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Foundations for change

Homelessness in New South Wales

Contents

Executive summary

Mission Australia welcomes the Foundations for change - Homelessness in NSW discussion paper and the opportunity to provide input into the policy direction for addressing homelessness in NSW. We particularly welcome the focus on prevention and early intervention and on the approach to homelessness as 'everyone's business': something that government agencies, community groups, private investors, and the homelessness sector need to work together on.

However, it is clear that any new strategy will need adequate and sustainable funding to support the provision of homelessness services and the development of more social and affordable housing, to ensure that fewer people enter homelessness and more are able to leave it. It will also require changes to the way that mainstream government agencies work (including the way they work with the homelessness sector), better collaboration and joined-up service delivery to ensure that there are 'no wrong doors' into homelessness supports.

Our submission draws on recommendations made in our 2015 Homelessness Policy, and is informed by the experiences of our service users and frontline workers as well as national and international evidence. Service experience and client voice is essential to understanding and addressing homelessness as it is experienced across NSW.

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We make a range of specific recommendations throughout our submission, but highlight the key recommendations here which support the major themes of our submission:

THEME 1

Efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness need to be underpinned by **sustainable funding arrangements and a national policy approach,** with both of these elements embodied in a new Commonwealth-State housing and homelessness agreement.

That the NSW Government negotiate with the Commonwealth and other States/Territories for a new housing and homelessness agreement in the terms outlined in this submission.

THEME 2

It is critical to address **housing supply** issues. Without sufficient housing for people on low and moderate incomes, homelessness cannot be effectively addressed.

That the NSW Government reform planning systems to:

- Require at least 15 per cent affordable housing for new housing stock in the greater metropolitan region and other regions where demand is high; and
- Require at least 30 per cent affordable housing where a major development is on government-owned land and in state-significant precincts.

That the NSW Government fund the expansion of Housing First models for homeless people, including the Common Ground model, incorporating funding for both housing and dedicated support services.

THEME 3

Changes to mainstream service systems are essential in addressing homelessness, as are closer interactions between those systems and the specialist homelessness service system.

Cross-system: That the NSW Government introduce homelessness risk indicators into mainstream administrative data systems, starting with the corrections system as the first priority.

Public housing: That the NSW Government prevent exits from public housing into homelessness, including by adopting a policy of "eviction only as a last resort" and by better post-eviction support procedures.

Child and family support: That the NSW Government:

a. extend current early intervention programs to support family cohesion; and

b. prevent exits from out-of-home care into homelessness, including by extending post-care support for young people up until the age of 21.

Education: That the NSW Government roll out the proven schools-based youth homelessness identification and intervention Community of Schools and Services (COSS) model to high risk areas of NSW.

Health: That the NSW Government:

c. work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Government to resolve issues around the NDIS transition and ensure that people with an episodic mental illness do not fall through the gaps of service provision;

d. extend current alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation programs to meet need; and

e. prevent exits from health facilities into homelessness, including through more effective discharge planning.

Domestic violence: That the NSW Government:

f. revise contracting and funding arrangements to allow for enhanced flexibility of service provision within SHS Program contracts to meet the needs of women and children escaping domestic and family violence; and

g. extend the coverage of 'safe at home' programs.

Justice: That the NSW Government:

h. expand justice reinvestment and diversionary approaches to keep people from entering the criminal justice system; and

i. prevent exits from justice and juvenile justice facilities into homelessness through better exit planning and pre- and post-release reintegration programs.

Legal: That the NSW Government advocate to the Commonwealth to ensure adequate funding for legal aid services.

THEME 4

Preventing people becoming homeless in the first place requires earlier intervention at both the individual and community level.

That the NSW Government recognise the need for a support coordination worker model, through:

- Inclusion in new FACS initiatives - Communities Plus and the Social Housing Management Transfer Program;

- Provision through the SHS Program to social housing and private rental tenants whose tenancy is at risk.

That the NSW Government extend a place-based community development and renewal approach to concentrated and persistently disadvantaged public housing areas in the Social Housing Management Transfer Program to maximise the prospects of the residents achieving higher personal wellbeing, economic independence, social inclusion and avoidance of homelessness.

THEME 5

Strategic commissioning approaches to service design, procurement and delivery can improve users' outcomes and services' efficiency by a stronger outcomes focus, greater flexibility for providers to tailor service delivery to individual users' specific needs within a good practice guidance framework and enhanced user involvement.

That the NSW Government work closely with the specialist homelessness sector to develop and implement a true commissioning approach to homelessness funding, including development of agreed outcomes.

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation, with more than 155 years' experience in standing together with Australians in need on their journey to independence. Our evidence-based, client-centred community services are focused on reducing homelessness and strengthening communities across Australia.

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

In the 2014-15 financial year, we supported over 307,000 Australians in need.

In 2009, Mission Australia (MA) established Mission Australia Housing (MAH), a Tier 1 Community Housing Provider. MAH currently owns or manages almost 2,000 social and affordable homes, including Common Ground in Sydney. Together, MA and MAH work to strengthen communities and reduce homelessness.

Mission Australia works to reduce homelessness across all points in time, from prevention and early intervention, to promoting exits from homelessness, to supporting sustained and secure tenancies, through to housing provision. We aim to respond to clients' immediate and long-term needs.

In NSW, we operate 39 housing and homelessness services in many areas of the State, including transitional accommodation and support, tenancy support, aged care for the formerly homeless and youth homelessness services.

Our approach to resolving homelessness is summarised in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Mission Australia's strategy to reduce homelessness

Recommendations

New housing and homelessness agreement
1. *That the NSW Government negotiate with the Commonwealth and other States/Territories for a new housing and homelessness agreement in the terms outlined in this submission.*

Commissioning approach
2. *That the NSW Government continue its moves towards a commissioning approach with more focus on outcomes than inflexible administrative rules, including through streamlining the current SHS contracting arrangements.*

3. *That the NSW Government work closely with the specialist homelessness sector to develop and implement a true commissioning approach to homelessness funding, including development of agreed outcomes.*

Outcomes
4. *That the NSW Government conduct extensive consultation with the sector on appropriate indicators to apply to the interim NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework to homelessness.*

Pathways into housing
5. *That the NSW Government reform planning systems to:*
   - *Require at least 15 per cent affordable housing for new housing stock in the greater metropolitan region and other regions where demand is high; and*
   - *Require at least 30 per cent affordable housing where a major development is on government-owned land and in state-significant precincts.*

6. *That the NSW Government prevent exits from public housing into homelessness, including by adopting a policy of "eviction only as a last resort" and by better post-eviction support procedures.*

7. *That the NSW Government extend a place-based community development and renewal approach to concentrated and disadvantaged public housing areas and communities in the recently announced Social Housing Management Transfer Program to maximise the prospects of the residents achieving higher personal wellbeing, economic independence, social inclusion and avoidance of homelessness.*

8. *That the NSW Government fund strengthening communities initiatives in high-risk communities across NSW.*

9. *That the NSW Government simplify and better communicate the social housing application documentation and processes, especially those relating to eligibility for priority housing.*

10. *That the NSW Government reform the Temporary Accommodation Program in consultation with the SHS and CHP sectors, including through demonstration projects run by Community Housing Providers.*

11. *That the NSW Government recognise the need for a support coordination worker model, through:*
    - *Inclusion in new FACS initiatives - Communities Plus and the Social Housing Management Transfer Program;*
    - *Provision through the SHS Program to social housing and private rental tenants whose tenancy is at risk.*

Community and corporate engagement

12. *That the NSW Government facilitate philanthropic and private investment in homelessness and housing initiatives, including through agile and flexible tripartite social investment models.*

Better exit planning

13. *That the NSW Government adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to people becoming homeless when they exit state care.*

14. *That the NSW Government embed the principles of engagement outlined here in exit planning.*

Education, training and employment

15. *That the NSW Government reform current social housing policy in areas such as eligibility, tenure, rent and conditions of exit to remove workforce disincentives and the potential conflict between housing and employment goals.*

Embedding early intervention and prevention

16. *That the NSW Government fund homelessness early intervention models that focus on:*
    - *Supporting people in their local area, and particularly providing adequate support for people in rural and regional areas;*
    - *Identifying and supporting people in at-risk tenancies; and*
    - *Preventing people exiting institutional settings from becoming homeless.*

17. *That the NSW Government roll out the proven schools-based youth homelessness identification and intervention Community of Schools and Services (COSS) model to high risk areas of NSW.*

Strengthening collaboration

18. *That the NSW Government review governance structures for local-level cooperation and:*
    - *Embed mainstream agencies, including Community Housing Providers, in governance structures; and*
    - *Apply collective impact principles to homelessness-focussed collaborations.*

19. *That the NSW Government apply the collaborative HART service model to other areas of high homelessness concentrations, such as Parramatta, Penrith and North coast towns.*

Effective referral pathways

20. *That the NSW Government increase its promotion of Link2Home with State and Commonwealth mainstream agencies including Centrelink, the Police Force, out-of-home care service providers, etc.*

Data

21. *That the NSW Government introduce homelessness risk indicators into mainstream administrative data systems, starting with the corrections system as the first priority.*

22. *That the NSW Government allow greater access to administrative data sets and explore opportunities for linking Commonwealth, State and agency data.*

23. *That the NSW Government incorporate the evidence on cost savings into business cases for homelessness prevention and management proposals.*

Groups at higher risk

24. *That the NSW Government adopt the following, within a good practice guidance framework for specialist homelessness services: trauma-informed care, recovery-oriented practice, continuity of care and service user involvement.*

Children and young people

25. *That the NSW Government extend current early intervention programs to support family cohesion and long-term homelessness prevention.*

26. *That the NSW Government improve data collection and proper monitoring, to generate information on rates of homelessness among out-of-home care leavers and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.*

27. *That the NSW Government introduce the Springboard and Youthbeat program models in high-needs areas of NSW.*

28. *That the NSW Government prevent exits from out-of-home care into homelessness, including by extending post-care support for young people up until the age of 21.*

29. *That the NSW Government advocate for continued funding of Reconnect or similar family reconciliation service by the Commonwealth.*

30. *That the NSW Government expand access to youth specialist community mental health and substance abuse services to meet demand.*

31. *That the NSW Government invest in the expansion of residential foyer-like supportive accommodation models for young people.*

32. *That the NSW Government provide 'top up' funding for current youth SHS programs to align them with the essential elements of the Foyer model.*

Domestic and family violence

33. *That the NSW Government revise contracting and funding arrangements to allow for enhanced flexibility of service provision within SHS Program contracts to meet the needs of women and children escaping domestic and family violence.*

34. *That the NSW Government extend the coverage of 'safe at home' programs.*

35. *That the NSW Government maintain and extend coordinated prevention and response strategies with other agencies including police, courts and education, and enhance its focus on addressing underlying gender discrimination.*

36. *That the NSW Government continue and expand good practice Men's Behaviour Change Programs.*

Aboriginal people

37. *That the NSW Government continue to build the capacity of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers and deliver additional housing to address overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities and regional centres through these organisations.*

Older people

38. *That social and affordable housing is developed to allow ageing in place by incorporating universal design standards.*

39. *That the NSW Government works in cooperation with the Commonwealth to facilitate the construction of one new homeless aged care services per year to meet growing demand across NSW.*

Rough sleeping and chronic homelessness

40. *That the NSW Government fund and support the expansion of specific Housing First models for rough sleepers and the chronically homeless, including the Common Ground model, incorporating funding for both housing and dedicated support services.*

41. *That the Registry Week approach, including assessment of vulnerability and triaging of people based on their need, is implemented annually and expanded to other needed areas in NSW.*

Mental illness

42. *That the NSW Government build flexible delivery hours into future funding agreements for mental health services in order to best support people experiencing episodic mental illness.*

43. *That the NSW Government provide mandatory training in trauma-informed care for staff in the homelessness sector, as well as relevant staff in mainstream service systems, and include trauma-informed policies/procedures in a good practice framework as a component of future homelessness funding agreements.*

44. *That the NSW Government implement a hoarding and squalor program as a homelessness prevention initiative.*

45. *That the NSW Government work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Government to resolve issues around the NDIS transition and ensure that people with an episodic mental illness do not fall through the gaps of service provision.*

46. *That the NSW Government use recovery oriented principles to inform the development of service models for people with a mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.*

People with disability

47. *That the NSW Government develop appropriate mechanisms for better integration between disability, housing and homelessness services.*

Leaving prison

48. *That the NSW Government:*
   - *Expand justice reinvestment and diversionary approaches to keep people from entering the criminal justice system; and*
   - *Prevent exits from justice and juvenile justice facilities into homelessness through better exit planning and pre- and post-release reintegration programs.*

49. *That the NSW Government advocate to the Commonwealth to ensure adequate funding for legal aid services.*

Substance use

50. *That the NSW Government extend current alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation programs to meet need.*

1 Response to *future opportunities* discussion questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can government and non-government agencies build on previous NSW homelessness initiatives and plans to create a robust strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness in NSW?

Two years on from the implementation of the Going Home Staying Home reforms, there are still areas in which collaboration needs to be improved so that people's experience of homelessness services becomes one in which there are genuinely 'no wrong doors'. A range of issues have contributed to this, which are addressed in more detail throughout our submission:

- Competitive procurement practices continue to create barriers for agencies collaborating with each other;
- Different funding streams have contributed to increased administrative burden and some confusion and lack of coordination across the sector;
- Governance arrangements including District Homelessness Implementation Groups (DHIGs) and District Homelessness Operational Groups (DHOGs) are not operating as effectively as they could, and there is a gap in strategic planning at District and State-wide levels;
- Integration between the mainstream and specialist homelessness sectors is inadequate and needs strengthening.

We know that preventing and reducing homelessness cannot be achieved by any one agency, or by the homelessness service sector in isolation. Rates of homelessness are significantly influenced by many service systems, agencies and programs, including 'mainstream' systems that are not specifically focused on homelessness, such as the criminal justice system, education system, public and community housing, the health system and the private rental market, as well as many others. Strong collaborative efforts are required to ensure that the effect of these agencies is maximised in relation to homelessness prevention and reduction and improved wellbeing. This means the specialist homelessness sector working alongside mainstream service systems to achieve better service integration.

Current NSW Government initiatives, including the new homelessness Discussion Paper *Foundations for change – Homelessness in NSW* and the social housing strategy, *Future directions for social housing in NSW*, offer new opportunities to get the link between homelessness and mainstream agencies right.

New housing and homelessness agreement

Homelessness in NSW cannot be reduced without a strong commitment and coordinated leadership from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to deliver housing reform and long-term service funding.

