diverse needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The future strategy should identify methods to scale up these models across the state.

As highlighted in the *SA Housing and Homelessness Strategy Report* the ability to interact and engage with their local community is critically important for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Empowering communities to engage in community activities, access to public spaces such as parks and gardens and decision making processes will increase people's sense of autonomy. For people who have been experiencing homelessness or have been in housing stress, the ability to make decisions in relation

to the services they receive, or to engage in preferred activities, will provide a sense of agency and control over their lives, which in turn will have an impact on their health and wellbeing.

Mission Australia Housing's Tenant Action Group NSW

Mission Australia Housing's Tenant Action Group provides a forum for tenants to influence, improve and shape the services that are delivered. The Tenant Action Group is made up of and led by the tenants, who play an active role in service delivery, share local knowledge, provide feedback into local and state government policy/regulation development processes, and develop skills through education, training and volunteering opportunities.

The *SA Housing and Homelessness Strategy Report* as well as the Taskforce report identify the importance of community connectedness and the need to feel safe, access to inviting public spaces and other amenities that facilitate regular and ongoing interactions between residents. Harnessing the existing resources and engaging residents can increase community participation and interaction.

The Gardens and Recipes of our World (GROW) community garden project

The Gardens and Recipes of our World (GROW) community garden project in Clarence Plains has been awarded the Leading Community Engagement Practice award at the Tasmanian biennial Australasian Housing Institute Awards.

Facilitated by Mission Australia, the GROW community garden has been designed and managed by local residents, Mission Australia Housing tenants and local services, bringing the community together to strengthen relationships.

The GROW community garden was established to encourage foraging, growing and healthy eating in the local community, and features an orchard, vegetable gardens, pizza oven and community and educational spaces. It celebrates Clarence Plain's Aboriginal connection to the area, with Aboriginal artwork and garden beds of bush tucker.

The GROW steering committee, which is made up of Clarence Plains residents, developed a concept for the garden through extensive community consultation, and worked with a landscape architect to design and oversee the construction of the space. The Committee now works with local services for the garden's ongoing management. The Leading Community Engagement Practice award acknowledges the dedicated involvement of residents in creating the garden.

The garden also works in collaboration with the neighbouring school's 24 Carrot Garden Project. The garden hosts a range of large and small community events including the emerging local Growers and Crafters market.

Better outcomes

In order for the current housing system in SA to deliver better outcomes, there should be a significant increase in investment in social and affordable housing to meet the growing demand.

Achieving better outcomes for people experiencing housing and homelessness related issues include understanding their priorities, needs and risk factors and providing sustainable wrap-around supports. There are a multitude of approaches to measure the impact of the services provided to individuals by community services. Mission Australia employs the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) to measure the wellbeing of clients and to better target supports to meet their needs.

Mission Australia Housing and Cornerstone Housing Collaboration

In 2017 Cornerstone Housing Limited (CHL) and Mission Australia Housing (MAH) entered into a collaboration agreement to explore ways in which the organisations could work together to improve the service experience of Cornerstone tenants. The CHPs agreed to focus their time, skills and resources into two projects.

The first project involved engaging Mission Australia (MA) to deliver a comprehensive measurement of individual wellbeing over the portfolio of CHL tenants. In June 2018 CHL staff participated in an interactive workshop at MAH's offices in Clarendon Vale in Tasmania. Over two days the staff developed a Theory of Change and learnt about MA's program of Impact Measurement.

Between August - October 2018 the team at CHL surveyed over 300 CHL residents and in November 2018 MA's Impact Measurement team analysed the data and presented the findings. There were some tenants with particularly low well-being scores. These individuals received an immediate and bespoke program of support.

In January 2019 the teams met in Adelaide. They discussed how to use the data and devised a program of improvements. In order to ascertain the impact over time, CHL delivered their improved tenancy and community services and the tenants were again surveyed in May-June 2019. The results demonstrated that in July 2019, the wellbeing of CHL tenants had increased. For further information, a presentation can be delivered on request.

Measures such as the PWI should be incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation of a long-term housing and homelessness strategy to ensure that the services are reviewed based on the feedback of the recipients for continuous improvement.

In addition to providing long-term, sustainable solutions by increasing the housing stock, there needs to be a raft of other measures to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first instance. There are numerous precursors for people seeking emergency accommodation such as domestic and family violence, housing crisis, leaving institutionalised settings such as prisons and hospitals and other unexpected changes to circumstances such as loss of employment and relationship breakdown. The

current level of funding and appropriate accommodation options available for these individuals or families are limited, this is particularly challenging in rural and remote areas.

Reconnect (Department of Social Services)

Reconnect supports young people aged 12–18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to improve family relationships so the young person may be able to return to the family home. If this is not possible, the young person will be supported to obtain alternative housing. In addition, the young person will be supported to remain engaged at school and to address their other needs, such as mental health, alcohol and drug dependence issues and life skills.

