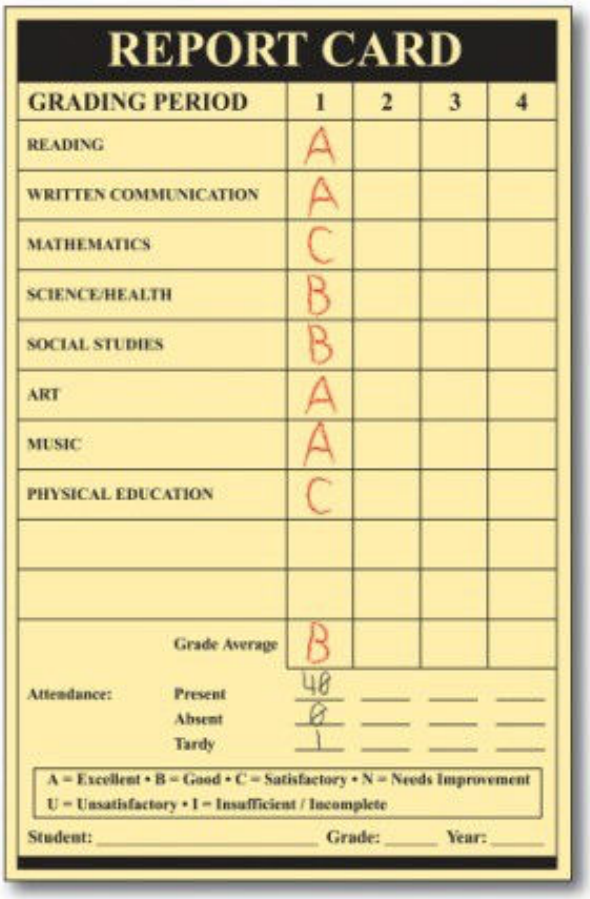
Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness



Making the grade?

Homelessness Australia's report card on the Australian Government's White Paper on Homelessness

May 2012

Homelessness Australia
PO Box 288 Kippax ACT 2615
T 02 6247 7744 F 02 6247 1586 W www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au
ABN 38006 346407

Homelessness Australia acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

On the 21st of December 2011, while most Australians were preparing for Christmas celebrations and family gatherings, the third anniversary of the release of the Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness, *The Road Home* clocked over.

At the time that the White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home* was released, the then Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP and then Minister for Housing, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP noted:

> *"...This White Paper delivers a 55 per cent increase on the current investment in homelessness. This represents an additional $800 million over four years and is a down payment on the 12 year reform agenda. It also includes a commitment to additional social housing for homeless people of $400 million over the next two financial years..."*[i]

With just two years to go until the interim targets set out on page 18 of the White Paper are due to be achieved, Homelessness Australia has spent a number of months undertaking a detailed re-examination of *The Road Home* with the aim of producing this report card that examines:

- Which of the key proposals have been implemented
- What the implementation looks like on the ground
- What data/evidence has been provided by new service models that tells us who is being supported, what support is being provided and how the interventions offered are improving outcomes for the people supported
- The data/evidence/research component of the White Paper and our initial assessment of the impact it is having on increasing our understanding of homelessness and related issues
- Which proposals flagged in *The Road Home* are yet to materialise
- What the sector believes are the strengths and weaknesses of the 'new approach to homelessness' outlined in the White Paper in each state and territory
- The strength of the evidence base that exists to date to enable us to evaluate the overall impact of the White Paper initiatives on the overall level of homelessness in Australia, and
- Issues that Homelessness Australia is seeking to follow-up on, especially those initiatives that we do not believe have been implemented to date.

From the outset we should affirm that we have prepared this report card based on our observations as a peak body and those of our councils and members and drawing on the information about the implementation of the key proposals in each section of the White Paper that is available to us in the public domain.

It is entirely possible, indeed probable, that the Australian Government has been provided with or has access to more up to date or detailed information about the implementation of particular elements and the outcomes that new service models are delivering, that we have not been able to draw upon during the preparation of our report card.

We recognise that States and Territories have only recently completed the design of their evaluation frameworks for services funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). We eagerly await the release of the findings of those evaluations.

The report card will also assess and evaluate the National Homelessness Research Agenda, what has been achieved and what, if anything, the findings thus far have added to our understanding of homelessness in Australia.