This commitment and leadership is best articulated through a new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement between the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments to replace the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). A new agreement should be developed through dialogue with people experiencing homelessness, the not-for-profit sector which is responsible for most service delivery, relevant industry sectors, researchers and other experts, and should include:

- national targets for reducing homelessness, including a commitment to:
  - halve the homeless population by 2025;

- o halve youth homelessness by 2020; and
- o halve the number of people living in rental stress, in order to reduce the risk of homelessness;
- 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;
- 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 new outcomes measurement framework with clear responsibilities from the Commonwealth and States and Territories - to improve accountability across the different levels of government.

NSW is a leading jurisdiction in the homelessness, social housing and affordable housing policy area through initiatives including the Going Home Staying Home reforms, the Social and Affordable Housing Fund, the Communities Plus and social housing transfer programs, the development of a Human Services Outcomes Framework and its application to social housing, and support for innovative and effective models for preventing and responding to homelessness.

This positions the NSW Government to be the prime mover in initiating, developing and negotiating a new national multi-year housing and homelessness agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. *That the NSW Government negotiate with the Commonwealth and other States/Territories for a new housing and homelessness agreement in the terms outlined in this submission.*

A commissioning approach
Strategic commissioning approaches have a number of benefits in human service system design, procurement and delivery, including:
- *Enable greater ability of service providers to tailor service delivery to individual users' specific circumstances, needs and aspirations.*

In Mission Australia's experience, inflexible contract provisions are often a barrier to our development and delivery of effective individualised responses to service users. Better outcomes are achieved through developing agreed service outcomes, providing the contractual ability for providers to achieve those outcomes within a good practice guidance framework (which would include, for example trauma-informed care and recovery-oriented practice) and measuring the achievement of the outcomes.

- *Enhance service users' agency in service design and delivery, in particular through co-design and/or co-production to enable user voice to be reflected in need identification, outcome articulation and service design.*

Mission Australia believes that services have the greatest impact when the clients or consumers of that service are fully engaged, and their experience and expectations inform the design, delivery and responsiveness of that service. We are piloting ways to enhance service users' capacity to interact meaningfully with our services, including testing best practice approaches to co-design of services with clients, the establishment of Client Advisory Groups and supporting a peer workforce in service delivery. Government-led commissioning approaches can facilitate such co-design processes and set expectations for providers to incorporate client voice mechanisms in their practice.

- *Provide a strong focus on specification of measurable outcomes, development of performance regimes and measurement and evaluation.*

Mission Australia supports the inclusion of outcomes-based measures in service contracts, in the belief that any action that compels a more focused approach to homelessness service delivery should be encouraged. This does not necessarily extend to outcome-based payment regimes for essential services, although such regimes can be appropriate for certain initiatives (such as to encourage co-investment from private funders). We have to make sure that the transition to outcomes-based funding is done effectively and minimises risks to clients. We advocate a gradual, considered and consultative approach to moving towards funding arrangements that are tied to outcomes measurement.

The outcomes measured should be those which will most effectively describe the impact of services. While large organisations such as Mission Australia have some capacity to develop measurement systems, the Government needs to support the sector to develop the skills and tools to measure outcomes well. Governments should consider funding service providers to implement a client wellbeing measure such as the PWI which could be applied across community services programs to assess client impact.

We suggest that the NSW Government capture lessons learned from the NDIS implementation, which is likely to be an instructive test case for a transfer from block funding to outcomes-based funding. This should include learning from aspects of the NDIS rollout that are having unintended or perverse outcomes that can be avoided in future.

Realisation of the aspirations of commissioning approaches can be hampered by procurement and contracting practices. The NSW homelessness service system has become characterised by a multitude of FACS-administered funding streams: the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program, the Service Support Fund, the Homeless Youth Assistance Program, funding through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and restoration funding in inner Sydney. This situation has contributed to increased administrative burden, confusion and lack of coordination across the sector.

FACS should take every opportunity, including the SHS Program recontracting process, to streamline the various homelessness funding streams to minimise the administrative and compliance burden so delivery organisations such as Mission Australia can focus efforts on delivering the best outcomes for our clients.

We commend the Government's moves towards a commissioning approach with more focus on outcomes than inflexible administrative rules. We encourage it to explicitly design procurement and contracting processes to avoid damaging sector collaboration, including by determining procurement cycles with this in mind, incorporating mechanisms to require or preference collaborative approaches, and recognising the additional costs incurred.

We suggest that an early step can be to streamline the current SHS contracting arrangements, including through:
- Allowing funding and resources to be shared between Program Level Agreements (PLAs) where a need has been identified, rather than going back to local Districts for onerous contract variation procedures. This would allow service delivery organisations to negotiate the sharing and transfer of funds and resources to best meet emerging areas and cohorts with high needs;
- Simplifying PLA agreements to minimise the administrative burdens on lead agencies and to incorporate adequate funding to cover the additional costs of the lead role;
- Explicitly incorporating client-directed service design and delivery; and

- Aligning the different Quality Assurance Frameworks with which providers currently must comply, so that reporting is streamlined across different service delivery areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS
2. *That the NSW Government continue its moves towards a commissioning approach with more focus on outcomes than inflexible administrative rules, including through streamlining the current SHS contracting arrangements.*

3. *That the NSW Government work closely with the specialist homelessness sector to develop and implement a true commissioning approach to homelessness funding, including development of agreed outcomes.*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are the key outcomes the homelessness system should deliver and what outcomes can it influence?

Mission Australia's Outcomes Hierarchy, based on our theory of change, sets out what we believe to be the key indicators for reducing homelessness and strengthening communities, and recognises the importance of measuring both housing and non-housing outcomes. The primary indicators of success for Mission Australia are:

i. Reducing entry into homelessness;
ii. Increasing exits out of homelessness;
iii. Maintaining stable housing; and
iv. Building strong communities.

MA's Outcomes Hierarchy is broadly consistent with the interim NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework. Mission Australia encourages the Government to consult extensively with the sector on the inclusion of appropriate homelessness indicators in the FACS Social Housing Outcomes Framework to ensure alignment between government and sector outcomes measures.

Mission Australia is committed to understanding the outcomes for clients who receive our services, as well as the overall impact we make in reaching our goal of reducing homelessness and strengthening communities. Accordingly, we have developed an Impact Measurement program based on our Outcomes Hierarchy and are currently in the process of rolling it out across the organisation. Our Outcomes Hierarchy is at **Attachment A** and further details about our approach to outcomes measurement are at **Attachment B**.

RECOMMENDATIONS
4. *That the NSW Government conduct extensive consultation with the sector on appropriate indicators to apply to the interim NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework to homelessness.*

1.1 People in NSW find adequate and secure places to live, and individual needs are assessed to ensure socially and culturally appropriate outcomes

1.1.1 Creating pathways into housing

We recognise the NSW Government's recent efforts in social and affordable housing, including the *Future Directions* strategy and the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF). However, there remains a severe shortage of housing for people in NSW on low and moderate incomes, which has very significant flow-on effects for rates of homelessness. Without addressing the shortage of affordable housing, efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness will be severely constrained.

Additional housing is needed across the spectrum of affordable housing, social housing, and crisis/transitional housing:

- In 2011, there was a shortage of affordable and available dwellings for households with very low incomes across NSW, including a shortfall of 54,000 in Sydney alone, mainly attributable to a lack of affordable supply.[1]
- Across NSW there are more than 59,000 people on the social housing waiting list.[2]
- Many people stay longer than necessary in transitional accommodation because they can't find a rental property they can afford, which increases the rate of homeless people turned away from those services (in 2014-15 in NSW, there were 18,758 unassisted requests for assistance[3]).

The lack of affordable housing is a brake on productivity as well as leading to social problems. Social and affordable housing needs to be treated as critical social and economic infrastructure to facilitate the engagement of institutional finance.

In order to address the undersupply of social and affordable housing, there needs to be a coordinated approach across all governments which covers the full continuum of housing policy including tax, planning, welfare, and security of rental tenure. A range of issues is best dealt with at the national level by the Federal Government. The NSW Government can advocate for national approaches in inter-jurisdictional forums such as Housing Ministers' meetings and COAG, including on the following issues:

- Taxation settings currently favour owner-occupiers over other household types and have skewed the market towards investment in higher cost housing and compounded issues around affordability. Adjustments to current tax settings to address housing affordability must be an important consideration for the Federal Government and COAG;
- Forty-two per cent of households who need rental assistance are still in 'housing stress' after Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) has been received.[4] Income support and CRA should be increased so it is sufficient to stop recipients living in housing stress;
- Institutional investment is required to begin bridging the gap between supply and demand for social and affordable housing. Government contributions and facilitation are required to underpin institutional investment.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Are there circumstances where it is more difficult to link people to a suitable housing option? What are the barriers?

Linking people to a suitable housing option is difficult in many circumstances, particularly where there is a lack of appropriate housing. In metropolitan Sydney and other FACS Districts in NSW, expected waiting times for social housing are over 10 years.[5] Private rental housing in Sydney and other areas of NSW is increasingly unaffordable for low and middle income households, risking their ability to pay for other necessities such as food, power, healthcare, transport and education,[6] as well as increasing the risk of rental arrears and eviction.

We know that some groups find it particularly difficult to find appropriate housing. This includes people with a disability, young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background, people escaping domestic and family violence, people with a mental illness and those leaving institutional care. These groups are discussed in more detail in the appropriate sections within *Section 2*.

The NSW Government can assist in removing current barriers to housing affordability in three key areas: planning reform, tenancy legislation, and community renewal, as below.

Planning reform
Redesigned planning systems can encourage, enable and expedite approval processes for construction of affordable housing, and of mainstream property developments that include a proportion of affordable housing. Reform of State Government planning systems can facilitate new supply, including introducing a robust inclusionary zoning policy.

Inclusionary zoning – where planning instruments require a component of below-market housing in specified areas – is an effective and proven way to stimulate new supply. It is widespread and effective across the USA and has been implemented successfully in some states in Australia, including in South Australia.

Well-designed schemes can balance creation of developer profit sufficient to incentivise activity whilst capturing social return from the private value uplift provided to developers and land owners through zoning changes. Government-led upzonings and increases in urban density are likely to lead to higher values and prices for land in affected localities in NSW cities — with new high-rise and medium-density housing developments targeted to higher-income households and with more intensive gentrification of neighbouring suburbs. The NSW Government should capture a portion of the land value uplift to allocate to social and affordable housing.

The NSW Government should now introduce inclusionary zoning across the state:
- Setting a target of at least 15 per cent affordable housing for new housing stock in the greater metropolitan region and other regions where demand is high;
- Committing to a target of at least 30 per cent affordable housing where a major development is on government-owned land and in state-significant precincts.

Tenancy legislation
Tenancies should be better protected to prevent avoidable evictions, including through reforms to tenancy legislation. Mission Australia supports the position of Shelter NSW, which has recommended that the Government revise the NSW Residential Tenancies Act to prevent evictions within a 12-month term where there is no just cause, allowing landlords to terminate a tenancy only for reasons that are specified in law and which can be challenged in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal.[7]

Community renewal
A significant proportion of social housing in NSW is in concentrated 'estate' communities, many of which face significant disadvantage. People living in such situations are at high risk of experiencing homelessness, and place-based efforts to improve circumstances in those localities are important homelessness prevention measures.

The provision of housing and services aimed at individuals is not sufficient to address the challenges of people living in locations of deep, persistent and concentrated disadvantage. These areas need a community development approach that aims to strengthen the community, build the capacity of residents and genuinely engage people in working together on local solutions to local issues. Integrating tenancy management with community development is a critical component of this, as it ensures a long-term commitment to working with the community.

A place-based model is required that co-ordinates services, targets intergenerational disadvantage through education and employment and aligns housing renewal with locally tailored services and capacity building. Mission Australia has developed a Strengthening Communities framework and is working to roll this out to identified communities of disadvantage, including those in NSW identified

through the Jesuit Social Services/Catholic Social Services Dropping Off the Edge study and other research.

We welcome the Government's intended Place Plans, outlined in the *Future Directions for Social Housing* paper, as an opportunity to develop place-based solutions for social housing tenants in concentrated housing estates and look forward to seeing the detailed development of this model.

Such a place-based approach should be extended to locations that include communities of concentrated disadvantage in the recently announced Social Housing Management Transfer Program to ensure community renewal initiatives are implemented to address entrenched locational disadvantage.

Government funding of strengthening communities initiatives would assist with the integration of homelessness and other community development work. This could include deploying community development workers in high-risk communities across NSW.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

We have seen successful approaches to community renewal in our own service experience. **Clarendon Vale and Rokeby** are disadvantaged communities in Hobart where Mission Australia Housing has been commissioned to manage 500 homes for Housing Tasmania over a 10 year period.

Mission Australia Housing has developed a decade long Master Plan to provide tenancy management, asset maintenance, property upgrades and new homes. In partnership, Mission Australia has developed a community renewal model, involving a 10 year community development plan encompassing community improvement projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. *That the NSW Government reform planning systems to:*
   - *Require at least 15 per cent affordable housing for new housing stock in the greater metropolitan region and other regions where demand is high; and*
   - *Require at least 30 per cent affordable housing where a major development is on government-owned land and in state-significant precincts.*

6. *That the NSW Government prevent exits from public housing into homelessness, including by adopting a policy of "eviction only as a last resort" and by better post-eviction support procedures.*

7. *That the NSW Government extend a place-based community development and renewal approach to concentrated and disadvantaged public housing areas and communities in the recently announced Social Housing Management Transfer Program to maximise the prospects of the residents achieving higher personal wellbeing, economic independence, social inclusion and avoidance of homelessness.*

8. *That the NSW Government fund strengthening communities initiatives in high-risk communities across NSW.*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In addition to increasing housing supply, what actions are needed to improve access to housing for people experiencing homelessness and how can the access system for social housing be more responsive to their needs?

Housing assistance application processes

There have been positive initiatives to simplify housing assistance application processes, such as the introduction of a no wrong door approach to social housing assistance delivered through Housing Pathways, and the introduction of online and phone applications delivered through Housing Connect. However, a number of barriers still prevent or impede access to housing assistance, especially for people experiencing homelessness, which include but are not limited to:

- The volume and type of documentation required to apply for social housing assistance – most homeless people are assessed for priority assistance given their urgent and complex needs. The evidence requirements for a priority assessment are excessive and vulnerable people are required to provide detailed documentation just to substantiate their eligibility and go on the waiting list. These requirements should be reviewed to reduce and simplify documentation required as evidence, and to shift some of the burden of documentation closer to the time of an actual offer of social housing;
- The requirements for maintaining a position on the NSW Housing Register can be onerous for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. People who are on the waiting list for social housing are required to keep their information up-to-date, but for vulnerable people living in precarious circumstances this can be problematic;
- The FACS - Housing NSW and Housing Pathways websites and documentation are complex and confusing - this contributes to poorly completed applications, missing information and to delays in completing assessments. Many vulnerable people struggle to complete the application for housing assistance forms, particularly if they are unassisted by a support person.