Mission Australia conducted an outcomes evaluation from March to October 2016 across all of its seven Reconnect sites.³ The evaluation considered a range of measures mapped to the outcomes that Reconnect aims to achieve. Overall, improvements were found in clients' wellbeing, sense of control and support, housing permanency, family cohesion and financial condition of the family. The evaluation also found that Reconnect services fill a significant gap in existing regional service systems, including a central role in supporting schools to connect young people to other services in the community.

Mission Australia delivers seven Reconnect services including two sites in SA (Christies Beach, Whyalla).

Case study

Tim* was 15 years old when he was linked with one of Mission Australia's Reconnect services in SA. Tim's mother was in Queensland and his father was in prison. He was couch surfing at the time and had no income. Tim has been disengaged from school and had not attended school since the beginning of that year. He also indicated that he has issues with alcohol and drug dependence and has unresolved legal matters.

Without an income, Tim was unable to access the local homelessness service. As he was not receiving any financial support from the government, the case workers worked with his father to ensure Tim was able to receive social security payments and coordinate with local housing services to find him appropriate accommodation.

Tim's case worker accompanied him to obtain necessary identification and other documentation such as his birth certificate, bank account, tax file number, Medicare card among other things. Once Tim's father was released from prison, they were supported to access housing by arranging and attending a

³ Mission Australia, Reconnect Evaluation, 2016, accessible at:
<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/homelessness/687-reconnect-evaluation-report/file>

range of appointments with them with different authorities and bodies. Following advocacy on their behalf, they were placed on the priority list for housing.

His case worker also engaged with a number of schools to assist Tim to re-enter education. The case worker was able to secure a place for Tim with additional support in place to meet Tim's needs while at school. He was also provided with brokerage funds for school uniforms and other supplies.

He received a range of supports and referrals for his alcohol dependence and was provided with strategies to refrain from interacting with people who had a negative influence on Tim's life. He also wanted to learn different recreational activities and the case worker taught him how to fish and catch crabs and provided Tim with fishing gear so that he could continue to fish.

Case workers accompanied Tim to his youth justice appointments and supported him through the family conference process. The matters were successfully resolved through the family conference process which meant Tim does not have a criminal record.

Tim and his father were offered a house by Housing SA and Tim continues to attend school. As part of his exit plan the family was referred to the Building Family Opportunities Program for ongoing support.

*name has been changed for privacy

More resources should be dedicated to early intervention programs to support people prior to them reaching crisis point including replicating the current early intervention models that are effective in supporting people to avoid experiencing homelessness. These early intervention programs can be directly related to housing and homelessness or they can be generalist services that are working with people experiencing disadvantages or challenges including housing related issues.

Emerging future needs

According to available data the top 3 reasons for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in SA were housing crisis (41%, compared with 39% nationally), domestic and family violence (33%, compared with 39%) and inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions (26%, compared with 24%).⁴ This demonstrates the need to increase social and affordable housing as well as the need for emergency and crisis options.

People living in SA and WA face the highest risk of poverty based on the 50% median income poverty line.⁵ It is widely accepted that social security payments are far too low and are increasing the risk of

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report, 2017 - 18, accessible at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/13fe50bb-2ee9-4c12-af5e-aa93b66370c2/aihw-hou-299-sa.pdf.aspx>

⁵ P. Davidson, P. Saunders, B. Bradbury, and M. Wong, Poverty in Australia, 2018. ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 2, Sydney: ACOSS, 2018, pp. 64-65.

homelessness.⁶ The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2019 indicated that there were 2,710 properties advertised for rent in and around Adelaide and only 3% or just 92 properties were affordable for all household on income support.⁷

The National Housing Supply Council calculated that 60% of people who are on low incomes in the rental market are in housing stress⁸ and therefore at risk of homelessness. Even for those receiving CRA, 41% of people are still living in rental stress after the payment.⁹ Without access to adequate social support payments, people will continue to experience housing stress or increased risk of homelessness.

Considering the increasing need for social and affordable housing to address the housing issues in Aboriginal communities, the state government needs to identify a multipronged approach to increase funding and remote housing stock through a long-term, sustainable framework.

Inclusionary zoning has proven to be an effective tool in increasing affordable housing. Research found that between 2005 and 2016, planning schemes delivered 5,485 affordable homes rental and low cost home ownership dwellings in SA.¹⁰ However, in the UK similar schemes led to 83,790 new affordable dwellings.¹¹ Mission Australia encourages the government to significantly expand the current inclusionary zoning policies to meet the emerging housing demand.

Value capture is another option that can be considered where governments impose a tax on the increase in value of a parcel of land when it increases because of an action by government, such as the land being rezoned to a higher value use (e.g. from farmland to residential housing), the building of more efficient local transport access, or the building of local amenities such as schools or cultural centres.¹² The future strategy should closely consider these options and direct the funds to increase social and affordable housing stock in SA.