Acknowledgments

Homelessness Australia acknowledges funding by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

We would also like to acknowledge the significant contribution by our member organisations to this paper, as well as contributions from a range of federal and state and territory government departments including FaHCSIA, DEEWR, and DHS.

THE WHITE PAPER

On 21 December 2008, then Prime Minister the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP and then Minister for Housing, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP released *The Road Home,* an Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness, the first ever White Paper on the subject in our nation's history.

The document outlined what it described as "a new approach to homelessness" in Australia which included clear goals and targets for reducing homelessness in Australia by 2013 and 2020 and for improving outcomes for people experiencing homelessness during and after receiving support from specialist homelessness services.

The new approach to homelessness outlined in the White Paper is underpinned by three strategies; *turning off the tap, improving and expanding services* and *breaking the cycle.*

The following sections summarise the main points that were outlined in each section of the White Paper and a list of the interim targets and headline goals listed on page 18 of *The Road Home.*

Vision

The White Paper vision for a more integrated 'whole of government' response which advocates that reducing homelessness is 'everyone's responsibility' is something that Homelessness Australia advocated for in our 2007 election platform.

The vision correctly asserts that in order to reduce homelessness significantly we need to strike the right balance between early intervention and prevention and breaking the cycles of recurrent and chronic homelessness.

The vision correctly identified the need for mainstream agencies and services to assume greater responsibility for identifying and responding to homelessness.

The vision articulated the need for long term solutions to end homelessness for people.

Improving and expanding services is something that we support in principle.

The desire to strengthen the evidence base that underpins policy, program and service delivery responses through expanded data collection and a dedicated homelessness research agenda is also generally supported by Homelessness Australia.

Turning off the tap

Covered:

- Increasing support for people in public and private rental housing to maintain their tenancies
- Assisting up to 9,000 additional young people between 12 and 18 years of age to remain connected with their families each year
- Assisting up to 2,250 additional families at risk of homelessness to stay housed (HOME advice)
- 'No exits into homelessness' from statutory, custodial care, health, mental health and drug and alcohol services
- Helping women and children who experience domestic violence to stay safely in the family home. This was however **not** a core outcome in the NPA on homelessness
- Delivering community based mental health services under the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMs) to 1,000 difficult to reach Australians, including people who are homeless
- Improving Centrelink's response by allowing weekly income support payments, implementing a homelessness vulnerability indicator, referring youth allowance unreasonable to live at home applicants to social work services and establishing a network of 90 Community Engagement Offi-

cers to improve access to Centrelink services for people at risk of homelessness

- Implement a funding round for the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) Program, and
- Deliver additional services – including brokerage funds and long-term support – to assist people with mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues who have been homeless to maintain their housing and participate in the community.

Improving and expanding services

Covered:

- People who are homeless have contact with mainstream services that have a responsibility to identify homelessness and actively respond
- Government will lead the development of joined-up service delivery and improving mainstream agencies to better identify and respond to service users who are homeless
- Specialist homelessness services are an effective way to deliver crisis and ongoing support, and provide expertise on homelessness
- Specialist homelessness services cannot deliver the entire homelessness response. The best outcomes for people who are homeless will be achieved if specialist and mainstream services work together closely
- Services should operate so that there are 'no wrong doors' for people who are homeless and seeking help. Features of a 'no wrong door' system will include: mainstream services assessing the housing needs of clients, specialist homelessness services assessing other needs beyond housing like education and employment needs of clients, strong service networks and agreements between all human service providers at a local level, joint assessment, planning, coordination and case management and; sharing information about clients
- All services that work with people who are homeless should focus on getting people into stable long-term housing, employment and training, or other community participation
- A workforce development strategy is needed so that there are sufficient people with the right skills to work actively with clients to end their homelessness, and
- A strong legislative base must remain in place to underpin the national homelessness response, set standards and deliver the best quality services possible for people who are homeless.

Breaking the cycle

Covered:

- To provide housing with long-term support packages. The main responses in the State and Territory are promoted as "Common Ground like" or "Foyer like" models
- The exceptions being NSW and SA which have funded supportive housing models (UNO apartments in SA and Platform 70 in Woolloomooloo)
- The Street to Home initiatives in each State and Territory are the other main series of service responses aimed at "breaking the cycle" of long term homelessness
- Two new aged care facilities have been funded as flagged in the White Paper. They will provide housing and support services to 153 people. St Bartholomew's House in East Perth has been funded to support 148 people including 40 aged care beds. This delivers on commitments to fund "at least one new specialist aged care facility per year for people experiencing homelessness over the next four years (from 2010-2013)
- The expansion of the not for profit housing sector is intended to provide opportunities for homelessness services to have improved access to

community housing for their clients

- Building up to 2,700 additional public and community housing dwellings for low income households
- Building up to 4,200 new houses and upgrading up to 4,800 existing houses in remote Indigenous communities, and
- In its 12 month progress report, the Australian Government added the social housing stimulus to this section of the White Paper.