Temporary Accommodation Program

Current arrangements under the Temporary Accommodation Program are inappropriate, unsustainable and inefficient, as outlined in Homelessness NSW's April 2016 discussion paper, *Temporary Accommodation Program – A review*.[i]

Stronger links between FACS, specialist homelessness services and community housing providers could help to divert people waiting for social housing and in SHS into better accommodation and support until such time as a permanent property becomes available.

Mission Australia would like to see reforms to the Temporary Accommodation Program, including allowing Community Housing Providers to develop and implement some demonstration projects to assess whether funds currently allocated to Temporary Accommodation can be used in more innovative and cost-effective ways if responsibility is devolved to the sector.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

In Mission Australia's **Western Sydney Homelessness Outreach Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Service (HOPARRS)** Program, Mission Australia and Mission Australia Housing work together to support people who have completed an application or whose tenancy is at risk.

HOPARRS works to prevent and reverse homelessness by providing frontline support, advocacy, referrals and advice, with a focus on early intervention, rapid rehousing and ongoing support to enable people to remain in their homes. HOPARRS can help by supporting clients to keep their tenancies, with housing and accommodation support, assistance to find new and secure housing, outreach and advocacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. *That the NSW Government simplify and better communicate the social housing application documentation and processes, especially those relating to eligibility for priority housing.*

10. *That the NSW Government reform the Temporary Accommodation Program in consultation with the SHS and CHP sectors, including through demonstration projects run by Community Housing Providers.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What different supports or tenancy management approaches could help keep people at risk of homelessness in their homes? *and* **How can different housing options be better linked to other supports?**
Recent research has indicated that tenancy support programs funded under the NPAH were successful in assisting households to sustain their tenancy and prevent eviction and homelessness.[8] Tenancy sustainment rates ranged from approximately 80 per cent to 92 per cent, depending on the program. Eviction rates were between 0.3 and 3.4 per cent. The research found significant avoided costs to government from avoided evictions and reduced cost of homelessness.

The research identified the key success factors in sustaining a tenancy as being:
- Well-developed relationships, in particular between the primary support agency and other services and agencies;
- Wrap around flexible support;
- Availability of brokerage funds;
- The use of housing as a platform for delivery of other social and human services;

- Supportive and flexible housing providers;
- Suitable housing, particularly where it was close to amenities and transport, not shared and with no time limit on the tenancy.

Those factors limiting program success were identified as:
- Long waiting lists for mainstream services, in particular mental health services, financial and budgeting services;
- Staff shortages and turnover in agencies delivering programs;
- Lack of suitable accommodation: in particular safety issues and high density housing;
- Issues with housing providers, including inadequate property maintenance and issues relating to high staff turnover.

Mission Australia's experience also identifies early intervention in rental arrears and other issues that could threaten a tenancy as essential in preventing a crisis emerging and the person becoming homeless. This requires a strong relationship between the tenancy manager and the support provider.[9]

We know that service approaches such as HASI are effective for sustaining tenancies for people with a mental illness, as addressed in *Section 2.6 Mental illness and homelessness*. Mission Australia also delivers tenancy support through a range of services under the SHS Program in NSW. This includes the South West Early Intervention and Tenancy Support Service (SWEITSS), support provided to young people through Canterbury Bankstown Youth Services (CBYS) and The Crossing, and other services across the state. Supports to maintain tenancies range from more intensive interventions to reasonably brief interventions, such as providing brokerage and assisting with housing set-up, actively following through with a referral and offering transportation to attend appointments.

Mission Australia recommends the roll-out of more tenancy support to private rental and social housing tenants because it has proven to be both efficient and effective. A well-evidenced model is the deployment of support coordination workers who identify tenants' need and navigate the system to connect them with the relevant services. While tenants may be eligible for supports that will help to increase their social connections, quality of life, health and mental health outcomes, and opportunities to participate in education, training and employment, they may not easily be able to access those services or even be aware of them. A soft entry point and assistance to connect with services helps to overcome any barriers to access.

This approach is, in Mission Australia's view, an essential element in preventing further increases in homelessness, especially in high-costs housing markets. Such a support model should include:
- A support coordination worker to work directly with people whose tenancies are at risk;
- An assessment of tenants' needs, strengths and specific tenancy risks;
- Close engagement between the support coordination worker and the housing provider (whether social or private landlord), to ensure that any issues likely to impact housing outcomes are identified and addressed early;
- Referrals to needed services;
- Impact measurement to ensure that supports and services are accurately targeted.

RECOMMENDATIONS
11. *That the NSW Government recognise the need for a support coordination worker model, through:*
    - *Inclusion in new FACS initiatives - Communities Plus and the Social Housing Management Transfer Program;*

- *Provision through the SHS Program to social housing and private rental tenants whose tenancy is at risk.*

1.1.2 Harnessing community and corporate engagement to prevent and reduce homelessness

Governments should facilitate private investment in innovative and proven homelessness and housing initiatives. The right policy settings can leverage institutional, philanthropic and social impact investment. However, this does not abrogate the responsibility of governments to provide care and support for the most vulnerable in the community.

In our experience, many private investors have a greater appetite for innovation and the associated risk than governments. Accordingly, they are important partners in funding innovations and pilot homelessness projects that do not yet meet the evidence-based criteria that governments usually require when funding programs. One example of this is Mission Australia's MISHA project, which a generous philanthropic donor funded both in terms of operations and a substantial research component to provide evidence for the effectiveness of the model. Nevertheless, philanthropic and private funding of innovation is ad hoc and insufficient; Mission Australia encourages all governments to consider the need for funding innovative service delivery responses as well as the evaluations that are required to support them.

Impact investment has emerged as an alternative mechanism for financing social services, and has the potential to access private capital for social good and drive innovation in service delivery to achieve greater social impact. This is a promising area and we are aware of significant investor appetite for impact investment models. However, most focus to date has been on one model – social benefit bonds – which require a significant upfront resource commitment and have relatively limited application. Greater focus should be placed on other social investment models, such as smaller outcomes-funded projects, which could be developed as more agile and flexible tripartite (government, investors and NGOs) mechanisms to harness private funding sources.

In terms of corporate investment in the supply of new housing, Mission Australia welcomes the NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund initiative, which promises to be an effective way to leverage private finance. We also support the Commonwealth's intention behind its establishment of the Affordable Housing Working Group. As a member of this group, NSW can help drive efforts to get a meaningful outcome from this process. No single level of government can provide the entire solution; it is vital that all levels work together. As well as joint government action to provide adequate returns and risk allocations, a new national institutional investment vehicle is needed. Mission Australia also supports the intermediary model proposed by the NSW Federation of Housing Associations in the July 2016 paper, *The affordable housing financial intermediary*[10]

RECOMMENDATIONS
12. *That the NSW Government facilitate philanthropic and private investment in homelessness and housing initiatives, including through agile and flexible tripartite social investment models.*

1.1.3 Better exit planning

We recommend a 'zero tolerance' approach for people becoming homeless when they leave state care. This includes people leaving hospitals, drug and alcohol facilities, correction facilities, detention centres and mental health institutions, as well as young people in the out of home care system. Supports need to be provided to people well before they exit institutions and governments should be held accountable for these outcomes over the medium term.

Strong cooperation between government departments and service providers is particularly important to ensure that people are not exited into homelessness from state institutions. Where vulnerable individuals are resident in an institution they must have a carefully planned transition into the community to ensure they are not exited into homelessness. Our detailed perspective on young people exiting out-of-home care and people leaving prison are set out in *Section 2.1 Children and young people* and *Section 2.8 Leaving prison and homelessness*, respectively.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can people at risk of homelessness be better engaged in their exit plans?
Ensuring that people are engaged in their exit planning is critical to the success of those plans. People exiting institutional care often have high and complex needs. Enhancing engagement with this group is one of the key principles of working with them towards a successful exit into housing. This involves creating positive relationships between the worker and client, engaging people as early as possible to build trust before, during, and after the intervention/support, and ensuring their participation in, and control of, their own journey to independence. General approaches will need to be tailored to specific cohorts, depending on their particular needs and circumstances. Table 1 below details the critical components of engaging people in exit planning.

Table 1. Critical components of engaging people in exit planning

Engagement	Critical components
Provision of supports	• Relationship/connection between support worker and client, built around trust
	• Compassion and understanding
	• Understanding of the limitations and consequences for actions
	• Individualised support provided to address specific needs of clients
	• Multidisciplinary case management teams
Person's empowerment or agency	• Desire to change their situation
	• Self-identified goals and activities of interest
	• Opportunity to design or adjust the service/program to meet individual needs (within reason)
	• Committees/House meetings
	• Opportunities to become mentors or peer support workers

RECOMMENDATIONS
> 13. *That the NSW Government adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to people becoming homeless when they exit state care.*

> 14. *That the NSW Government embed the principles of engagement outlined here in exit planning.*

1.2 People are empowered to tackle the underlying issues that put them at risk of homelessness

1.2.1 Empowering people through education, training and employment to prevent homelessness

Local labour market conditions have been associated with entries into homelessness, with AHURI and the Melbourne Institute finding a one percentage point increase in the rate of entry into homelessness for every one percentage point rise in the unemployment rate.[11] Mission Australia recognises the role that education, training and employment can play in both preventing homelessness and providing a bridge out of homelessness.

However, we also caution that employment does not always prevent nor alleviate homelessness. The Journeys Home study[12] did find a negative relationship between employment and homelessness (with employment rates higher among those who were housed than those who were homeless), more particularly for men than for women. While this suggests a relationship between employment and stable housing, the rates of employment still remained very low among those who were housed (34 per cent of housed men and 25 per cent of housed women). This suggests that employment is not a panacea for homelessness, nor conversely that housing is a panacea for unemployment.

Mission Australia's own service experience is that participation in education, training and employment is very beneficial for many people and should be one of the multi-dimensional responses to homelessness available to clients. Clients for whom this approach might be beneficial may broadly align with the 'opportunity group' of social housing tenants identified by the NSW Government in *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*.

However, our experience also suggests that any employment-related targets set in this regard should be realistic about the level of employment likely to be achieved, particularly among those who have high and complex needs and have experienced chronic homelessness (those analogous to the 'safety net group').

Removing disincentives to employment

Sometimes the goals of encouraging people into employment, and preventing homelessness, can come into conflict with one another. For example, social housing tenants are encouraged to find work, which is likely to intensify under the *Future Directions* strategy. Once they find work, their housing subsidy is reduced and they may either choose to move into the private housing market or may become ineligible for social housing if their income is too high. However, many social housing tenants are likely to find only low-paying, part-time and/or casual employment. If they lose their job or otherwise find themselves unable to survive on their wages, they are at risk of homelessness but are once again at the end of the waiting list for social housing.

The loss of secure, affordable housing and an employment-generated income stream together puts vulnerable people at risk of homelessness. This creates a powerful disincentive for people to either find work or, if they do find work, to voluntarily move out of social housing.

Mission Australia therefore recommends that the Government review current social housing policy in areas such as eligibility, tenure, rent and conditions of exit to remove workforce disincentives and the potential conflict between housing and employment goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS
> 15. *That the NSW Government reform current social housing policy in areas such as eligibility, tenure, rent and conditions of exit to remove workforce disincentives and the potential conflict between housing and employment goals.*

1.2.2 Putting people at the centre of responding to homelessness

The provision of integrated wraparound services to people across a range of life domains can help people achieve positive outcomes:

- 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.
- Responses should be multi-dimensional, since solving the issue of 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 connection to family and community.
- Services should be culturally appropriate for the clients beings supported, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander and CALD clients with staff trained in culturally aware approaches and practice.
- Integrated models such as MISHA (Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord) should be supported which provide a range of quality, timely and individualised services and supports including health and mental health supports in conjunction with accommodation. See **Attachment C** for further information about MISHA.

1.2.3 Embedding early intervention and prevention

Different cohorts have different risk factors, and programs and initiatives work best to prevent homelessness when they target these individual factors. Prevention not only helps to reduce the number of people who experience homelessness but also helps to reduce the personal and societal costs associated with homelessness.

Greater investment is needed in prevention programs and services that work to keep people from becoming homeless, as well as broader policies that address structural causes of homelessness including housing affordability and supply. When homelessness does occur, early intervention measures are vital in securing quick and successful outcomes. There have been some welcome shifts towards early intervention homelessness programs, but this cannot occur at the expense of crisis services. It should instead boost the capacity of the service system overall.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Recognising that there are many factors which can increase the risk of homelessness, how can services get better at identifying these people earlier and helping them to get support in place? *and* **Where are there program opportunities to improve the prevention of homelessness?**

Until the recent past, predictive models of homelessness have been inefficient at determining those who are likely to become homeless versus those who will resolve their own housing issues. Recent developments, however, are starting to show promise, with a new model leading to improved identification of families becoming homeless by 26 per cent, and reducing incorrect identifications by two thirds.[13] However, this model was developed in the US and has been adopted by New York City agencies: it is likely that a different tool would be required for the Australian context.

A research project being conducted by Western Sydney University and Mission Australia at the Mission Australia Centre-Kingswood aims to improve identification of families at risk of homelessness. We hope that in the long term this will be a useful input to policy development and service design.

This is also a significant opportunity for data from mainstream agencies to inform design of homelessness prevention and service delivery approaches. Universal mechanisms such as identification/risk assessment for homelessness in planning discharge from hospitals, prisons and other institutions will be critical in this regard.

Homelessness is highly spatially concentrated and initiatives to support people in their local areas are an important part of early intervention. Case coordination models such as the Inner-City Drift Project can help to prevent people moving away from their social networks to access crisis services.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

The Inner City Drift Project (ICDP) was a NSW program aimed at stemming the flow of homeless people from western Sydney into the inner city. An evaluation found that all participants followed-up at six months had remained within their community of origin.

The service model identified assessment and referral pathways as critical to the early intervention and prevention focus of the ICDP. Integral to this was the need to work with 'first to know' agencies, two key agencies being Housing NSW and Centrelink, since most people with financial and/or accommodation difficulties will have contact with one or both of these services. There were also other important partnerships that the ICDP developed including a relationship with a real estate agency in Fairfield.