In order to cater for diverse needs of growing communities, it is important to invest in models that are designed and developed to meet the growing population in SA through mixed developments. In addition to building more affordable and social housing to meet the critical need, strategic planning should

⁶ See further: Business Council of Australia, Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System for Jobseekers and Others, accessible at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_Employment_and_Workplace_Relations/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/newstartallowance/submissions

⁷ Anglicare Australia, Media Release: Rental Affordability Snapshot: Adelaide Metro Region, April 2019, accessible at: <https://anglicaresa.com.au/2019-rental-affordability-snapshot/>

⁸ National Housing Supply Council, Housing Supply and Affordability Key Indicators, 2012, NHSC, Canberra.

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Housing Assistance in Australia 2017, accessible at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2017/contents/financial-assistance>

¹⁰ N. Gurrán, et al, *Supporting affordable housing supply: inclusionary planning in new and renewing communities*, AHURI Final Report No. 297, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, 2018, accessible at: https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/20483/Inquiry-into-increasing-affordable-housing-supply-Evidence-based-principles-and-strategies-for-Australian-policy-and-practice-Executive-Summary.pdf

¹¹ Ibid

¹² AHURI, What is value capture? Understanding value capture and how it can fund infrastructure projects, 2017, accessible at: <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/what-is-value-capture>

consider the demands of the population including access to infrastructure, amenities, accessible recreational spaces, facilities such as child care, aged care facilities and employment opportunities.

Ivanhoe Estate Development NSW

As part of the NSW Government's Communities Plus program, Mission Australia Housing will create at least 950 social housing dwellings and 128 affordable homes among the 3000 new dwellings in partnership with developers at Ivanhoe estate, 15 kilometres northwest of the Sydney CBD.

The development will provide residents with easy access to transport, services, jobs, quality amenities and open green spaces to support a vibrant and sustainable community. The development will include a high school, residential aged care, childcare centres, a supermarket, cafes and retail shops.

Mission Australia Housing will provide tenancy and asset management for the social housing residents and will also deliver community development utilising the Mission Australia Strengthening Communities model. Additionally, Mission Australia will coordinate support service for residents to increase their independence.

This model of urban renewal has potential to be adapted for developments in SA.

Strategic Intent

Broadly, the Strategic Intent covers the majority of the important aspects of addressing housing and homelessness in SA, especially the measures to address housing system as a whole. However, Strategic Intent does not provide clarity in relation to how the strategy will be implemented, timelines for achieving the objectives and outcomes or what human and financial resources will be attached to the strategy. There is little clarity in relation to how this strategy will encourage increase of social and affordable housing stock through direct government investment and intervention.

As discussed, inclusionary zoning plays a critical role in increasing affordable housing stock. The document does not make direct references to demonstrate how inclusionary zoning would be incorporated into the future planning.

It is encouraging that the Strategic Intent 2019 recognise the need to improve protections for renters and promoting long-term lease agreements. It is imperative that the framework meaningfully engages with all branches of the government, the community and social services sector to effect these changes.

The Strategic Intent also makes references to a number of federal government programs including Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), National Rental Affordability Rental Scheme (NRAS), and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA). Each of these funding streams have different focusses and targeted towards different stakeholders. It should be noted that NRAS funding is coming to an end and should not be relied on into the future, however working with the Commonwealth on a new affordable housing scheme would produce more stock and contribute to reducing homelessness.

There is evidence to demonstrate that current CRA payments are insufficient considering the rising cost of rent across the country.¹³ CRA is only available for individuals in the private rental market or in housing managed by a community-housing provider. In order to maximise the benefits of this, the state government could consider strategies to transfer properties managed by the government to community housing providers that are better placed to provide a range of wrap-around supports in addition to managing and providing tenancy support.

Social Housing Management Transfer to Mission Australia Housing (MAH)

On 1st July 2019 MAH took over management of a portfolio of over 1000 social homes located on NSW's Mid North Coast. This was one of fourteen packages transferred by NSW FACS to CHPs under a competitive tender process. Under this long-term arrangement, MAH will deliver a comprehensive service of tenancy and property management.

Access to CRA means that MAH has the capacity and ability to deliver a deeper level of service and improve the experience of residents and the greater community.

Strengthening Communities

Through our Strengthening Communities model, Mission Australia listens to the community and equips them to transform their community – realising the community itself has the insight into what will work to tackle neighbourhood challenges.

Tailored Support Coordination Service (TSCS)

Tailored Support Coordination Service (TSCS) will work with tenants, other household members and selected applicants to develop goal orientated personal support plans and then enable them to access services that provide appropriate supports.

Maintenance upgrade program

Our Property Management Services Plan focuses on improving low standard properties as quickly as possible, followed by exceeding the required benchmark and increasing the aggregate portfolio score. We will do this through a maintenance surge in years 1 to 3 in parallel with providing tenants with training in maintaining their property to support high property standards

A stronger focus should be placed on early intervention and prevention with allocation of increased funding for the on the ground services through the Strategic Intent. This could be a three pronged approach where people are provided with stable accommodation in the first instance. This should be coupled with support to address their other needs such as supports to address mental health, domestic and family violence, alcohol and drug issues or any other factor that was contributing to increasing their risk of homelessness. Once they are in stable accommodation and initial crisis or issues have been

¹³ See further: Anglicare Australia, Rental Affordability Snapshot, 2018, accessible at: <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshotb811d9309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

resolved, they should be provided with support to engage or reengage in education and training or employment.