Research

Covered:

- The Australian Government will develop a national homelessness research strategy to support the White Paper. It will build on existing research and data collection efforts. It will strengthen the current evidence base to inform policy and practice and guide research priorities for researchers and funding bodies
- As a starting point, the Australian Government will work with states and territories to pilot data linking projects in order to gain a clearer picture of the pathways through service systems for people who are homeless
- Initial projects will focus on clients most at risk, particularly children, and will explore data linkages across child protection, housing, homelessness and criminal justice systems as well as Centrelink
- The Australian Government has allocated $11.4 million for the research agenda. Of this; $4.6 million has been allocated to the *Journeys Home: Longitudinal study of factors affecting housing stability* (will follow 1500 people over 5 years). $4.1 million has been allocated to 3 Research Partnerships (University of Queensland, Flinders Partners and Swinburne). The consortiums are developing an agenda; $1.5 million has been allocated to 16 research projects. HA has only been made aware of findings from 1 study on the needs of sole fathers in the homelessness service delivery system, and
- In addition to the research agenda the Australian Government committed in the White Paper to improving the knowledge and evidence base around homelessness by developing a new improved, expanded specialist homelessness services data collection.

Implementation and governance

Covered:

- The Australian Government will establish the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness. The Council will drive the reform agenda to reduce homelessness by 2020
- The COAG Reform Council will monitor State and Territory government performance against agreed high level performance indicators and report progress annually
- To meet the goals and targets a long-term and sustained effort from all levels of Government and from the business and community sectors is needed
- The Social Inclusion Board, the Housing Ministers' Conference and Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference each has a role to play, and
- The Australian Government will enact new national homelessness legislation in consultation with the homelessness sector. This will replace the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*.

The 2013 interim targets

The key interim targets for 2013 are:

- Overall homelessness is reduced by 20 per cent
- Primary homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent
- The proportion of people seeking specialist homelessness services more than three times in 12 months is reduced by 25 per cent.

To track progress, the following interim targets for 2013 will be developed with the states and territories:

- The number of people engaged in employment and/or education/ training after presenting at specialist homelessness services is increased by 50 per cent
- The number of people exiting care and custodial settings into homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent
- The number of families who maintain or secure safe and sustainable housing following domestic or family violence is increased by 20 per cent
- The number of people exiting from social housing and private rental to homelessness is reduced by 25 per cent
- The number of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with improved housing stability and engaged with family, school and work is increased by 25 per cent
- The number of children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness provided with additional support and engaged in education is increased by 50 per cent
- The number of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive financial advice, counselling and/or case management is increased by 25 per cent
- The number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who receive legal services is increased by 25 per cent.

The 2020 headline goals and targets

The Australian Government, with the agreement of all state and territory governments has set two headline goals to guide our long term response to homelessness:

- Halve overall homelessness by 2020, and
- Offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020.

Principles to guide the approach

In addition to the interim targets and headline goals listed above, the Australian Government developed a list of ten guiding principles for the national approach to reducing homelessness. It also stated that it would be 'underpinned by a strong legislative framework'.

1. A national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels of Government and from non-government and business sectors are needed.
2. Preventing homelessness is important.
3. Social inclusion drives our efforts.
4. Clients need to be placed at the centre of service delivery and design.
5. The safety and wellbeing of all clients is essential.
6. The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families need to be protected.
7. Joined-up service delivery needs joined-up policy.
8. Transition points are a priority.
9. Evidence-based policy helps to shape our priorities for action.
10. Targets are set to reduce homelessness and hold ourselves accountable.

THE FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

Specialist Homelessness Services previously funded via the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program bi-lateral agreements now derive their funding from the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).

In 2010/11, 1,547 agencies received $494.479 million in funding, with mean funding per agency being $320,000. This represented a 9% increase in total funding and a 10.5% increase in funding per agency from 2009/10[ii].