Schools-based youth homelessness identification and intervention

Mission Australia sees particular benefits in using a universal platform such as schools for early identification of homelessness risk indicators so that early intervention work is possible. A proven model of early identification and intervention is the creation of a place-based Community of Schools and Services (COSS) model, aiming to identify young people at risk of homelessness and disengagement in school and intervene quickly to divert them from those journeys.

This approach was first trialled in The Geelong Project (TGP),[14] which assisted 600 young people in 2015-16 with the following outcomes:

- 38 per cent returned home from crisis refuges within 12 weeks;
- 68 per cent were engaged in education or training;
- 72 per cent had case plans that included activities for family connection/reconciliation;
- 266 were diverted from homelessness.

The rationale behind the development of the original TGP model included to simplify the complex and confusing service delivery system that confronts young people. Mission Australia's experience supports this imperative, as we recognise that a number of individuals in the community will be receiving services or supports with funding from a range of Government agencies, primarily NSW Health, NSW FACS, NSW Justice, and the Commonwealth Departments of Employment and Social

Services. We need to do what we can to ensure that this funding is aligned and mutually reinforcing. One of the best ways to do this is to provide place-based, integrated models of care such as the COSS.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Based on the TGP/COSS model, **The Ryde Project** establishes a holistic collaboration between a diverse group of stakeholders, led by Mission Australia, and involves universal screening of all students from Years 7 through 12 within the City of Ryde and Lane Cove Local Government Area.

Partners in The Ryde Project include government, education, health, and community services, with a common agenda to reduce youth homelessness and school disengagement. They strategically utilise the 'business as usual' practice of partner services, by coordinating service access through a common entry/referral point and service collaboration to address all presenting and identified needs of the young person and their families. Students who may be at risk of school disengagement or homelessness are referred into The Ryde Project, identified by their schools and the scores from the universal screening tool. Students who may be at risk are then supported as appropriate through coordinated services relevant to the young person and their family.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. *That the NSW Government fund homelessness early intervention models that focus on:*
    - *Supporting people in their local area, and particularly providing adequate support for people in rural and regional areas;*
    - *Identifying and supporting people in at-risk tenancies; and*
    - *Preventing people exiting institutional settings from becoming homeless.*

17. *That the NSW Government roll out the proven schools-based youth homelessness identification and intervention Community of Schools and Services (COSS) model to high risk areas of NSW.*

1.2.4 Strengthening collaboration

Whole of government and sector approaches
Responses to homelessness should facilitate the involvement of the whole of community and promote shared responsibility and collaboration for preventing and addressing homelessness amongst the community, all levels of government and business sectors:

- Mainstream service agencies such as hospitals and police need to understand homelessness in order to be able to identify and work with people who are at risk of homelessness. They also need to be equipped to respond to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to ensure that there are 'no wrong doors'.
- Greater cooperation can enhance service provision including identifying those at risk of homelessness, providing services to those who become homeless and locating housing options to exit people from homelessness. Greater collaboration should be encouraged in recognition of the complex and multidimensional nature of people's needs.

- Strong cooperation between government departments and service providers is particularly important to ensure that people are not exited into homelessness from state institutions including prisons, juvenile detention, out of home care, hospitals and mental health care.

Governance structures

Governance arrangements including District Homelessness Implementation Groups (DHIGs) and District Homelessness Operational Groups (DHOGs) are not operating as effectively as they could, and there is a gap in strategic planning at District and State-wide levels. Further, they are generally failing to facilitate collaborative efforts at the District level.

At first, they provided a good opportunity for networking between different agencies in the rebuilding phase after the Going Home Staying Home reforms. Over time, however, the need for this has waned and the Groups have not yet acquired higher-level strategic planning functions. Overlapping membership between the two Groups in many Districts indicates that there are redundancies in some of the frequent meetings. FACS should also ensure greater participation by Community Housing Providers in these groups.

Successful collaboration models

The Homelessness Assertive Response Team (HART) service is a very promising collaborative model for helping rough sleepers in Sydney to exit homelessness and access long-term housing and support. Mission Australia partners with a range of other agencies, including the Police, FACS, City of Sydney, Neami Way2Home, St Vincent's Homeless Health and others, which all work together under a collective impact framework. HART patrols the City as a group every week, following up with existing clients and engaging with new clients to link them with appropriate support. Housing officers participate in this outreach to engage people directly and support them to complete their paperwork, and the Police are able to use their ID database to provide personal reference which can be accepted as a form of ID to complete housing applications.

HART is underpinned by a collective impact framework, which is a promising model for strong cross-sector collaborative efforts. Our experience also suggests that co-location is a successful mechanism for ensuring that services collaborate with each other and that clients have ease of access to all of the supports that they require.

RECOMMENDATIONS
> 18. *That the NSW Government review governance structures for local-level cooperation and:*
>   - *Embed mainstream agencies, including Community Housing Providers, in governance structures; and*
>   - *Apply collective impact principles to homelessness-focussed collaborations.*
>
> 19. *That the NSW Government apply the collaborative HART service model to other areas of high homelessness concentrations, such as Parramatta, Penrith and North coast towns.*

1.2.5 Building effective referral pathways and processes
In many cases, successful referral pathways and processes are built on strong relationships between particular individuals working for organisations. However, we need a systemic response to make sure that referral pathways are strong, effective, contribute to a 'no wrong doors' system and transcend individuals' personalities.

Link2Home is one of the cornerstones of a strong referral system in NSW, and is now functioning more effectively than it was when initially established. While at first it was hampered by inappropriate referrals, incorrect service information and inadequate knowledge of services, much

of this has been addressed by services taking responsibility for updating information about their organisation within the Central Information Management Systems (CIMS) or the Vacancy Management System (VMS), which is updated daily for information about accommodation or support vacancies.

While Link2Home has improved coordination and referral pathways within the homelessness sector, FACS should undertake further work to promote it with mainstream agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS
> 20. *That the NSW Government increase its promotion of Link2Home with State and Commonwealth mainstream agencies including Centrelink, the Police Force, out-of-home care service providers, etc.*

1.2.6 Using data to improve services
Good data collection can play a critical role in informing the development and implementation of policies to address homelessness. Government should maintain its investment in reporting frequently, consistently and as early as possible on data collected on homelessness through the Census of Population and Housing and the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC).

The ABS should continue to work with the sector to improve the Census collection where there is a recognised undercount, for example better capturing of young people who are couch surfing. The service sector should also be consulted on counting homeless and at-risk populations in local areas.

Governments should also provide greater access to administrative data sets to allow researchers and practitioners to identify trends, improve accountability and transparency in funding allocation and encourage innovation.

Other attempts to track homelessness should also be supported, including Council street counts which capture primary homelessness in various locations at different times of year, and longitudinal studies such as the Journeys Home research which provide more in-depth information about transitions in and out of homelessness and the factors associated with these transitions.

As noted earlier, there is a significant opportunity for data from mainstream agencies to inform homelessness prevention and service delivery approaches. One key aspect of this is introducing homelessness risk indicators into mainstream data collection systems, and particularly into schools. This will ensure a population-level data collection that will identify people at risk before they become disengaged from universal platforms and direct them towards any needed interventions, such as through The Ryde Project.

Integrating data sources
Mission Australia supports NSW Government efforts to integrate data sources under the interim NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework, to allow the tracking and monitoring of clients' outcomes across services and sectors. However, we additionally encourage the Government to persevere in efforts to link Commonwealth and other State data.

Integrating agency data with government-held administrative data may help to further elucidate people's pathways through various service systems, and assess various outcomes from particular service interventions or combinations of interventions. Mission Australia supports this being explored with leadership from the NSW Government, including through the existing NSW Government Data Analytic Centre.

Mission Australia also believes that there are significant opportunities to use the evidence on cost savings to demonstrate to mainstream agencies the value of preventing, reducing and managing homelessness. This will be critical in encouraging the involvement of both State and Commonwealth agencies in homelessness efforts.

Several Australian studies have now indicated the cost benefits of delivering housing and services to people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including evaluations of two flagship Mission Australia programs, the Michael Project[15] and MISHA[16], as well as national studies on the costs of homelessness[17], costs of youth homelessness[18], a NSW study of the life-course institutional costs of homelessness for vulnerable groups[19] and a WA study of the economic benefits of providing public housing and support to formerly homeless people[20].

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. *That the NSW Government introduce homelessness risk indicators into mainstream administrative data systems, starting with the corrections system as the first priority.*

22. *That the NSW Government allow greater access to administrative data sets and explore opportunities for linking Commonwealth, State and agency data.*

23. *That the NSW Government incorporate the evidence on cost savings into business cases for homelessness prevention and management proposals.*

2 Response to groups at higher risk of experiencing homelessness discussion questions

There is no one program that works for all people at risk of homelessness. Prevention measures can target at-risk groups such as: supporting young people to stay connected to families; helping women and children who experience domestic violence to stay safely in the home; and ensuring people leaving institutional care are not exited into homelessness. When homelessness does occur, early intervention measures are vital. Various approaches tailored to the specific issues faced by these cohorts are set out below.

In addition to this need for tailoring of programs to their specific cohort, there is a range of principles and approaches that should be adopted within a good practice guidance framework across all programs, including: trauma-informed care; recovery-oriented practice; continuity of care; and service user involvement in both service design and delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

24. *That the NSW Government adopt the following, within a good practice guidance framework for specialist homelessness services: trauma-informed care, recovery-oriented practice, continuity of care and service user involvement.*

2.1 Children and young people

We acknowledge the efforts that the NSW Government has made to target this important group, including the Homelessness Youth Assistance Program (HYAP) and the Premier's Priority on reducing youth homelessness.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Where are the opportunities to better identify and respond to the warning signs that young people are at risk of homelessness?

Schools-based youth homelessness identification and intervention
As discussed in *Section 1.2.3 Embedding early intervention and prevention*, the COSS model has been proven to be effective in identifying and assisting young people who are at risk of homelessness.

Outreach services to identify at risk youth
Outreach services are particularly useful in reaching children and young people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as they are able to go to the areas they frequent. Outreach services aim to develop rapport, care for immediate needs, and provide linkages to services and resources to help young people navigate the service system.[21] Outreach programs can build connections with local communities and develop relationships with children and young people due to their more informal service delivery model.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Youthbeat is a Mission Australia safety and early intervention program supporting youth on the streets of the Perth CBD. This comprehensive program provides mobile outreach to young people in the Northbridge and inner city areas, as well as counselling and goal setting. Youthbeat also runs a recreation program for young people on Thursday and Friday nights.

Youthbeat's brightly coloured vans are staffed by professional youth workers who are trained to deal with alcohol and drug-fuelled incidents and support young people experiencing homelessness. The service provides safety, information and guidance for young people at risk and connects them with local community services, family and peers. A key feature of the model is follow-up support with young people and their families. Youthbeat helps young people to become strong, healthy adults who play active roles in their communities.

Out-of-home care leavers at risk of homelessness
Given that people in out-of-home care are so much more likely to become homeless than the general population, an important long-term homelessness prevention strategy is to reduce the numbers of out-of-home care entrants in the first place. The Government's Targeted Earlier Intervention Reforms and continued support for programs such as Brighter Futures will hopefully,

over the long term, help to prevent family breakdown and the placement of children into care settings.

For those who do enter the out-of-home care system, we recommend improving data collection and proper monitoring, to generate information on post-care rates of homelessness, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and enable governments to be held accountable.

We also recommend improvements to exit planning. All states and territories require young people to have a 'leaving care' plan, which includes a housing option. However, a 2013 survey showed that 64 per cent of young people did not have such a plan.[22] When transition planning is done, often it is too late or inadequate in terms of finding housing for the care leavers. Post-care programs for young people transitioning from out-of-home care are only available to a limited number of young people and, for the rest, support is limited. Programs such as Springboard (see below) should be made more widely available.

For many people, simply reaching 18 years of age does not mean that they do not need ongoing support. The Queensland Government has already agreed to provide a coordinated program of post-care support for young people until at least the age of 21, and to fund non-government services to provide a continuum of transition to independence services, including transition planning and post-care management and support. The 'Home Stretch' campaign, an Anglicare Victoria initiative, calls on state governments to allow state care to continue to 21 years where any young person needs or seeks this. Mission Australia and many other community service providers support these initiatives and encourage all governments, including the NSW Government, to adopt them as a significant way of preventing homelessness.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

In Victoria, Mission Australia delivers the **Springboard** program which provides intensive youth focussed assistance to those aged 16 to 18 in residential out-of-home care, or up to 21 years who have left residential care. It supports these young people to gain secure long-term employment by re-engaging with appropriate education training and/or supported employment opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

25. *That the NSW Government extend current early intervention programs to support family cohesion and long-term homelessness prevention.*

26. *That the NSW Government improve data collection and proper monitoring, to generate information on rates of homelessness among out-of-home care leavers and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.*

27. *That the NSW Government introduce the Springboard and Youthbeat program models in high-needs areas of NSW.*

28. *That the NSW Government prevent exits from out-of-home care into homelessness, including by extending post-care support for young people up until the age of 21.*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can the strategy strengthen services to ensure young people are engaged in the services they access and that services are tailored to the needs of children and young people?

Family reconciliation services

Special services can assist young people and their families with reconciliation and reconnection. They can teach skills such as conflict resolution and resilience, to enable the family to get along better so that the young person can return or stay at home (where safe). The Federal Government's Reconnect program has a long history of successful delivery in Australia, and we recommend that the NSW Government advocate for the continued funding of Reconnect by the Commonwealth (or continue funding it at the State level, should responsibility for all service delivery be devolved to the States in the next round of Commonwealth-State negotiations).

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Reconnect is an example of a successful early intervention program for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is a Commonwealth-funded program that works with young people and their families in flexible ways, including counselling, mediation and practical support. It has a focus on responding quickly to referrals.

A recent Mission Australia evaluation demonstrated significant positive outcomes for young people and their families in the Reconnect program, including in personal wellbeing, sense of control, support in a time of crisis, family's ability to get along, and housing permanency.[23]

Other specialist services

Best practice specialist support for young people is delivered by specially trained staff and in a tailored context, such as headspace for young people with mental health issues and Mission Australia's Triple Care Farm for young people recovering from substance abuse. A recent Social Return on Investment (SROI) report by Social Ventures Australia on Triple Care Farm indicated that approximately $3 of social value is created for every $1 invested in the service.

It is often difficult to access such specialist services. There are often long waiting lists for community mental health services, substance abuse programs, gambling counselling and other such supports. Access in regional, rural and remote areas is especially problematic. Greater investment is needed to ensure appropriate support can be accessed where specialist needs are identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

    29. That the NSW Government advocate for continued funding of Reconnect or similar family reconciliation service by the Commonwealth.