Funding certainty for service provision

The Strategic Intent document makes references to the need to reform the homelessness system, sector, supports and funding. It is imperative that housing needs should be coupled with other services to ensure there is a consistent service presence in the local communities, with people aware of the services available to them and the services are able to build trust and relationships with local residents.

As recommended by Productivity Commission, to allow adequate time for service providers to establish their operations, and have a period of continuity in service provision and handover before the conclusion of the contract (when a new provider is selected), default contract lengths for family and community services should be increased to seven years, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services, this should be increased to 10 years.¹⁴ Given the importance of these services in local communities, a review of current funding levels and contract length should be conducted and ensure funding enables services to attract and maintain adequate staffing levels and retain the qualified workforce.

Being more inclusive and responsive

There is a need for sustainable and concerted measures to address the prevailing issues in relation to homelessness and a clear policy and strategic recognition that the people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are not a homogenous group.

Support services should be flexible to meet the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness. In order to achieve positive, long-term outcomes, services should be able to provide holistic wrap around supports for people to address the multitude of challenges they are experiencing. Responses to homelessness should ensure the equitable treatment of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including those with particularly complex needs who are hardest to reach and who require more intensive support over longer periods of time.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experience disproportionately high levels of homelessness, contributed to by social stressors such as poor housing or overcrowding, poverty and unemployment as a consequence of colonialism, dispossession from land, culture and traditional social

¹⁴ Productivity Commission, Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Reforms to Human Services, No 85, Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, 2017, accessible at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/humanservices/reforms/report>

structures and racism.¹⁵ In particular there are high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in overcrowded dwellings.

Family violence is one of the major drivers of homelessness among Aboriginal communities. Important new approaches to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities include a focus on social and emotional wellbeing, that draws on connection with law, cultures, and spirituality as protective factors against the occurrence of family violence and putting Elders (male and female) at the centre of interventions wherever possible.¹⁶

Homelessness services designed to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be co-designed and implemented with community members, Elders and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to ensure they are culturally appropriate and effective. Particularly in regional and remote areas, relationships with the local community and having a strong understanding of local cultures are critical to developing the necessary trust for community members to accept support from services.

Women and children affected by family and domestic violence

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children, and must be considered in connection with the homelessness strategy. Lack of availability of appropriate accommodation is likely to prevent people from leaving abusive relationships. Therefore, housing assistance measures, particularly for women affected by DFV need to include options that allow women to remain safely housed or to find affordable, stable and suitable accommodation within a short timeframe.¹⁷

Women will often cycle in and out of homelessness as they try to rebuild their relationship with their abusive partner.¹⁸ Safe accommodation is therefore a vital part of the service landscape. This includes increasing the stock of crisis, transitional and long-term social and affordable housing in SA.

Young people

Mission Australia conducts an annual youth survey and over 28,000 young people participated in 2018. In total, 3,767 young people from SA aged 15 to 19 years responded. For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact upon them moving out of home in the future. Of those responding, seven in ten (67.4%) respondents from SA indicated housing costs (e.g. rent, utilities) would be a future barrier to moving out of home, followed by financial stability

¹⁵ Mission Australia, *Out of the Shadows: Domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia*, 2019, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/Out-of-the-shadows>

¹⁶ H. Blagg, et al., *Innovative models in addressing violence against Indigenous women: Key findings and future directions*, Sydney: ANROWS, 2018.

¹⁷ Mission Australia, *Out of the Shadows: Domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia*, 2019, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/Out-of-the-shadows>

¹⁸ Chamberlain, C. & MacKenzie, D. (2003), *Counting the homeless 2001, Australian Census Analytic Program*, Canberra: ABS.

(61.7%) and availability of housing (39.2%).¹⁹ This demonstrates that housing affordability is a significant issue for young people, coupled with issues of financial stability.