It is pleasing to see that funding for specialist homelessness services has increased under the National Affordable Housing Agreement. This has resulted in a slight decrease in the turn-away rates from services across Australia since 2007/08.

These services supported just over 230,000 people in 2010/11 including over 88,000 children who this year will for the first time be treated as clients who are entitled to service offers in their own right.

The work of these services is contributing to the achievement of outcome one of the NAHA which reads:

> *"people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion"*[iii]

The NAHA aims to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation.

The NAHA is an agreement by the Council of Australian Governments that commenced on 1 January 2009, initiating a whole-of-government approach in tackling the problem of housing affordability. The NAHA provides $6.2 billion worth of housing assistance to low and middle income Australians in the first five years.

The NAHA is supported by the National Partnership Agreements on:

- Social housing
- Homelessness
- Indigenous Australians living in remote areas.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness[IV] focuses on three key strategies to reduce homelessness:

- Prevention and early intervention to stop people becoming homeless
- Breaking the cycle of homelessness, and
- Improving and expanding the service response to homelessness.

Australian and state and territory governments will work together to implement the strategic agenda outlined in the Government's White Paper on Homelessness.

Under the agreement, the Australian and state and territory governments will provide $1.1 billion in funding.

The states and territories will deliver the following four core outputs:

- Implementation of A Place to Call Home
- Street to home initiatives for chronic homeless people (rough sleepers)
- Tenancy support for private and public tenants, including advocacy, financial counselling and referral services to help people sustain their tenancies, and
- Assistance for people leaving child protection, jail and health facilities, to access and maintain stable, affordable housing.

The states and territories will also deliver some or all of the following additional outputs:

- Support services and accommodation to assist older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Services to assist homeless people with substance abuse to secure or maintain stable accommodation
- Services to assist homeless people with mental health issues to secure or maintain stable accommodation
- Support to assist young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to re-engage with their family where it is safe to do so, maintain sustainable accommodation and engagement with education and employment
- Improvements in service coordination and provision
- Support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence to stay in their present housing where it is safe to do so
- Assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing
- Outreach programs to connect rough sleepers to long-term housing and health services
- National, State, and rural (including remote) homelessness action plans to assist homeless people in areas identified as having high rates of homelessness
- Support for children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including to maintain contact with the education system
- Legal services provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of legal issues including family violence, tenancy or debt, and
- Workforce development and career progression for workers in homelessness services.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness commenced on 1 July 2009.

The Australian and state and territory governments have agreed on Implementation Plans which set out new initiatives and additional services which will make a substantial contribution towards achieving interim targets to reduce homelessness by 2013.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGES TO THE METHODOLOGY ON THE FUNDING INSTRUMENTS

It is important to note that the goals and targets in the White Paper were based on the Chamberlain and Mackenzie homelessness estimate of 104,676 people and despite assurances to the contrary, Homelessness Australia believes that the review of the methodology will have significant implications for both the funding and organisation of the homelessness service delivery system, either intentionally or unintentionally.

This is especially true for NAHA funded specialist homelessness services of which almost two thirds of providers are funded to support young people and women escaping domestic and family violence. If the number of young people is purportedly one quarter of that previously thought and only one twelfth of the total number of people thought to be homeless, as opposed to one fifth in the Chamberlain and Mackenzie estimate, then it may be reasonable for Treasury to ask the question why are thirty-four percent of specialist homelessness services funded to support young people?

Similarly if women make up only thirty-eight per cent of people experiencing homelessness according to the ABS review estimate as opposed to forty-four per cent in the Chamberlain and Mackenzie estimate, it might be reasonable to ask why resources aren't shifted to supporting services for single adult men?

Homelessness Australia is not suggesting that this be considered but point out these examples because we disagree with assurances provided to date that the changes to the methodology, with the flow on changes to the number of people believed to be homeless on any given night will not have any implications for resourcing homelessness programs and services.

A bigger issue for the Government goes to overall funding for the homelessness component of the NAHA and the next NPAH. Treasury could make a strong case for a significant cut in funding for NAHA funded specialist homelessness services and the next NPAH. This argument would hold sway given that the previous funding was based on data that showed there were just under 105,000 people homeless on any given night whereas the chief statistical agency is now indicating that the figure is closer to 64,000 people.