    30. That the NSW Government expand access to youth specialist community mental health and substance abuse services to meet demand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: How can services better work together and engage young people at risk of homelessness to keep them in education, training or employment? *and* **How can services engage with young people to help them into appropriate housing?**

Supportive accommodation

An increasingly common model internationally and in Australia is the Youth Foyer Model. This model assists young people, usually aged between 16-24, to engage in education and employment, and gradually to reduce their dependence on social services. Youth Foyers generally have self-contained accommodation, on-site support workers, education programs, variable levels of support where a young person can progress to more independent living, onsite facilities (for example health services) and social enterprises (such as a café). Participation in education, training and employment is a condition of the accommodation. In these ways and because of their focus on independence, Foyers are different from traditional supported accommodation models.[23] Youth Foyer models are yet to be fully evaluated in the Australian context but offer great prospects in helping young people transition to independence.

Development or redevelopment of new facilities for Foyer-like models is part of the solution to respond to unmet demand. Nevertheless, current youth homelessness facilities run by SHS can achieve best-practice outcomes for this cohort by integrating the essential elements of the Foyer approach - including strong links to education and employment, a focus on building independence and a 'contract' with clients - into their current practice.

Many youth SHS already build aspects of these into their operations, but to be truly transformative extra program elements are required (such as deep partnerships with education providers and employers) which are not possible within current SHS funding levels. In addition to accelerating the construction of new Foyer-like facilities, Mission Australia advocates a systemic 'Foyer top up' of funding for existing youth SHS programs, to align them with the essential elements of the Foyer approach.

Youth Foyer approaches do not suit every young person experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Supportive accommodation is also needed for the most marginalised young people, particularly those with alcohol and drug problems, mental health issues, criminal convictions and those who live in rural and remote communities. Such young people, who have experienced trauma and hardship in their past, may need more intensive case management supports.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Canterbury Bankstown Youth Services (CBYS) assists young people and young families aged between 16 and 25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are dealing with complex issues.

CBYS provides a range of support services and accommodation operations, including prevention and early intervention programs, crisis resolution, transitional and semi-independent accommodation, post-crisis support and case management services. An Education Support Worker develops and implements education programs and works closely with case managers to link young people to training, education and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

31. *That the NSW Government invest in the expansion of residential foyer-like supportive accommodation models for young people.*

32. *That the NSW Government provide 'top up' funding for current youth SHS programs to align them with the essential elements of the Foyer model.*

2.2 Family violence and homelessness

Domestic and family violence (DFV) continues to be the major driver of homelessness.[24] Domestic and family violence was the main reason for seeking assistance for nearly one quarter of specialist housing services clients in 2013-14[25]. While DFV is not limited to one group, culture, gender, or sexuality, overwhelmingly it is violence perpetrated by men against women and it is women and children who are at greatest risk of homelessness as a consequence.

We acknowledge the NSW Government's efforts in this very important area, including the Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund, the state-wide rollout of Safer Pathways and 'safe at home' programs (Staying Home Leaving Violence and Start Safely).

Mission Australia believes that:
- Reducing homelessness will require concerted effort and more investment in reducing DFV including: education on healthy relationships in schools; family early intervention programs; improved training of first to know agencies; legal and policing reform to protect the rights of people experiencing DFV; men's behaviour change programs and broader efforts to address underlying gender equality and rigid gender stereotypes.

- Where women and children are experiencing or are at risk of domestic and family violence, resources are also required for those women who need to leave home to be safe including crisis accommodation and rapid rehousing programs.[26]
- Efforts to remove violent men from the home should be continued to enable women to stay safely where they are, remain connected to social networks, community support and schooling and prevent homelessness, including 'safe at home' programs such as Staying Home Leaving Violence and the Start Safely subsidy.
- DFV specific services should adopt a model of trauma informed care and be funded as a priority, while DFV training should be mandated across the homeless service system because of the evidence of women experiencing DFV presenting to diverse services and with different experiences of DFV.
- Culturally appropriate models (including those suitable for women in remote Indigenous communities and for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) need to be integrated into a flexible and responsive homelessness service system.

We recommend the adoption of a place-based, flexible service model in each District that includes adequate 24/7 services responses, early intervention and prevention programs and a range of flexible options for clients so that services can genuinely be client-centred in case management approaches (e.g. each District would have a range of safe accommodation and support options for women and children escaping DFV such as specialist women's refuges, as well as *Staying Home Leaving Violence* programs, specialist legal support and strong trauma informed case management services). The service model would include specialised support such as specialist DFV child workers, specialist disability workers and Aboriginal family violence and culturally and linguistically diverse responses. Allocation of services, models and programs should be designed according to needs determined by local specialists, communities and agencies and based on evidence of best practice responses.   This model should be underpinned by contracting and funding arrangements that allow for the enhanced flexibility of service provision within FACS Districts to meet the needs of women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs)
Mission Australia believes that eradicating domestic violence ultimately requires changed behaviour from the perpetrators, alongside continuing provision of services for those experiencing domestic and family violence.

To this end, Mission Australia has recently established a Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP) in Dubbo, which will utilise a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach and provide group services for perpetrators of domestic violence, to be co-facilitated by male and female facilitators.

We encourage the Government to continue and expand successful MBCPs as a critical component of reducing DFV-related homelessness.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can we build on Staying Home Leaving Violence and Start Safely, to address the risk of homelessness for people experiencing domestic and family violence, including supporting women and children to remain in their home?
The *Start Safely* program offered by FACS has received positive feedback from MA staff in our South West Sydney homelessness services, and Mission Australia welcomes the announcement in the NSW Social Housing Strategy that Start Safely will be expanded, to increase the number of families getting assistance from approximately 2000 to 3500 each year.

Staying Home Leaving Violence has also been a good model, but more could be done to remove the onus on women to leave the violence, including providing safe and therapeutic spaces for men to go when angry or under the influence of alcohol and at risk of committing violence.

The recommendation for a place-based flexible service model (as above) will allow best practice elements including specialist DFV workers and *Staying Home Leaving Violence* to continue in a needs-based and client-centred way while making improvements where needed.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia has three **safe houses** located in Western NSW - Lightning Ridge, Walgett and Brewarrina. These Safe Houses operate as crisis centres and assist women and children escaping family and domestic violence and homelessness, with a focus on Aboriginal women. In addition, we provide transitional accommodation for women and families who have been through the Safe House program and cannot return home.

Yaralla in Central Sydney provides 23 one bedroom units and Mission Australia provides case management support. The program caters for women over 35 who have generally been homeless for more than 12 months. Presenting issues include: domestic and family violence; untreated co-morbid health issues (such as poor physical health, mental illness, diabetes); alcohol, other drug and gambling addictions; and family breakdown. Women stay for 6 months or more until they can be supported into long term housing options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

33. *That the NSW Government revise contracting and funding arrangements to allow for enhanced flexibility of service provision within SHS Program contracts to meet the needs of women and children escaping domestic and family violence.*

34. *That the NSW Government extend the coverage of 'safe at home' programs.*

35. *That the NSW Government maintain and extend coordinated prevention and response strategies with other agencies including police, courts and education, and enhance its focus on addressing underlying gender discrimination.*

36. *That the NSW Government continue and expand good practice Men's Behaviour Change Programs.*

2.3 Aboriginal people and homelessness

We recognise the efforts of the NSW Government in identifying Aboriginal people as a key cohort in strategies to reduce homelessness, including through the recent funding of the Far West Homeless Youth Assistance Program under the HYAP funding stream, as part of which Mission Australia will work closely with local Aboriginal groups to ensure that appropriate services are delivered.

Mission Australia is a signatory to the ACOSS *Principles for a partnership-centred approach*,[27] which set out the importance of working collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including working together on the design and delivery of any activities to be implemented.

Mission Australia supports developments in thinking around the co-design of services, which allows communities to be co-constructors of responses to local issues and moves away from treating them as passive recipients of services. It also allows a local, culturally-specific response to community issues, which can vary widely across geographic and family boundaries. Mission Australia supports further exploration of co-design work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around NSW to determine needed and appropriate services and other responses at a local level.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia's **Going Places** program in Cairns involves homeless outreach which moves long-term homeless people into sustainable housing. This program works with significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders clients.

For every $1 invested, the government saves $5.10 in public services no longer required. The savings reflect reduced need for crisis accommodation, incarceration, court proceedings, police time, diversionary services, time in hospital, and participants being able to support their own children amongst other benefits.

Mission Australia also suggests the following approaches:

- There is a need for priority place-based investment in housing supply and transitional accommodation to address overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities and regional centres.
- Governments should continue to build the capacity of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers and deliver the additional housing required through these organisations either directly or in

partnership with other providers where desirable. Housing can be effectively sustained where community members are engaged in tenancy management and maintenance activities.[28]

- Homeless services that work with Aboriginal people need to be culturally appropriate and tailored to local needs, including being staffed by Aboriginal people and other staff with high levels of cultural competence and cooperating with local Aboriginal organisations.
- Housing first approaches should be supported to provide stability and wrap around supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of homelessness and significantly reduce long-term health, justice and social support costs to government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

37. *That the NSW Government continue to build the capacity of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers and deliver additional housing to address overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities and regional centres through these organisations.*

2.4 Older people and homelessness

Policies around retirement incomes, home ownership, housing affordability and secure tenure should be reviewed in order to prevent homelessness in older age, with a particular focus on older people who do not own their own home.[29]

A higher proportion of new social and affordable housing should incorporate universal design standards, to reflect the increasing numbers of tenants with access needs and improve opportunities to age in place.

Those people who are homeless or formerly homeless with high levels of frailty, co-morbidity or complex needs may need residential aged care. Construction of one new homeless aged care service every year would generate a pipeline of new places for older people who have been chronically homeless.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia manages specialised aged care facilities that offer a permanent response to the needs of elderly vulnerable people who would otherwise be homeless or living in substandard accommodation. This includes **Charles Chambers Court** in Surry Hills, **Annie Green Court** in Redfern and **Benjamin Short Grove** which is currently under construction in Orange. Charles Chambers Court is a fully accredited aged care facility for men and women who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

It provides personalised, safe, secure accommodation and care for men and women who are vulnerable, homeless, and frail/aged, allowing a high quality and independent lifestyle. Charles Chambers Court has received several awards for high quality service provision since being built in 1998 and provides the model for the other services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

38. That social and affordable housing is developed to allow ageing in place by incorporating universal design standards.

39. That the NSW Government works in cooperation with the Commonwealth to facilitate the construction of one new homeless aged care services per year to meet growing demand across NSW.

2.5 Rough sleeping and chronic homelessness

As demonstrated by strong Australian and international evidence, the 'Housing First' model of support services linked to housing is the most effective way to maintain tenancies and improve wellbeing for all cohorts experiencing homelessness. For people with complex needs, including rough sleepers or chronically homeless people, effective Housing First models include:

1.   Purpose-built housing with on-site intensive support (for example, Common Ground in Sydney);
2.   Social housing linked to intensive support (for example, MISHA); or
3.   Private rental housing linked to intensive support (for example, Platform 70 or Connect 100).

Mission Australia believes that:

- Specific Housing First models should be funded to end homelessness for the chronically homeless, saving substantial costs for government as well as delivering strong positive outcomes for vulnerable clients.
- MISHA and Common Ground should be built on as best practice, well-evidenced Housing First models.

Crisis and outreach responses to rough sleeping also need to be adequately funded. Outreach approaches have been used for a number of years to engage rough sleepers with services. Outreach services provide support to people in places where they naturally congregate, rather than requiring people to visit a particular office or location, allowing relationships to be built over time. Outreach services may help to identify relatively new rough sleepers and intervene early before their homelessness becomes chronic. The HART service, outlined in *Section 1.2.4 Strengthening collaboration*, has been successfully delivering outreach services to rough sleepers in Sydney. Other outreach services, including Mission Australia's Missionbeat (which is a partner in HART), have worked with rough sleepers for many years.

Mission Australia also recognises the recent contributions of the pop-up FACS-Housing office program held at various locations across Sydney.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Missionbeat has been serving Sydney's homeless for 35 years. The service works in close collaboration with other services and government and non-government agencies to help break the cycle of homelessness. Missionbeat patrols inner Sydney streets seeking out those in distress and offering them support. The iconic vans transport homeless men, women, children, families and intoxicated or drug affected men and women to

services to meet their immediate needs, including safe accommodation, medical care, food and clothing or, as a last resort, provide a blanket or a street swag. The Missionbeat vans use the Mission Australia radio network to connect people with services – whether it's calling a nurse to treat and dress an infected wound, transport them to a shelter or contacting emergency services for crisis support. Missionbeat responds to public calls for help as well as calls from police, ambulance, community services and government departments.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are the barriers to housing and support providers working together to support a Housing First approach for people sleeping rough?
Mission Australia's experience in delivering Housing First services indicates that developing effective tenancy protocols and channels of communication with housing providers from the start of the program is important in ensuring a smooth working relationship between the housing and support provider. This particularly includes protocols for notifying the service provider of any rental arrears. Additionally, for the service provider, relationships with existing service networks should be established before service provision starts.[30]

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Where are there opportunities to identify people who are sleeping rough and intervene earlier to stop the problem becoming chronic?
Mission Australia supports the Registry Week approach[31], which uses the Vulnerability Index & Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) to assess vulnerability and triage people based on their needs. The tool includes a question on how long people have been homeless for

(rough sleeping or in emergency accommodation), which could be used to identify those who are new rough sleepers and therefore appropriate for an early intervention approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

40. *That the NSW Government fund and support the expansion of specific Housing First models for rough sleepers and the chronically homeless, including the Common Ground model, incorporating funding for both housing and dedicated support services.*

41. *That the Registry Week approach, including assessment of vulnerability and triaging of people based on their need, is implemented annually and expanded to other needed areas in NSW.*

2.6 Mental illness and homelessness

Stable housing and tenancy support

Stable housing is critical to people's mental wellbeing. Poor mental health can lead to homelessness and difficulty sustaining employment. On the other hand, unstable housing can deteriorate mental wellbeing.[32]

Community based supports need to be strengthened to support people living with mental illness to function in the community and continue the process of deinstitutionalisation. A continuum of support needs to be provided for people living with mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, with different models addressing the different intensity of needs among clients.

Several existing programs across this continuum have been shown to have strong positive outcomes for people experiencing mental illness in terms of housing and wellbeing, including the Personal Helpers and Mentors service (PHaMs), Partners in Recovery, the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI), HASI Plus, and the Enhanced Adult Community Living Support (EACLS) program, and should be expanded to provide support to a greater proportion of those in need.