Although the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in SA was 6.0% in July 2019, the annual average unemployment rate for young people (those aged 15 to 24 years) was 13.6%.²⁰ Current social security payments including the Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance, and Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) are insufficient for many young people to pay the rent and meet other costs, particularly those in lone households and in the private rental market.²¹

Further, the services targeting adults are often unsuitable for young people and may not provide an appropriate platform for them to engage. Youth services should provide holistic wraparound supports that respond to young people's individual needs and circumstances. Young people need access to a broad range of services that include both universal programs and targeted approaches that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable young people including those experiencing homelessness, disengaged from education and employment, experiencing mental illness, in out of home care and in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Completion of education is critical in securing future employment and stability. Research indicates that young people who have achieved year 12 or higher level of qualifications are less likely to experience economic disadvantage including housing and homelessness related issues.²² Therefore, it is imperative that a range of holistic, wraparound services are available for young people to address the challenges they experience and to remain engaged in education. For instance, the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) program works with young people who are disengaged from education and are likely to experience multiple challenges including housing and homelessness.²³

Try, Test and Learn – Support for VET students - South Australia

This service model aims to support students at risk of disengaging with post-secondary VET studies to stay engaged and complete their education or training, resulting in an increased likelihood of future

¹⁹ Mission Australia, Youth Survey Report 2018, 2019, p. 118 accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey>

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6202.0 Labour Force, Australia, 2019, accessible at:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Jul%202019?OpenDocument>

²¹ See further: W. Stone, S. Parkinson, *et al* (2016) *Housing assistance need and provision in Australia: a household-based policy analysis*, AHURI Final Report 262, Melbourne, accessible at:

https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/7617/AHURI_Final_Report_No262_Housing-assistance-need-and-provision-in-Australia-a-household-based-policy-analysis.pdf

²² S.Lamb, and S.Huo, Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 0 2/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

²³ University of Adelaide and Mission Australia, What does Success Look Like? An Evaluation of Mission Australia's Flexible Learning Options (FLO) Program (South Australia), 2018, accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/765-what-does-success-look-like-an-evaluation-of-mission-australia-s-flexible-learning-options-flo-program-south-australia/file>

employment. A 15-month trial was conducted in four different locations to test the efficacy of this model. Objectives of the service include:

- Improved engagement, attendance and attainment in education
- Increased educational completion
- Improved engagement in the pursuit of employment
- Increased employment
- Faster pace of transition to employment
- Improved social connection and support networks

The program also focuses on early intervention by using risk factors to identify students, helping them connect to available supports and maintaining a relationship so that support can be offered quickly to resolve and stabilise escalating issues before students disengage.

The service model allows additional support to be provided at key points to reduce individual risk of disengagement and building on motivation and strengths when non-vocational issues arise (eg family conflict, mental health, homelessness, substance abuse, unplanned financial difficulty).

Despite a demonstrated positive impact, this program is no longer funded.

Case study

Rob* was 18 years old when he was linked with Try, Test and Learn – Support for VET Students (SVS) program. He was participating in an Automotive Body Repair Technology (Certificate III) apprenticeship. He was referred to the Adelaide SVS program by his industry trade mentor, who identified that Rob was at risk of disengaging from training and employment. Despite going through multiple challenges, Rob was a keen student and was determined to finish his apprenticeship to obtain employment.

At the time of his referral, Rob was experiencing mental health issues, and was dependent on alcohol as he felt that was the only way to suppress his anxiety and depression. He also had a history of self-harm and use of cannabis on a regular basis. Whilst community mental health services were involved at this point, clinical treatment ceased shortly after at Rob's request. Due to his escalating mental health issues, Rob had to leave his current employment.

Rob lived with his parents and his financial capacity was limited for him to live independently. Rob found it difficult communicating his worries to his parents or friends and, since he stopped working,

he rarely left the house. At Rob's initial meeting with his SVS case manager, a safety plan was developed. Rob was provided with information about the connections within the community and where he could go to seek support whilst awaiting his appointment with the mental health clinician.

The SVS case manager helped Rob navigate through the mental health service system, by ensuring he accessed his GP to gain a referral via a Mental Health Care Plan. The case manager then set up a case conference with the local youth mental health service (Headspace) to discuss transitioning Rob into their program and the expected supports to be offered by their organisation. Whilst Rob was focusing on his recovery from poor mental health, the case manager also ensured that regular contact was maintained with Rob's GP and his Industry Specific Mentoring for Australian Apprentices mentor. After a few sessions with his Headspace, it was decided that focusing on education and employment related activities via the SVS program would be of benefit.

Rob set a series of new goals, including to either gain employment within the automotive sector or complete his apprenticeship. This commitment to gaining fulltime employment or reactivating his apprenticeship has been a powerful motivator for him to continue to work on improving his wellbeing. Additionally, Rob was supported in identifying strengths for his resume, writing his resume, searching for job vacancies and learning how to apply for jobs formally online.

Rob is currently in employment and independent accommodation.

*name has been changed for privacy

Older people

Appropriate and affordable housing is a key part of the solution for all older people experiencing, and at risk of homelessness. One seventh of all homelessness is experienced by those over the age of 55 and there are new and emerging groups of older people at risk of homelessness, such as older women with limited retirement savings.²⁴

For a group of older people who do not own their own home and are reliant on social security payments, rental stress is a significant concern. A range of housing options is required to cater for a broad spectrum of circumstances including supports to age in place, an increased supply of social and affordable housing for older people, supported accommodation models for older people with more complex needs and specific residential aged care facilities that can provide intensive supports to those who have previously experienced homelessness.