Furthermore, the White Paper was heavily focused on providing assertive outreach and fast-tracked access to housing and support for people sleeping rough. According to the ABS review estimate, this group makes us half what was previously thought.

Treasury could similarly argue that this is not perhaps the best allocation of finite resources in a budgetary environment that is seeking to return to surplus by any means possible.

Homelessness Australia believes these are real risks that the Department and the Minister need to be aware of given that negotiations around funding for the next NAHA and NPAH will commence in July 2012.

Overall Assessment of the White Paper on Homelessness

Chapter 2: The White Paper Vision

Key points

Include:

- The White Paper vision for a more integrated 'whole of government' response which advocates that reducing homelessness is 'everyone's responsibility' is something that Homelessness Australia advocated for in our 2007 election platform
- The vision correctly asserts that in order to reduce homelessness significantly we need to strike the right balance between early intervention and prevention and breaking the cycles of recurrent and chronic homelessness
- The vision correctly identified the need for mainstream agencies and services to assume greater responsibility for identifying and responding to homelessness
- The vision articulated the need for long term solutions to end homelessness for people
- Improving and expanding services is something that we support in principle
- The desire to strengthen the evidence base that underpins policy, program and service delivery responses through expanded data collection and a dedicated homelessness research agenda is also supported by Homelessness Australia with some qualifications.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9✔	10

Status: *Well under way*. The White Paper vision is sound. Important steps have been taken to realise it.

While progress has been made the key question that comes to mind is whether Government recognised the level of resourcing that would be required to achieve it.

Many of the initiatives, programs and services funded under the NPAH that are designed to achieve the outcomes of that agreement which are closely linked to the White Paper goals and targets are small in scale and tightly targeted.

While there is some evidence that we are starting to move towards a more integrated response to homelessness and some agencies have stepped up and assumed greater responsibility for identify and responding to homelessness (e.g. Centrelink) other key departments and agencies have not yet demonstrated this capability.

We need to see an improved response from Health and Ageing, the Office for Youth, State and Territory justice departments, the child protection system and statutory care agencies.

The White Paper vision cannot be realised without stronger linkages with the national plan to reduce violence against women and children.

The vision is sound but real barriers and challenges to its realisation still loom large. At the time that the White Paper was released and funding announced, the $1.1 billion funding commitment was described as "a down payment on the 12 year reform agenda".

A further installment will be needed for a second National Partnership Agreement if we are to continue the progress towards meeting the two headline goals outlined on page 18.

A broader National Affordable Housing Agreement that provides growth funding for the expansion of social housing and specialist homelessness services and a second National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and A Place to Call Home initiative totalling at least $1.2 billion will be needed if we are to actualise the White Paper vision between now and 2020.

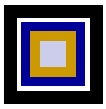
Significantly boosting access to public and community housing and enacting brave reforms to Australia's ailing housing system must be prioritised over the next decade if we are to have any hope of meeting the 2020 headline goals and targets.

We will also need to see a renewed focus on expanding our efforts to prevent homelessness and intervene early after people lose their housing to present homelessness from becoming entrenched.

Addressing structural drivers of homelessness such as poverty, intergenerational disadvantage, labour force marginalisation, social inequality, housing (un) affordability and the inadequacy of income support payments must be a central focus of the next "down- payment" on the 12 year reform agenda.

Chapter 3: Turning off the tap

What the White Paper promised...

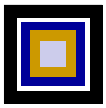


Increasing support for people in public and private rental housing to maintain their tenancies

This is a core outcome of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. States and territories have reported that they have either established or expanded tenancy support programs but there is no readily available data on the exact number of people for whom evictions have been prevented. FaHCSIA notes that there is work being done through the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness (PMCH) and the ABS Homelessness Statistics Reference Group to improve the evidence base and data collection sources.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8✔	9	10

Status: *Delivered*. Need to see consistent data on the number of people assisted and how.



Assisting up to 9,000 additional young people between 12 and 18 years of age to remain connected with their families.

The primary program servicing 12-18 year olds prior to the White Paper was the Reconnect program. Homelessness Australia believed that initiatives to support the additional 9000 young people included the expansion of the Reconnect program. We have recently learned that this is not the case and that jurisdictions have funded their own programs to assist this group of up to 9000 using funding provided via the NPAH.

1	2	3	4	5	6✔	7	8	9	10

Status: *Delivered* but Reconnect expansion in funding and scope has only been in the order of 7 new services and $3.14 million. Data on the number of young people supported by "Reconnect-like" initiatives funded by States and Territories was not available to Homelessness Australia at the time of writing.