One of the benefits of the EACLS model is that it offers flexible hours of support based on need instead of a set package allocation (such as those offered by HASI or PHaMs). Flexibility in delivery hours ensures that individualised care is linked directly to a client's changing levels of need as assessed by the clients, their clinical professionals, and the EACLS support team, and is critical to meeting the needs of people whose illness may be episodic in nature.

Mission Australia's experience in delivering these programs also suggests that systemic collaboration is vital to good service delivery. For example, one of the reasons that HASI Plus works so well is the collaboration between the program staff and local Community Mental Health Teams. We note that good relationships between agencies are important but are not sufficient by themselves to ensure that services work well together. Mission Australia encourages the Government to build systemic collaboration into future funding agreements to ensure that formal collaborative relationships have a strong basis for establishment.

We also note that one of the reasons that HASI Plus works effectively in metro regions is the ability to access after-hours outpatient clinical support. In rural and some regional areas, such access for clients and support workers is not available. For HASI Plus to be truly effective in rural or regional settings, the Government needs to bolster local infrastructure or provide other solutions to this issue.

Trauma-informed care

Trauma is both a cause and consequence of homelessness. According to a range of studies within Australian homelessness services, the rate of reported exposure to at least one incident of trauma is between 91-100%.[33]

Homelessness services need to engage in trauma-sensitive practice which requires practitioners to be knowledgeable about trauma and also takes the likely concentration of complex trauma as the starting point for service delivery. Routine use of screening tools for trauma should be incorporated and links should be provided to trauma-specific services.[34]

More broadly, political commitment is required to address the root causes of trauma including racial inequality, gender inequity and poverty and to prevent traumatic events such as domestic violence, childhood abuse and neglect and intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities.[35]

We encourage the Government to mandate training in trauma-informed care for people working with those experiencing homelessness, and require the development of trauma-informed policies and procedures for the NGO sector in funding agreements.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Douglas House is a Cairns based, 22 bed supported accommodation facility, working with individuals who have experienced long term chronic homelessness. Prior to being accommodated, many of the Douglas House residents were excluded from other services, with frequent hospital presentations, mental health facilities and they were in regular contact with police for minor offences.

Douglas House works from a trauma informed framework, which incorporates recovery, oriented practice, strengths based and individually tailored approaches. Douglas House recognises the social, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of its residents.

Hoarding and squalor

Hoarding and squalor are complex and significant issue for people affected by them, and can place people at serious risk of homelessness through eviction. Responsibility for the issue among Government agencies is unclear, as it crosses the remit of a number of agencies including FACS, Health and Fair Trading.

Mission Australia has recently completed a FACS-funded pilot intervention to address hoarding disorder and squalor across the central and eastern Sydney region. The Room to Grow pilot program

addressed the physical, cognitive and psychological factors contributing to situations of severe domestic squalor and hoarding disorder, thereby reducing the risk of tenancy loss. An evaluation of the program has demonstrated the effectiveness of the interventions in enabling the participants to maintain their tenancies. We recommend that a hoarding and squalor program be implemented to fill the current gap in the homelessness prevention system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

42. *That the NSW Government build flexible delivery hours into future funding agreements for mental health services in order to best support people experiencing episodic mental illness.*

43. *That the NSW Government provide mandatory training in trauma-informed care for staff in the homelessness sector, as well as relevant staff in mainstream service systems, and include trauma-informed policies/procedures in a good practice framework as a component of future homelessness funding agreements.*

44. *That the NSW Government implement a hoarding and squalor program as a homelessness prevention initiative.*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What needs to change to stop people living with mental illness from becoming homeless because of the episodic nature of their illness?
As noted above, flexible hours of delivery are a critical component of working with people whose mental illness may be episodic, and this should be built into future funding agreements.

Mission Australia is also concerned that some clients of community mental health programs which are transitioning into the NDIS (such as the Commonwealth-funded Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) program) will be ineligible for assistance through the NDIS as they hope to (and in many cases will) recover from their mental health condition. Indeed, the effectiveness of these programs comes from their explicit recovery focus, which contrasts with the NDIS' explicit focus on permanent disability.

Mission Australia is also concerned that these issues in the transition to the NDIS may have unplanned impacts on people with mental health issues who are likely to 'fall through the gaps'.

As is the case for hoarding and squalor as outlined above, we are concerned that there is a lack of a clear 'owner' within and between governments for this issue. The confusion around accountability for this issue is, from our experience, preventing the size and seriousness of this issue being identified and resolved.

This situation, if not speedily resolved, will cause a rise in the number of people with mental illness in the community with no support and thus at high risk of homelessness. Accordingly, the State has a role to play in working with the Commonwealth to resolve issues around the NDIS transition and ensure that people with an episodic mental illness do not fall through the gaps of service provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

45. *That the NSW Government work cooperatively with the Commonwealth Government to resolve issues around the NDIS transition and ensure that people with an episodic mental illness do not fall through the gaps of service provision.*

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can the mental health system better keep people at risk of homelessness engaged with their support?

Recovery oriented practice

Mission Australia's Recovery Oriented Practice Framework 2016 sets out our approach to supporting people in our mental health programs, and is focused on person-led recovery model.

Recovery refers to the process through which people are able to live, work, learn and participate in their communities. For some, recovery is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite the presence of mental illness. The process of recovery is unique to each individual and encompasses life experiences, circumstances, abilities, interests, aspirations and internal and external resources. .

The framework outlines Mission Australia's approach to recovery oriented, person led practice across all our mental health programs in order to provide high quality collaborative support. These practices emphasise the importance of self-determination and choice by each individual with a lived experience of mental illness, their families and friends and others that support them. The framework provides a set of core principles that underpin Mission Australia's recovery oriented practice, provides guidance about recovery models used within service delivery and articulates how recovery language is used across our organisation. Importantly, Mission Australia's commitment to expanding a peer workforce will enhance our capacity to support people with mental illness.

Assertive outreach

Assertive outreach is another important practice model for keeping people engaged with their support. Rather than expecting people to attend services at dispersed venues, taking services to where they are will encourage greater attendance and engagement. The provision of well-qualified support workers in multi-disciplinary teams (social workers, psychologists, nurses and peer support workers, etc) will further support this.

RECOMMENDATIONS
> 46. *That the NSW Government use recovery oriented principles to inform the development of service models for people with a mental illness who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.*

2.7 People with disability and homelessness

There is a need for better integration of disability and homelessness services and a more holistic approach that also considers employment, socialisation and other needs of the individual, [36] that recognises where the impairment is severe the client may need intensive and ongoing support.

There is also an undersupply of housing that is appropriate to the needs of people with various disabilities, affordable on their incomes and of a decent quality.[37] The goals of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are jeopardised by the absence of a plan to enable recipients to achieve secure, safe and appropriate housing; this should be an urgent priority.

Mission Australia has observed a huge expectation from people with disability and their families that the NDIS will provide them with housing, and there is demonstrably a huge need to be met. However, it is largely unclear at this point as to how housing will be provided to NDIS participants, and greater information and clarity is required so that the NGO sector (housing, disability, homelessness) as well as people with a disability and their carers and advocates can plan for the future. For those who are not eligible for NDIS, the picture is even less clear. It is likely that the social housing sector will need to continue to provide a safety net, but the lack of information and clarity makes it difficult to plan needed services.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

The **Common Ground** model focusses on those formerly homeless individuals that 'fall through the cracks' and require a high need for support in conjunction with permanent housing.

This includes clients with significant cognitive impairment. This permanent housing provides stability for the individual, whilst onsite support from both housing and case management enhances opportunities for personal improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

47. *That the NSW Government develop appropriate mechanisms for better integration between disability, housing and homelessness services.*

2.8 Leaving prison and homelessness

As noted in Section 2.1 *Children and young people in relation to out-of-home care*, preventing involvement in the out-of-home care system will assist in preventing homelessness. Taking a justice reinvestment approach will help to promote local, community-based prevention and early intervention responses that address multiple risk factors for crime, and divert people from becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This is particularly important for vulnerable young people, who are over-represented in the criminal justice system including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Justice reinvestment recognises that tough on crime approaches have resulted in increased numbers of people in detention and skyrocketing costs socially as well as economically. Instead funding is diverted to address the underlying issues including homelessness, child protection, disability, high-risk drug and alcohol use, violence, poverty and a lack of appropriate services.

For people who do become involved in the criminal justice system, the following issues should be addressed:

- Early intervention and diversionary programs such as Youth on Track should be supported and expanded to prevent the compounding disadvantages of imprisonment in appropriate cases.
- 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.[38]

- Legal advice such as the free advice provided by community legal services and Shopfront youth legal centre is important to help people understand their rights and assist them with criminal and civil matters. Mission Australia is a signatory to the National Legal Aid Centre's *Legal Aid Matters* campaign, which calls for adequate funding for legal assistance services.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia supports and is a partner in the **Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project**, the first major justice reinvestment trial in Australia, based in the Bourke community in north-west NSW.

A preliminary assessment by KPMG has found that the justice reinvestment approach is strategically aligned with NSW and Australian government justice, early intervention and Indigenous policies designed to prevent social problems and crime and promote Indigenous self-governance. Compared with other crime prevention approaches, the justice reinvestment approach was found to be promising and have the potential to address underlying causes of crime and taken a data-driven and community-led approach.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What exit planning strategies and support partners need to be involved to stop people leaving prisons into homelessness?

Mission Australia supports efforts to provide stronger planning for those exiting prison so that they are not exited into homelessness. We suggest a service model that includes pre- and post-release case management, referral to local and specialist service providers, material support (by way of brokerage), aftercare support and options for the inclusion of Peer Mentoring and AOD Counselling and Support Services. The service should begin 8-12 weeks prior to release, and continue for the two years following release. It should include:

- Individualised support provided to program participants post-release for two years, based on personal needs and circumstances as well as ongoing risk assessment (including of criminogenic factors and known offending behaviours).
- Programming that responds (in intensity and types of support) to:
    - The principles of the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model of offender rehabilitation;
    - Match the proven statistical patterns of reoffending behaviour and activity; and
    - Focus on accommodation, relationships/support networks and employment/education participation, as well as fulfilling parole requirements.
- Collaboration and partnerships:
    - With local and specialist service providers to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach to supporting individual pathways to independence and desistence from criminal activity; and
    - To complement and align with supports provided by Corrections NSW District Offices (post-release) and other relevant agencies.
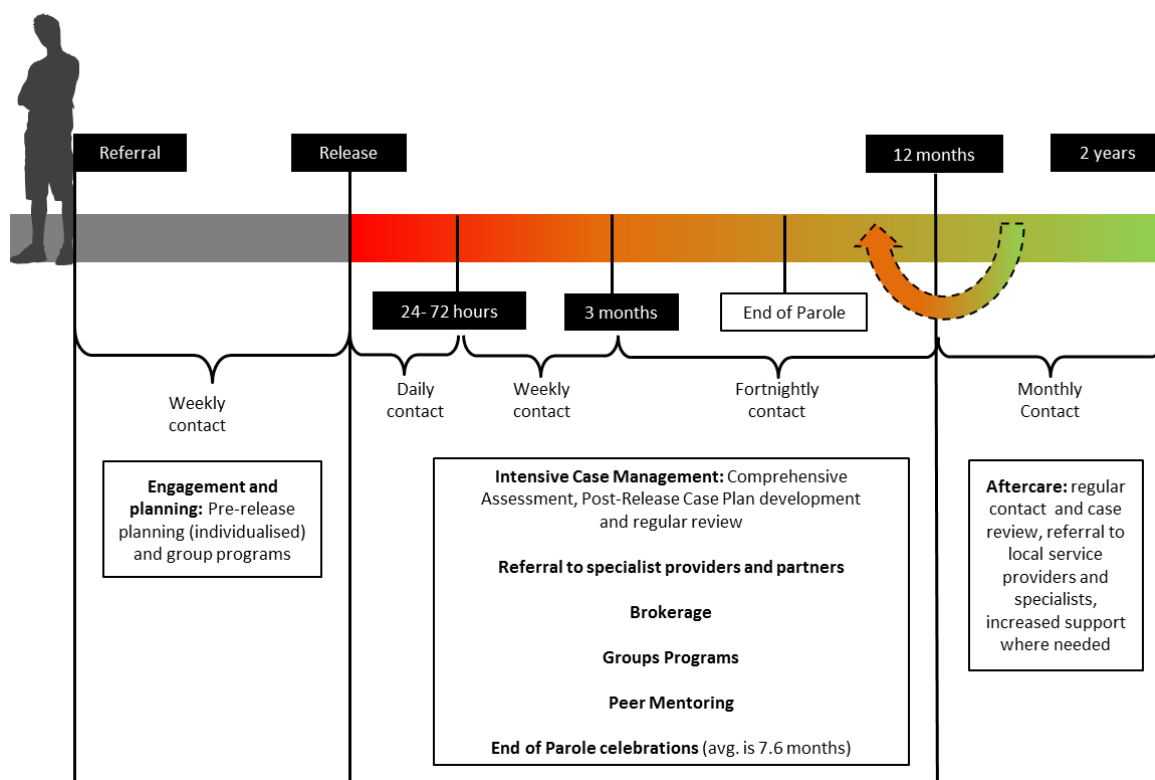
Figure 2. Suggested service model, post-release program

RECOMMENDATIONS

48. *That the NSW Government:*
    - *Expand justice reinvestment and diversionary approaches to keep people from entering the criminal justice system; and*
    - *Prevent exits from justice and juvenile justice facilities into homelessness through better exit planning and pre- and post-release reintegration programs.*

49. *That the NSW Government advocate to the Commonwealth to ensure adequate funding for legal aid services.*

2.9 Culturally and linguistically diverse communities and homelessness

2.9.1 CALD communities
The following should be addressed in efforts to prevent homelessness among CALD communities:
- Urban planning for new social and affordable housing should incorporate demand from CALD communities, particularly where there is severe overcrowding which is spatially concentrated, and reflect the location and kind of housing required.
- Service providers should link to cultural and community groups as these are often the first to know agencies and can offer their cultural knowledge and identify vulnerability.
- Services available to prevent homelessness should also be promoted amongst CALD communities to increase early access.
- Person-centred approaches should be adopted that include culture as a key factor and organisations should endeavour to hire and recruit staff who reflect the cohort in terms of culture, language and religion.