Supports to ensure older people can stay in their homes as long as possible are needed, including tenancy support services and upgrading or renovating current social and affordable housing to meet

²⁴Mission Australia, Ageing and Homelessness: Solutions to a growing problem, 2017, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/ageing-and-homelessness-solutions-to-a-growing-problem>

accessibility and living needs.²⁵ The needs of this emerging cohort should be acknowledged in the strategy and supported by concrete action to address their needs.

Housing First is an effective model where people are provided with housing prior to assisting them with other needs. This model can be adapted to meet the needs of specific cohorts of people to ensure services are meeting the diverse and complex needs of people, particularly those who have been experiencing chronic homelessness.

Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord (MISHA Project) NSW²⁶

The MISHA project was a successful Housing First model providing holistic care to men who were chronically homeless. It began in late 2010 with the aims of providing homeless men with support to enter and sustain permanent housing, ensuring access to mental and physical health supports, reducing social isolation and equipping clients to live successfully within the community.

As a result of services provided, 98% of clients were able to support their tenancy over a 12 month period. Research on the project from 2010-2013 demonstrated costs associated with use of health and justice services were more than halved over 2 years – delivering a saving to government of more than \$8,000 per person each year.

Overall financial savings to government attributed to the MISHA Project were estimated at close to a million dollars over 2 years, through fewer nights spent in hospitals, mental health facilities or drug and alcohol centres, fewer visits from justice officers, less police interaction and less time spent in detention facilities.

There were also savings generated to housing providers due to reduced evictions, estimated at \$1,880 per client, in the first 12 months of the client being housed. The total net saving to housing providers generated by providing tenancy support services to 74 MISHA clients over a one year period was estimated at \$138,880.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ See further: Mission Australia, *From Homelessness to Sustained Housing, 2010 – 2013, MISHA research report*, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/documents/279-from-homelessness-to-sustained-housing-2010-2013-misha-research-report-2014/file>

People with disability and mental health issues

It is estimated that there are over 380,000 people with disability in SA.²⁷ People with disability have a greater exposure to the risk of homelessness than the general population and different disabilities predispose individuals to different levels of homelessness risk.²⁸

People with disability are vulnerable to homelessness due to low income, increased medical costs, limited employment options, and particularly, limited accessible and appropriate housing options.²⁹ Other structural factors that impact on this cohort include poverty and lack of paid work.

It is estimated that nationally 6% of the NDIS participants, or 28,000 individuals need access to Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).³⁰ When the Scheme is fully implemented, the SDA is expected to account for NDIS spending of \$700 million a year.³¹ It is also expected that the NDIS will contribute to create a \$5 billion disability housing market over the next five years.³² This investment into disability accommodation is vital considering the acute shortage of affordable and accessible housing in the private rental market.³³

Accessible housing is limited in supply and there are significant waiting times for public and social housing in SA. These factors add further pressure on people with disabilities as they are unable to find appropriate, accessible and affordable housing. The Government should adopt measures to increase social and affordable housing in SA and ensure that all new constructions at minimum adhere to universal accessibility principles. In addition to increasing the accessible housing stock, the government must also ensure that appropriate measures are in place to ensure people with disability are provided with supports to be active and participating members of the community.

People with mental health issues are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, and can be isolated, have disrupted family and social networks and sometimes suffer poor physical health, all of which impacts

²⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015, accessible at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4430.02015?OpenDocument>

²⁸ Mission Australia, Mission Australia's review of homelessness, 2015, accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/mission-australia-s-review-of-homelessness-2015>

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ National Disability Insurance Scheme, *Specialist Disability Accommodation Provider and Investor Brief*, April 2018, p.5, accessible at: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/essentials-providers-working-ndia/specialist-disability-accommodation>

³¹ D. Winkler, G. Taleporos and L. Bo'sher, *How the NDIS is using the market to create housing for people with disability*, The Conversation, accessible at: <https://theconversation.com/how-the-ndis-is-using-the-market-to-create-housing-for-people-with-disability-83144>

³² Summer Foundation and PwC, *NDIS Specialist Disability Accommodation Pathway to a mature market*, August 2017, p.5 accessible at: <https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/resources/ndis-specialist-disability-accommodation-pathway-to-a-mature-market/>

³³ Anglicare Australia, Rental Affordability Snapshot, 2018, accessible at:

<https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshotb811d9309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

their capacity to find and maintain adequate housing.³⁴ Several studies suggest that when people with mental health issues are supported by homelessness agencies, they are more likely to remain housed rather than return to homelessness.³⁵

Of over 288,000 people accessing Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) nationally last financial year, over 81,000 indicated that they were experiencing mental health issues.³⁶ Mental health services, including psychological, psychiatric and mental health services, were one of the most common specialised services identified as needed by clients accessing SHS services, however, these needs were frequently unmet with around 3 in 10 clients (32%) neither provided nor referred to these services.³⁷ Increased access to mental health services is required.

In addition to tenancy support, supports for mental health and other issues may be required and these should be integrated with housing supports. One model for such support is the Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative in NSW for which Mission Australia is a provider. Service models such as these can be replicated in SA.

Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) Plus NSW

HASI Plus is a supported accommodation program providing housing, daily living support and clinical care for people with lived experience of mental illness.

HASI Plus is a program specifically for people with severe and persistent mental illness who are ready to transition back to community living after long periods of stay in psychiatric facilities or similar institutions. HASI Plus provides 24/7 hour support to people who would otherwise be unable to successfully live independently.

HASI Plus is strongly based upon the principles of recovery in which we foster hope, empowerment and self-determination in all aspects of our work. Day to day we provide hands on support and structure to teach wellbeing in daily living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting; mental and physical health; community engagement and the ultimate recovery goal of one day all of our consumers being able to return to independent living.

³⁴ See further: Homelessness Australia, States of being: Exploring the links between homelessness, mental illness and psychological distress: an evidence based policy paper, 2011 and NSW Mental Health Commission, Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW. Sydney, NSW Mental Health Commission, 2014.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2017-18, 2019, accessible at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2017-18/contents/contents>

³⁷ Ibid

People with alcohol and drug dependence related issues

There is a clear correlation between alcohol and drug dependence and homelessness or increasing risk of homelessness.³⁸ Homelessness and alcohol and drugs have a bidirectional relationship. One study found that an estimated 17% of the national homeless population became homeless because of substance dependence.³⁹ Another study found that people experiencing homelessness were six times more likely to have a drug-use disorder and 33 times more likely to have an opiate use disorder than the Australian general population.⁴⁰

Where individuals are treated for their substance dependence issues in an institution such as a hospital, prison or residential program, they must have a carefully planned transition into the community, ensuring that their housing needs are addressed whether they were homeless prior to treatment or at-risk of homelessness. Access to treatment when needed is also crucial and this includes age and culturally appropriate detoxification and rehabilitation options close to the person's community. Youth specific detoxification and rehabilitation is particularly important to ensure early intervention and to increase the prospects of recovery for young people and provide integrated care.

A challenge with people experiencing homelessness and alcohol and drug dependence is the limited availability of appropriate crisis accommodation. For example, the DFV crisis accommodation services that support parents with young children are often unable to provide accommodation to people who are currently using or dependent on substances due to safety reasons. These people who may also have children, may return to their abusive partners as there are no safe and affordable accommodation options.⁴¹

Additional accommodation support services are required for people with substance dependence issues. A Housing First approach with wrap around supports is an evidence-based approach and earlier access to detoxification and rehabilitation closer to communities is also required.

³⁸ P. Flatau, et al, How integrated are homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol services in Australia? AHURI Final Report No.206, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2003.

³⁹ G. Johnson and C. Chamberlain, Are the homeless mentally ill? Australian Journal of Social Issues, 46(1), 2011, pp 29-48.

⁴⁰ L. Kaleveld, et al, Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence, 2018, p. 60.

⁴¹ Mission Australia, Out of the Shadows: Domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia, 2019, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/Out-of-the-shadows>

The Youth and Family – AOD Support program SA

The Youth and Family – AOD Support program aims to reduce the impact of substance dependence for young people with substance related concerns or, current parents/caregivers with substance dependence related concerns or both parents and young people.

The service has capacity to support up to 90 young people (10 – 24 years old) experiencing alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues: and/or their parents/caregivers; and/or their families via a flexible after hours and weekend program that is assertive case management based on a primary health and integrated service model of harm minimisation and health promotion.

The referrals for the program can come from multiple sources including community services, mental health services, GPs, youth or community networks and self-referrals. The service is available for people afterhours specifically to cater for the needs of young people as and when they need them.

Flexible / after-hours local service

- Wed- Sunday: 2 -10pm
- Saturday: 10am – midnight
- Sunday: 11am – 7pm
- Mon & Tue: on call support

The service also has brokerage funding to ensure young people are provided with access to crisis and other accommodation supports. This program is available in Fleurieu Peninsula, Murray Bridge and Elizabeth.

People in rural, remote and regional areas

People living in regional, rural and remote communities who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness have specific challenges to seeking support including social and geographic isolation and a scarcity of housing and other services.⁴² In these areas, lack of appropriate resourcing for vital services usually means that efforts are focused on crisis response and risk management at the expense of outreach work.⁴³

Having to travel significant distances to access crisis accommodation is not a viable option for many people, particularly those with school aged children. Thus, where there are no refuges in the community, the individuals should have access to a pool of funding to access accommodation in safe places or hotels in the local community until more stable options become available.

⁴² Holder, R. Putt, J. & O’Leary, C. (2017), *Women’s specialist domestic and family violence services: Tehri responses and practices with and for Aboriginal women: Key findings and future directions*, Sydney: ANROWS.