Assisting up to 2,250 additional families at risk of homelessness to stay housed.

The main program said to be fulfilling this promise is the Household Management and Expenses (HOME) Advice program. It has provided support such as budgeting assistance, household organisation skills, financial counselling, and referral and case management to 2232 families.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10 ✔**

Status: *Delivered*. Target met.

'No exits into homelessness' from statutory, custodial care, health, mental health and drug and alcohol services.

This is a core output of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). States and Territories have funded a range of new initiatives that are documented in their Homelessness Implementation Plans. The Australian Government is engaged in a data mapping exercise to support the evaluation of the efforts to achieve this outcome.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children includes new national standards on out of home care including plans for transition to independence. This is also a core area of focus for the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness and work to support no exits is being progressed through select councils in COAG. At the time of writing this report, Homelessness Australia was not privy to detailed information about this work.

1	2	3	4	5	**6 ✔**	7	8	9	10

Status: *Delivered*. Initiatives will only support a combined total of just over 3300 people nationally per year. This will reduce exits but will not achieve the lofty goal of 'no exits'. New funding has been provided to support this measure through the National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health which will assist in providing stable accommodation on exit from mental health services. This should assist people who lose their housing as a result of in-patient stays to remain housed and will reduce the number of people exited from mental health settings into homelessness.

Helping women and children who experience domestic violence to stay safely in the family home

This was an optional output in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. HA believes it should have been a core output. NSW, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT allocated National Partnership money to small scale programs that support women and children to remain in the family home while the perpetrator is evicted.

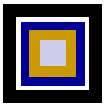
1	2	3	4	**5 ✔**	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Underway with good possibility for improvement in the score.* WESNET have expressed concerns to us about the roll-out of *Safe at Home* initiatives. As an optional output they have not been implemented everywhere. We are not aware of which providers are delivering the safe at home models. We are not aware of any data documented how many women and children have been assisted by *Safe at Home* programs.

FaHCSIA advise that projects being delivered by the Commonwealth, States and Territories under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, social housing and housing affordability measures directly contribute to achievements of the outcomes of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

Work has already commenced on key priority areas under the Plan, with the Australian Government committing over $86 million since April 2009 to improve the lives of women who have experienced violence.

A national implementation plan is currently with States and Territories for endorsement and will set out how governments will implement key national priorities over the life of the first action plan. Alongside the national implementation plan, each jurisdiction will develop and make public a jurisdictional implementation plan, for each Action Plan (i.e. every three years.) The National Implementation Plan will be publicly released by the Select Women's Council later in early 2012.



Delivering community based mental health services under the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMS) to 1,000 difficult to reach Australians, including people who are homeless.

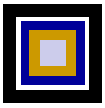
The PHaMs Program has been expanded and round 4 and 5 programs were designed to support people experiencing homelessness. The program has been well received in some jurisdictions poorly in others. It is supposed to assist people without a formal diagnosis but we are told by services in two states that this is not happening and providers are not reaching into homelessness services or taking referrals from them but are instead prioritising their own clients. This is disappointing as the program has enormous potential to benefit people experiencing homelessness.

1	2	3	4	5	6	**7 ✓**	8	9	10

Status: *Delivered*. The expansion has occurred but feedback about the efficacy of the program is mixed.

FaHCSIA advise that PHaMS is a successful program with 10,551 active participants from 1 July 2011 to 31 December 2011, 13 per cent of whom identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

PHaMs helps people with mental illness build social networks, gain employment, learn how to better manage their illness and live independently. In the first stage of the implementation of the 2010-11 Budget measure providing $208.3M over five years, PHaMs services will be expanded in high-need areas and use the expansion to strengthen the capacity to target priority groups including people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.



Establishing a network of 90 Community Engagement Officers to improve access to Centrelink services for people at risk of homelessness.

Centrelink's network of 90 Community Engagement Officers is now in place and reports from HA members have generally been very positive. While their main aim is to ensure people are receiving the correct income support payment and the maximum 'benefit' possible they are linked in with NGOs and deliver 'place based responses'. In 2010–11 the 90 Community Engagement Officers made 213 996 contacts with customers who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. DHS advise that they are in the process of expanding the CEO network.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9 ✓**	10

Status: *Delivered* and making a positive difference. As of February 2012 the 90 CEOs were operating in 16 Centrelink/DHS service sites across Australia. This has been one of the most successful White Paper initiatives.