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia Housing (MAH) has built effective partnerships with culturally specific services and recruited staff to mirror the cultural diversity in the regions where tenancies are managed. For example, in Blacktown, there is a strong partnership in place with the **United Muslim Women Association (UMWA)**. The Association provides a wide range of services such as counselling, information and referrals, advocacy and crisis accommodation. MAH began a partnership with UMWA back in 2010; since then, over twenty women have been housed in MAH properties in South Western Sydney, with support being provided by UMWA.

2.9.2 Refugees and asylum seekers

Mission Australia's recommended approach to this group focuses on the following:

- Settlement, youth, health and housing services should be better coordinated and a more holistic approach taken to refugee and asylum seekers' needs.[39] Adequately resourced casework models can improve support to refugees and asylum seekers.[40]
- Services need to be culturally aware and appropriate, sensitive to gender issues within this context and take a trauma-informed approach.
- Prevention and early intervention efforts should address the risk of family breakdown, which is significant amongst this group.
- Current work and study restrictions on asylum seekers need to be relaxed, as they result in many being unable to afford safe and stable housing and being pushed into overcrowded situations.
- Targeted programs such as AMEP and SEE improve language, literacy and numeracy and in turn increase participation in training and employment and should be extended.

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Mission Australia's **Home Tutor Scheme** provides an individualized and personalized tutorial service to newly arrived adult migrants, 18 and over, to help them learn the basics of the English language. The service is provided by trained volunteers on a one to one basis, generally in the client's home.

The Enhancement Program provides support to community groups such as libraries, schools, ethnic associations and churches to set up and run English language classes for migrants no longer eligible for the Home Tutor Scheme. In 2013-14 Mission Australia supported 84 partners across 6 contract regions to provide informal ESL classes and workshops.

2.10 Veterans and homelessness

As noted in *Section 2.6 Mental illness and homelessness*, the provision of trauma-informed care is a critical component of service delivery to people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. This is likely to be particularly true of military veterans, many of whom may have been diagnosed with PTSD or to have witnessed or been part of traumatic events. Mission Australia does not operate any services that are specifically for veterans, but have veterans in many of our homelessness services. Our services are increasingly working from a trauma-informed framework to help this group.

We encourage the Government to cooperate closely with the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs to ensure that needed services are provided to veterans.

Mission Australia supports the commissioning of research by the NSW Department of Veterans Affairs into the causes of homelessness among war veterans, which will support the development of policy in this area.

2.11 Additional cohorts

In addition to the groups identified in the discussion paper, Mission Australia also believes that two other cohorts are at higher risk of homelessness and should be considered for priority responses: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and gender Questioning (LGBTIQ) people, and people with substance abuse issues.

2.11.1 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and gender Questioning (LGBTIQ)

LGBTIQ people are over-represented in homeless populations due to both the complexity of their experiences and difficulty accessing services. In the 2014 General Social Survey, gay or lesbian people and people with 'other' sexual orientations were more likely to report at least one past experience of homelessness (34% and 21% respectively) compared with heterosexual people (13%).[41]

Mission Australia believes that:
- Safe and secure accommodation is required to assist homeless LGBTIQ people including crisis, transitional, medium and long term options.[42]
- Homelessness services need to understand and be sensitive to the specific issues faced by LGBTIQ people. A holistic and wraparound approach is also required to address complex needs.
- Service providers need to demonstrate a commitment to equality and acceptance and LGBTIQ people need to be involved in the development and implementation of programs that can assist them.[43]

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Roma House is a 31 bed temporary accommodation service for people experiencing homelessness that provides trauma informed care. The trauma informed model aims to create a respectful, safe and supportive model for all including the provision of enhanced privacy where possible. People who identify as transgender are placed in the male or female dorm on the basis of the gender they identify as without judgment based on physical characteristics, even when people are newly transitioning.

2.11.2 People with substance abuse issues

Prevalence rates of substance use disorders among homeless persons exceed general population estimates and co-morbidity (co-occurrence) of substance use and other mental disorders is common.[44] 25 per cent of drug and alcohol assistance needs identified by specialist homelessness services were unmet in 2013-14.[45] Substance abuse can be a cause of homelessness for some people and a response to prolonged homelessness for others.[46]

We recognise the significant funding allocated to Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) issues in the NSW Drug Package, which will provide $26.5 million over four years to make sure that people get the treatment they need.

Mission Australia believes that:

- Where individuals are treated for their drug and alcohol issues in an institution such as a hospital, prison, residential program or foster care, they must have a carefully planned transition into the community to ensure they are not exited into homelessness.
- Housing First models that provide stability for a person with substance abuse issues to engage in treatment and integrated service models that approach the risk of homelessness and substance abuse in holistic ways should be developed, funded and implemented.
- Effective rehabilitation and treatment programs such as Mission Australia's Triple Care Farm, Mac River, Junaa Buwa! and Drug and Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS) should be supported as successful intervention strategies for people with substance abuse issues who are at risk of homelessness.
- Youth-specific detoxification and rehabilitation services should be expanded in NSW to meet growing demand.

What works

An example from Mission Australia's service delivery experience

Triple Care Farm (TCF) is a residential Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) rehabilitation and treatment program for young people aged between 16 and 24 years. Located on 110 acres in the NSW Southern Highlands, TCF is a national service receiving referrals Australia-wide which has been operating for more than 20 years.

The program specialises in treating young people with co-morbid mental illness and drug and alcohol problems. The treatment model is a holistic psychosocial rehabilitation program based on harm minimisation and health promotion. A recent social return on investment (SROI) showed $3 of value created for every $1 invested.

Junaa Buwa! is a residential rehabilitation program on the NSW North Coast for young people aged 13-18 from across NSW. The young people in the program are all clients of NSW Juvenile Justice with a history of significant alcohol and other drug abuse and offending behaviour. Junaa Buwa! provides a six-month treatment program which includes three months of holistic residential rehabilitation followed by three months of aftercare supporting young people in their transition back into the community. The residential treatment program includes case management, counseling, AOD treatment, behaviour management, living skills and education via a partnership with Southern Cross University. A dedicated early intervention program, the Junaa Buwa! AOD Outreach Program works with eight local schools on the Mid-North Coast of NSW to provide case management and referrals for young people identified by the school as being at risk of substance

RECOMMENDATIONS

> 50. *That the NSW Government extend current alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation programs to meet need.*

Attachments

Attachment A   Mission Australia Outcomes Hierarchy
Attachment B   Overview of Mission Australia's approach to measuring outcomes
Attachment C   MISHA Project snapshot July 2014

End notes

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MISSION AUSTRALIA

We contribute to

Reducing homelessness & strengthening communities by:

Reducing entry into homelessness • Increasing exits out of homelessness • Maintaining stable housing • Building strong communities

People & communities are

| Healthy | Safe | Developing and achieving | Connected and participating | Experiencing economic wellbeing | Housed | Inclusive and cohesive | Supported and resourced |

Independence is gained through

Self-efficacy and optimism → **An increased sense of:** Confidence and fulfilment → **Participation and inclusion**

Our services facilitate

| Improved physical and mental health | People feel safe | People are able to access employment & education | Individuals and families experience strong social networks | People have good financial management | People can access and maintain housing | Opportunities for people to come together and develop relationships | Partnerships are made to meet people's needs |
| Satisfactory physical and mental health | Individuals, families and communities are safe | People are skilled and confident | There are positive connections between people, families & community | People can afford the essentials in life | Housing is affordable and appropriate | People have a sense of belonging | People have access to appropriate services |

Our clients experience

We know we are successful when:

An increase in self reported subjective wellbeing	Improved perceptions of safety	Increased satisfaction with what they are achieving	Increased satisfaction with personal relationships	An increase in self reported perceptions of standard of living	Housing costs at an acceptable level	Satisfaction with being part of the community	Positive relationships with our services
An increase in perceptions of health	Homes are free of violence	Participation in education or employment	Living in functioning families	Having enough money to meet their needs	Living in stable accommodation	Opportunities to participate in decisions and governance	Timely access to services
Increased awareness and understanding of own mental health or AOD issues	High levels of trust; with their family, friends, community and services	High quality Early Childhood Education and Care	Living a satisfactory distance from family, friends & cultural networks	A reduction in rental stress	Living in housing which is adequate for their needs	Community events inc. volunteering	An increase in self reported coping

We measure this through:

Mission Australia surveys • Strengthening communities: wellbeing check • Reducing homelessness: wellbeing check

Attachment B
Overview: Mission Australia's approach to measuring outcomes

Mission Australia has drawn on the findings of Australian and international research, as well as its own service experience, to develop an Outcomes Hierarchy (at **Attachment A**). The Outcomes Hierarchy, based on our theory of change, sets out what we believe to be the key indicators for reducing homelessness and strengthening communities, and recognises the importance of measuring both housing and non-housing outcomes. The primary indicators of success for Mission Australia are:

1. Reducing entry into homelessness;
2. Increasing exits out of homelessness;
3. Maintaining stable housing; and
4. Building strong communities.

These are supported by a range of secondary outcomes for communities, services and clients that are broadly focused on self-efficacy and optimism, confidence and fulfilment, and participation and inclusion, as shown below in Table 1:

Table 1. Secondary indicators of successful service provision, Mission Australia Outcomes Hierarchy

People and communities are:	Our services facilitate:		Our clients experience:		
Housed	Housing is affordable and appropriate	People can access and maintain housing	Housing costs at an acceptable level	Living in stable accommodation	Living in housing which is adequate for their needs
Healthy	Satisfactory physical and mental health	Improved physical and mental health	An increase in self-reported subjective wellbeing	An increase in perceptions of health	Increased awareness and understanding of own mental health or AOD issues
Safe	Individuals, families and communities are safe	People feel safe	Improved perceptions of safety	Homes are free of violence	High levels of trust, with family, friends, community and services
Developing and achieving	People are skilled and confident	People are able to access employment & education	Increased satisfaction with what they are achieving	Participation in education or employment	High quality Early Childhood Education and Care
Connected and participating	There are positive connections between people, families and community	Individuals and families experience strong social networks	Increased satisfaction with personal relationships	Living in functioning families	Living a satisfactory distance from family, friends & cultural networks
Experiencing economic	People can afford the	People have good financial	An increase in self-reported	Having enough money to meet	A reduction in rental stress

wellbeing	essentials in life	management	perceptions of standard of living	their needs	
Inclusive and cohesive	People have a sense of belonging	Opportunities for people to come together and develop relationships	Satisfaction with being part of the community	Opportunities to participate in decisions and governance	Community events incl volunteering
Supported and resourced	People have access to appropriate services	Partnerships are made to meet people's needs	Positive relationships with our services	Timely access to services	An increase in self-reported coping

MA's Outcomes Hierarchy is broadly consistent with the interim NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework, as indicated in Table 2 below. Mission Australia encourages the Government to consult extensively with the sector on the inclusion of appropriate homelessness indicators in the FACS Social Housing Outcomes Framework to ensure alignment between government and sector outcomes measures.

Table 2. Mapping outcome domains, NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework and Mission Australia Outcomes Hierarchy

NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework outcome domain	NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework key indicator	Mission Australia Outcomes Hierarchy outcome domain
Social & community	All people in NSW are able to participate and feel culturally and socially connected	Connected and participating
Empowerment	All people and communities in NSW are able to contribute to decision making that affects them and live fulfilling lives	Inclusive and cohesive
Safety	All people in NSW are able to be safe	Safe
Home	All people in NSW are able to have a safe and affordable place to live	Housed
Education & skills	All people in NSW are able to learn, contribute and achieve	Developing and achieving
Economic	All people in NSW are able to contribute to, and benefit from, our economy	Experiencing economic wellbeing
Health	All people in NSW are able to live a healthy life	Healthy
(N/A)		Supported and resourced

Mission Australia is committed to understanding the outcomes for clients who receive our services, as well as the overall impact we make in reaching our goal of reducing homelessness and strengthening communities. Accordingly, we have developed an Impact Measurement program based on our Outcomes Hierarchy and are currently in the process of rolling it out across the organisation. The program which works alongside the data collection requirements of funders (such as FACS for the SHS Program), helps us understand our clients' concerns and issues when they enter our services as well as how they change over time. The foundation of our data collection is the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) [i] which is a measure of life satisfaction as a whole and includes the domains of satisfaction with standard of living, health, achievements, relationships, safety, being

part of the community and future security. We then further supplement this with service-specific outcome measures.

The data from the Impact Measurement program will inform Mission Australia on appropriate service design, performance and outcomes measures as we work to our goals of reducing homelessness and strengthening communities.

End notes

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MISSION AUSTRALIA | **together we stand**

A home at last

Tenancy achievements from a housing first homelessness program

Research group: Kaylene Zaretzky, Elizabeth Conroy, Marlee Bower, Paul Flatau and Lucy Burns
The University of Western Australia, the University of Western Sydney and the University of New South Wales.

Executive summary

The MISHA project provided housing support and wrap around services to a group of 74 men who, prior to entering the project, were chronically homeless. The project was provided by Mission Australia and was made possible by philanthropic funding. This study examines housing outcomes, and the costs and benefits associated with achieving these outcomes.

The study found that:

- 97% of clients were still living in their properties 12 months after being housed;

- savings generated to housing providers due to reduced evictions were estimated at **$1,880 per client** in the first 12 months of the client being housed;

- the total net savings to housing providers generated by providing tenancy support services to 74 MISHA clients over a one year period were estimated at **$138,880**;

- case workers played a crucial role helping clients sustain tenancies through educating clients about their responsibilities as a tenant, advocating on behalf of clients to address tenancy issues, acting as an intermediary to facilitate communication between the client and social housing provider and assisting clients to work through their substance use and other mental health problems;

Providing tenancy support services can substantially improve tenancy retention rates for clients who have been chronically homeless and, in addition, can generate considerable net savings to housing providers.

The outcomes, along with a broader costing analysis of the MISHA project in the areas of health and justice, will be released as part of the final MISHA report in 2014.

Assessing tenancy outcomes for MISHA clients

This report examines three key questions related to tenancy outcomes for MISHA clients:

- How successful were the MISHA clients in retaining their tenancies over a 12 month period?

- Were net savings generated to housing providers from the provision of tenancy support services to a group of clients who, prior to being housed, were classified as chronically homeless?

- What were the key factors that lead to tenancy success and failure?

The MISHA project

Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord (MISHA) project was an innovative homeless men's service that links men experiencing homelessness in the Parramatta area of Sydney to long-term, stable accommodation while supporting them to rebuild their lives.

The MISHA service delivery model was based on Assertive Case Management, Supported Housing and Housing First principles: facilitating access to permanent housing on the part of clients and providing a holistic service delivery approach that included both psycho-social and economic supports to improve well-being and ensure that housing accessed could best be sustained.