⁴³ Wendt, S. et al. (2017), *Seeking help for domestic and family violence: Exploring regional, rural, and remote women’s coping experiences: Key findings and future directions*, Sydney: ANROWS.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people

LGBTI people are an important cohort that need to be closely considered in the Strategy discussion as they are over-represented in homeless populations due to both the complexity of their experiences and difficulty accessing services. Rejection by family and the community is a main driver of homelessness among LGBTI young people. A study found that Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) respondents were at least twice as likely as heterosexuals to have ever experienced homelessness.⁴⁴ Lesbian and gay people were also found to be twice as likely to stay in crisis accommodation or sleep rough.⁴⁵

Research has found that older LGBTI people have higher levels of some health and mental health problems and increased social isolation, compared to their non-LGBTI counterparts.⁴⁶ Many older LGBTI people refrain from divulging their sexuality when accessing services due to fears of discrimination and/or abuse. The lack of understanding of, and respect for, LGBTI people is a broader systemic social issue that needs wider social awareness.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

Refugees and asylum seekers have been an under-reported group at risk of homelessness. Young people from refugee backgrounds are six to ten times more likely to be at-risk of homelessness than Australian-born young people.⁴⁷ It is estimated that between 500 and 800 young refugees are homeless Australia-wide and this number is growing.⁴⁸ Couch surfing is common for young refugees and may not be reported as homelessness, resulting in under-estimates.⁴⁹ There is a clear need for housing support for people on temporary visas who may not be eligible for federally funded housing services.

Challenges refugees and migrants face include adjustments to language, culture and education when settling into Australia.⁵⁰ Family relationships may be more complex amongst refugees with added burdens of trauma, overcrowding, high expectations and differing acculturation.⁵¹ Disconnection from family, school and community are major precursors to homelessness for young refugees, and family reconfiguration and overcrowding contribute to this.⁵²

Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds may experience violence from their intimate partner, extended family or adult children. The experience of migration itself can lead to women becoming socially isolated, and therefore beholden to a partner and possibly his family.⁵³ Stigma and shame

⁴⁴ GALFA LGBTQ Homelessness Research Project: LGBTQ Homelessness: Risks, Resilience, and Access to Services in Victoria, 2017, accessible at: http://www.lgbtihomeless.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LGBTQ-Homelessness-project-Final-report-September-2017-Final_.pdf

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ ACON, (2013), Love: Living Older Visibly and Engaged, NSW, p.2.

⁴⁷ Centre for Multicultural Youth, Finding Home in Victoria, Melbourne, 2010.

⁴⁸ J. Couch, 'A new way home - Refugee young people and homelessness in Australia' in Journal of Social Inclusion 2(1) 2011.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Centre for Multicultural Youth, Finding Home in Victoria, Melbourne, 2010.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Intimate partner violence in Australian refugee communities Scoping review of issues and service responses*, CFCA paper no. 50, p.2, AIFS, 2018.

associated with domestic and family violence can result in women from migrant and refugee backgrounds being less willing to speak out or seek assistance and remain in abusive relationships.⁵⁴ Therefore, targeted culturally appropriate services are required to support these individuals.

No exits into homelessness from institutions

A 'zero tolerance' approach to people becoming homeless upon exiting hospitals and other health facilities has been a key platform for our homelessness action plan. We are members of the Home Stretch campaign and also providers of specific programs for young people leaving out of home care and adults leaving health and mental health facilities and prisons including the HASI model detailed above.

People leaving prisons are at high risk of homelessness, particularly those who spent a considerable amount of time (i.e., 12 months or more) in juvenile detention.⁵⁵ On the other hand, stable housing may contribute to a decrease in reoffending and drug use.⁵⁶ The growth of the prison population means there are a growing number of people at risk of homelessness and accommodation is a primary need at the time of release.⁵⁷

More resourcing is required for through-care programs in which people are supported going into prison, during incarceration and after release to prevent homelessness and reduce re-incarceration. Securing employment is a particular barrier for this group and should be included in support services as should drug and alcohol rehabilitation where required. Integrated approaches and intensive case management are needed for people who are homeless, have a cognitive impairment, mental disorder or complex needs and are enmeshed in the criminal justice system.⁵⁸

Stronger planning is also required for those exiting prison and other institutional settings such as acute mental health facilities to avoid clients exiting into homelessness. There is a significant gap in supported accommodation options available to young people and adults on release from incarceration.

⁵⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, (2011), *Supporting women from CALD backgrounds who are victims/survivors of sexual violence Challenges and opportunities for practitioners*, No 9, p. 9-10, Melbourne, AIFS.

⁵⁵ Bevitt et al (2015) *Journeys Home Research Report No.6 – Complete Findings from Waves 1 to 6*, University of Melbourne, accessed at: https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2202865/Scutella_et_al_Journeys_Home_Research_Report_W6.pdf

⁵⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2008) *The Road Home: A national approach to reducing homelessness*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

⁵⁷ Baldry E (2014) 'Complex needs and the justice system' In Chamberlain, Johnson and Robinson ed *Homelessness in Australia: An Introduction*, UNSW Press, Sydney.

⁵⁸ Ibid