Chapter 4: Improving and expanding services

What the White Paper promised…

People who are homeless have contact with mainstream services that have a responsibility to identify homelessness and actively respond.

1	2	3	4✓	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Unsatisfactory to date*. With the exception of Centrelink (DHS), there is little evidence that other mainstream and 'first to know' agencies are responding adequately or have improved their response. Small pilot programs are not good enough. Much work to do.

The $197.3 million in funding set aside for 50 new 'headspace' centres has been proposed as an example of efforts to improve the response of mainstream services and under new contractual arrangements 'headspace' will be required to report on the housing status of clients.

DEEWR has suggested that the Home Options and Pathways to Employment Project is possibly an example where learnings can be gained. An Australian Government funded partnership between Homelessness Australia and the National Employment Services Association (NESA), it aimed to facilitate effective linkages between Job Services Australia and homelessness services providers – to strengthen their capacity to work collaboratively to ensure that homeless people receive appropriate and tailored services which will enable them to progress to employment and offer pathways from poverty and homelessness.

However analysis on the effectiveness of HOPE is required to assess its relative (and ongoing) contribution to the linkages between mainstream and specialist homelessness services.

In addition, the Government has also supported over $12.2 million of innovative projects in the employment services arena which have included a focus on homeless job seekers - 9 Jobs Fund projects (funded for $8.5 million) and 5 Innovation Fund (funded for $3.7 million) projects. Lessons and positive experiences from the nine Jobs Fund projects will be analysed as a part of program closure report. Under the Innovation Fund, each project is required to undertake a project specific evaluation as the final stage of the project. The program will also be evaluated during 2012 and this evaluation is likely to inform policy development around improving assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in mainstream programs.

Unfortunately, from the sector's viewpoint the funding for these innovations fund projects ceases on 30 June 2012 and we have unsuccessfully lobbied for an extension in funding for homelessness specific innovations fund projects.

The Australian Government will work with the states and territories to establish a 'case-mix' pilot trial to better quantify the actual costs of supporting high-needs clients and test whether additional outcome-based performance payments can improve both employment and housing outcomes for people who are homeless. The trial will identify those people who have a higher level of complexity requiring longer-term and more intensive coordinated support. The trial will identify a best practice approach (including the skills needed) to providing this support.

1	2	3	4✓	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Uncertain.* We are told that a case-mix pilot was undertaken

but no results have been made available to Homelessness Australia. FaHCSIA notes that it is an on-going item of attention and discussion at the Prime Minister's Council and Homelessness Delivery Review Board meetings.

services should operate so that there are 'no wrong doors' for people who are homeless and seeking help.

1	2	3	4	5	6 ✓	7	8	9	10

Status: *In progress.* States and territories have established or are in the process of establishing single access gateways to the homelessness services system. Thus far they do not appear to be improving access because demand for services continues to exceed the number of beds/places services can offer to accommodate and support people. The objective of this strategy is that people needing services will only have to "tell their story once".

The Australian Government and state and territory governments will work with homelessness services and people who are homeless to develop national homelessness service standards and a system for accrediting services focused on improving quality.

1	2	3	4	5	6 ✓	7	8	9	10

Status: *In progress.* 2 rounds of consultation around the development of a National Quality Framework to support quality services for people experiencing homelessness have been completed. A sector reference group has been established to provide on-going advice as we progress towards its implementation. People experiencing homelessness have been consulted. There was much haste in the initial stages of the development of the NQF which the sector believes has since lost momentum. FaHCSIA has a differing view and reports that it is now being progressed through the Select Council on Homelessness. Communication about the process has not been provided to the sector who remain confused about progress and timeframes.

A workforce development strategy is needed so that there are sufficient people with the right skills to work actively with clients to end their homelessness.

1	2	3	4 ✓	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Not delivered.* We are yet to see a firm commitment to develop an overarching workforce development strategy for the homelessness sector but this may be an outcome of the research. Homelessness Australia was interviewed for a project by the University of Queensland funded under the homelessness research agenda to provide advice about workforce challenges, capacity and future demands/needs. There is a good case for including the $2 billion federal funding commitment to support the Fair Work Australia equal remuneration decision in our analysis here as a positive even though it is not a White Paper initiative.