The MISHA project built on the already strong links and knowledge developed through the Michael Project[1] on the effectiveness of integrated approaches for clients with multiple needs, and the feasibility (in terms of relative costs and benefits) of providing these services. Both the Michael and MISHA projects were made possible by the generous support of a philanthropist and provided by Mission Australia.

The MISHA clients

The MISHA clients were formerly chronically homeless men. Their average age was 46 years, 9 per cent identified as Indigenous Australian, 5 per cent were married or in a de facto relationship and 48 per cent had children. The majority were considered not in the labour force (52%); a further 23 per cent were classified as marginally attached to the labour force, 16 per cent were unemployed and just 9 per cent were employed. Approximately a third had left school before Year 10 (32%), a third had completed Year 10 (38%) and a third had completed Year 11/12. Eighteen per cent self-reported a moderate serious problem with drinking and 12 per cent self-reported a moderate-serious problem with drug use in the month prior to entering the MISHA project.

Housing history

The MISHA clients had extensive homelessness histories, with approximately a quarter (25%) first becoming homeless before they were 18 years of age and a further 16 per cent first homeless between 18 and 24 years of age. Three quarters of the sample had a history of sleeping rough and 31% were sleeping rough at the time they were accepted into the project. Additionally, some participants had also been blacklisted and barred from accommodation services in the past (5%) or else had been barred from private rental (10%) and public housing (4%).

Housing providers were approached by Mission Australia on behalf of the men to make available housing, on the understanding that the men would pay the normal rent from their fortnightly benefits, while being supported by Mission Australia.

The success of MISHA in sustaining tenancies for chronically homeless men

As mentioned, the majority of MISHA clients had longstanding histories of homelessness. To sustain tenancies in this context, it was necessary for case managers to invest considerable time and effort in educating clients about the importance of paying rent, maintaining their homes in good order and keeping on top of household bills.

Of the 74 men housed, only one was evicted during the first 12 months of being housed, and one lost his tenancy due to incarceration. The remaining MISHA clients (97%) kept their housing during the first year of support. This finding is similar to that of the Brisbane Street to Home Project, which found that 95 per cent of chronic rough sleepers remained housed at 12 months (Parsell et al, 2013). Given the profile of MISHA clients, this represents a very high rate of success in sustaining tenancies.

The benefits and cost of tenancy support

The costing analysis examines the cost to housing providers of providing the MISHA program to clients in the first 12 months of clients being housed.

The benefits associated with tenancy support are generated through the reduced incidence of tenancy issues and evictions. There is limited data on tenancy retention rates for the chronically homeless, particularly where there is no case management support attached to those tenancies. Zaretzky et al. (2013) found that where men who accessed supported accommodation services had previously been in a public tenancy, the eviction rate in the previous 12 months was 50 per cent. Zaretzky et al. also provided a conservative estimate of the average cost per eviction from a public housing tenancy of $4,800. This included costs such as lost rent, damage repairs, legal costs and housing provider time. This suggests that if the MISHA clients had been provided with public and community housing, but no support services, 50% would have been evicted in the first year, with the cost to housing providers from evictions estimated at around $177,600. No figures are available to determine the likelihood of abandonment or tenancies ending due to imprisonment, however if support were not provided it is likely that these types of events would result in additional costs for housing providers.

The actual cost of failed MISHA tenancies was considerably lower than it could have been if no support were provided. The total cost to housing providers of the 2 failed tenancy events that occurred in the first 12 months of tenants being housed was estimated at $4,420 ($2,210/event on average). The eviction event had a relatively low estimated cost to housing providers of $960, due to rent outstanding, while the tenancy terminated due to incarceration is estimated to have

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1 The Michael Project provided assertive case management and wrap-around specialist services (such as podiatry, dentistry and counselling) to men accessing accommodation & support services across Sydney.

cost $3,460 (predominantly from lost rent while in prison). The total cost of these 2 failed tenancies is considerably lower than what would likely be incurred if these men were housed without support, with potential savings to housing providers of $173,180 ($2,340/ person) estimated in this first 12 months of the 74 men being housed. Across the system, this represents an offset to the cost of support.

The costs associated with tenancy support were comprised of the MISHA case manager time spent on tenancy management support. Considering only the direct cost of case manager time spent with clients; over the 12 month period case manager time spent on tenancy management issues was calculated at approximately 10.5 hours per client on average, with an associated cost of approximately $460 per client, or $34,300 across all clients. Therefore, the cost of direct tenancy management support is substantially lower than the potential savings associated with improved housing outcomes, resulting in an overall net saving of $138,880, or $1,880 per client.

In reality, without support very few chronically homelessness men are able to access public or community housing, with none of the current cohort reporting having a public tenancy in the 12 months prior to receiving support from MISHA, and only three were in community housing.

The positive housing outcomes are also likely to be associated with support provided to clients to address issues not categorised as tenancy management, such as mental health and/or substance use issues. Even when all case manager time spent with clients is considered (i.e. tenancy support and other case manger support) the total cost of this time is estimated at approximately $152,600 over the year ($2,060/person), which is still lower than the estimated potential savings from improved housing outcomes.

Summary of savings and costs associated with tenancy support

	Estimated cost of failed tenancies if no case worker support		Cost with case manager support	Net savings
	$ (per client)		$ (per client)	$ (per client)
Scenario 1	(1)		(2)	(1-2)
Case manager time: tenancy support only	177,600 (2,400)	Case manager time	34,300 (460)	138,880 (1,880)
		Cost of failed tenancies (2 clients)	4,420 (60)	
Scenario 2				
Case manager time: tenancy support + other support	177,600 (2,400)	Case manager time	152,600 (2,060)	20,580 (280)
		Cost of failed tenancies (2 clients)	4,420 (60)	

The role of MISHA caseworkers in sustaining tenancies

"And so without the support, their chances of being evicted would have been higher because nobody would be there to guide them and just remind them of the importance of the homes that they have - I put it down to the fact that they're on support and that's why their chances of being evicted is very low." [Social Housing Provider]

As noted, all of the MISHA clients had a long-standing history of chronic homelessness and a third of them had been sleeping rough on the streets immediately prior to being housed. This meant that many of the clients had little recent experience of being a tenant. To assist them in their transition from homelessness to housing, each client had access to intensive case management support, which varied depending on need. The following strategies were identified as pivotal in assisting clients to remain housed.

1. Educating the client about their responsibilities as a tenant and developing skills to manage a tenancy

MISHA caseworkers spent a substantial amount of time educating clients about their responsibilities as a tenant. This included advising clients of the importance of paying rent on time, reporting any problems to their housing provider and generally maintaining their property. The social housing providers found this type of support from the caseworkers significantly improved their own ability to manage each tenancy. In particular, it was the consistency and repetition of the message that was seen as effective.

Case study 1

MISHA caseworkers also worked closely with clients to improve their personal living skills, such as financial management. This was readily apparent for Fred. Fred was a chronic rough sleeper whose problems with drinking and aggression had placed his tenancy at risk.

When Fred decided to stop drinking and commit to his tenancy, his caseworker realised he would need additional skills to enable him to achieve this. He worked closely with Fred, helping him to budget and organised for his rent to be deducted from Centrepay to avoid further rental arrears. He also worked with Fred on developing his skills in cooking, cleaning and gardening. Fred now cooks dinner for his neighbours once a week and runs the community garden at his complex. He currently needs very little assistance from his MISHA caseworker.

2. Advocating on behalf of clients to address tenancy issues

Social housing providers commented that MISHA caseworkers were very good at pursuing outstanding property issues on behalf of their client. They were also strong advocates for a more lenient approach when it came to managing tenancy issues such as rent arrears, and to some extent, this created tension for the social housing provider. By requesting leniency, caseworkers were able to give their clients more time to get used to the responsibilities associated with being a tenant. This leniency often meant they became better tenants with time. However, the social housing providers sometimes felt that MISHA caseworkers were too lenient on clients, often failing to realise the real implications of large scale rental arrears or debt. Ensuring open communication between clients, caseworkers and housing providers often helped to resolve such tensions.

Case study 2

For Dane, a chronic rough sleeper with alcohol dependence and depression, the persistence of his MISHA caseworker was critical in him being able to develop pride in, and a connection to, home. Dane had a history of childhood trauma and was aggressive and defensive in his interpersonal interactions.

Dane's history made it difficult for Dane to engage with both his MISHA caseworker and his social housing provider. However, Dane's caseworker 'wore him down just by always being there' and gradually he began to trust in, and open up to, his caseworker. During the first year of being housed, Dane's aggressive interpersonal style and dependent drinking resulted in rental arrears, property damage and violent conflict with his neighbours, placing his tenancy at significant risk. Dane's caseworker advocated for leniency with both his social housing provider and the tribunal. Now, Dane takes pride in his house and his tenancy problems are behind him.

"And he's told me that he can't go back to the streets. So the longer he's stayed in his house the less likely or the less appealing the streets become, and I found that with a lot of the guys. That, yeah, there – there's a therapeutic benefit of just having a house, in terms of his outlook, in terms of his – what he considers normal, in terms of then, what he considers possible, definitely." [MISHA staff]

3. Acting as an intermediary to facilitate communication between the client and social housing provider

The MISHA clients had higher levels of engagement and trust with their caseworker relative to their social housing provider. This is not surprising given that social housing providers are typically responsible for a large number of tenancies which constrains the amount of time they have to engage with individual tenants. Some MISHA clients would more readily respond to contact from their caseworker. When traditional means of communication from the housing provider (such as telephone calls, letters and visits) failed, they would contact the caseworker who would often know how to locate a client and then directly liaise with the client regarding the tenancy issue. This had the effect of reducing the likelihood of a poor outcome in the longer term.

> "Whereas other general clients, you ring them, you can't find them, it stops there. You send the letter, you've got no other point of contact to lead on to find where they are, yeah." [Social Housing Provider]

Along with the advocacy engaged in by MISHA caseworkers, this improved ability to communicate meant that social housing providers spent more time with MISHA clients relative to other tenants in their portfolio.

> "I feel [MISHA clients] are so lucky. We're always there…compared to other tenants. I feel sometimes, [the other tenants are] on their own."
> [Social Housing Provider]

4. Assisting clients to work through their substance use and other mental health problems

Case managers often indirectly helped clients maintain their tenancies by assisting them to deal with any substance use and mental health problems. Both substance use and mental health problems interfered with a client's ability to maintain their property to a satisfactory standard, make rental payments (sometimes because income was diverted to purchasing alcohol or other drugs), and caused difficulties with neighbours due to disruptive, antisocial or unsafe behaviours. Mental illness also contributed to a client's poor judgement with respect to their choice of friends and acquaintances and in some cases, tenancy problems such as neighbour complaints, could be attributed to the behaviour of acquaintances and friends rather than the client himself.

Case study 3

Lucas had a significant trauma history, including child abuse and neglect, physical assault resulting in a hospitalisation, and an attempt to resuscitate a person who later died. This cumulative trauma load had a significant impact on his functioning.

His marriage broke down and he lost access to his children, he started smoking and injecting drugs, was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and spent 10 years being homeless, including significant periods of rough sleeping. His mental health issues impacted his ability to manage his finances which meant he accrued substantial rental arrears and, on several occasions, was threatened with eviction.

Additionally, Lucas found it difficult to trust other people and to feel safe despite now having his own place. His defensive and aggressive behaviour was a challenge for his social housing provider. With the patience and commitment of his MISHA caseworker, Lucas began to understand and accept his mental health problems and traumatic past. This has been a difficult first step for Lucas and one that has now opened the door to treatment and a more stable housing experience.

On the few occasions when it went wrong…

Despite the effort applied to supporting clients in their tenancies, sometimes this simply wasn't enough. In the first twelve months of being housed there were two failed tenancies. Over the longer two year support period there were a total of 8 failed tenancies. This section draws on the experience of the 8 failed tenancies reported over the two year period, rather than over the 12 month study period discussed above. In doing so, it draws on a broader base of information to understand the reasons behind these failures, and as a result better inform improvements in the 'housing first' approach and other interventions aimed at reducing chronic homelessness.

Of the eight failed tenancies over two years, two properties were relinquished by clients due to them being in prison, three clients were evicted, one client ran away following a series of difficulties with the police, and two clients temporarily vacated their properties but failed to return within a reasonable timeframe. The amount of time that tenancies survived before failing varied, ranging from 10 months to 2 years. Only two tenancies failed within 12 months; 2 tenancies failed at 13 months, 3 failed around 18 months, and 1 failed

around 24 months. Tenancy problems were evident in most failed tenancies apart from the two properties relinquished due to imprisonment and one property that was abandoned. However, these tenancy problems were not characteristically different from the tenancy issues experienced by clients who were able to sustain their tenancies. Similarly, almost all of the clients with failed tenancies had high levels of baseline distress (indicative of mental disorder) and had alcohol or other drug dependence but this was also true of many of the clients who remained in their properties. The distinction between success and failure appears to be the client's capacity to engage with case management due to a complex array of vulnerabilities. In both of the eviction cases, the clients appear to require more intensive support (such as after-hours crisis support) than what MISHA could effectively offer.

Case study 4

Josh was pushed out of his own property by his 'housemate', who moved himself and his family into Josh's apartment. Josh then slept in his car and had stopped paying rent because he believed he had signed over his lease. He was subsequently evicted because of a build-up in rental arrears.

Josh didn't disclose his tenancy problems to his caseworker and avoided meeting his caseworker inside his property. Thus, MISHA case workers were unable to intervene in time to avoid the eviction. Josh had trouble staying engaged with his caseworker, especially when his mental health deteriorated. Although he was linked in with his local community mental health team, he frequently missed his appointments and a clear diagnosis and treatment plan couldn't be established.

Prior to accepting his MISHA property, Josh was living in a supported accommodation service that was highly structured and where he had an established network of supports. He would sometimes return to his previous accommodation for a meal and a shower despite having his own property. Josh found living on his own a lonely experience and had difficulty asserting himself in his choice of 'housemate'.

What do the findings tell us?

This study has shown that with the right type of service provision and support it is possible to achieve sustained tenancy outcomes for a group of men who, prior to being housed through the MISHA project, were chronically homeless.

This study highlights the importance of the role of case managers in supporting, educating and working with both clients and housing providers to manage and maintain clients' tenancies. It also highlights the complex needs of many of the clients, and hence the need for a holistic approach to case management. Importantly, the study finds that the provision of housing first and holistic case management to clients with complex housing and personal histories can generate net savings to housing providers and hence a net benefit to the community as a whole.

Sources

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