FaHCSIA notes that the University of Queensland research is being considered by FaHCSIA and has not yet been released. This is pleasing but as at time of writing we are unable to assess this.

A strong legislative base must remain in place to underpin the national homelessness response, set standards and deliver the best quality services possible for people who are homeless.

1	2	3 ✔	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Not yet delivered.* New national homelessness legislation is on the parliamentary agenda for early 2012. It was also apparently on the agenda in 2011.

We are informed that this will take the form of 'recognition legislation' and hence is not the strong rights-based legislation the sector was seeking. Without seeing an exposure draft we cannot evaluate the quality of the proposed legislation. FaHCSIA advises that an exposure draft will be released later in 2012.

Chapter 5: Breaking the Cycle

What the White Paper promised...

Build 50,000 affordable rental homes for low and moderate income earners.

1	2	3	4 ✔	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Being delivered.* The Australian Government will provide funding over 7 years from 2008 to 2014/15 for tax incentives of $9524/year that will be allocated to organisations/people who provide rental properties at a rate that is *at most* 80% of market rental.

This is an excellent scheme which should be expanded but it must be stressed that even though it appeared in the White Paper it is ***not a homelessness initiative.*** 80% of market rental in Canberra and Sydney still means that the average weekly rent for a 3 bedroom property is $402 per week[v]. This is not affordable for most people experiencing homelessness or indeed income support recipients in general. We welcome the much needed investment but have stressed to the Minister that it is a scheme to benefit low and moderate incomes earners. It is not a homelessness initiative and should not be promoted as one.

Build an additional 2700 dwellings for people who are either experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless through the A Place to Call Home initiative and the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 ✔

Status: *Target exceeded*. This is perhaps the most successful initiative of the White Paper to date. Originally, 600 dwellings with 13 month support packages were to be built through *A Place to Call Home* and 1600 social housing dwellings through the NP. The new projected allocation of *A Place to Call Home* dwellings and support packages is 770 over 4 years.

The NPA on Social Housing is projected to provide 2100 new properties. This should definitely be re-funded for a further 4 years. FaHCSIA notes that a com-

plete stocktake of all initiatives will be conducted in 2012 to inform future funding decisions.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing will assist in reducing homelessness. Some people who are homeless will benefit from specialist long-term accommodation models that easily allow for the integration of support and accommodation. Specialist supported housing facilities in diverse communities should target:

- *Families*
- *People who are ageing and the chronically homeless*
- *Young people.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 ✓	8	9	10

Status: *Being delivered*. One new specialist aged care facility per year and $18.4 million for the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged. The roll-out of Common Ground and Foyer models of permanent supportive housing and priority access to stimulus properties for 'greatest need' families on priority social housing lists are the main initiatives contributing to the achievement of this outcome. They are welcome initiatives but have high capital works start-up costs.

The Department has indicated it is working with the Prime Minister's Council to consider ways of generating philanthropic contributions but should we be reliant upon philanthropy to fund permanent housing for these target groups?

With the demand for a budget surplus by 2013 this target may be under threat.

Pilot the co-location of state and territory housing services in Centrelink Customer Service Centres.

1	2	3	4	5	6 ✓	7	8	9	10

Status: *Trial underway* HA is aware of a limited trial in a handful of sites. The concept is sound. We have not seen any data or reports that have documented the benefits of the trial that took place in four locations. It makes sense to co-locate Government services that people reliant on income support need as it will reduce the costs of taking transport to access services. The co-location of services has also been shown to assist people in crisis by ensuring that they can access more of the services they need at a single location, thereby reducing the stress that can be caused by navigating a complex housing and support system. Homelessness Australia looks forward to seeing the results of evaluations of the pilots of the co-location of Centrelink and housing offices.

According to the 2010/11 Centrelink Annual Report:

> *"...Where possible, Centrelink has state and territory department of housing visiting services operating in its CSCs in 13 locations across Australia..."* [vi]

The co-location of services makes sense and could help drive the joined-up service delivery that is a key feature of the White Paper. The amalgamation of Centrelink, Medicare, the Child Support Agency and Hearing Australia into the Department of Human Services provides further opportunities for the co-location of Government services. Homelessness Australia believes there are potential benefits in co-locating Australian Government services with State and Territory Government services such as families and housing.

Reform employment services to provide greater incentives to employment service providers to assist homeless jobseekers.

1	2	3	4 ✓	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: Delivered. Homelessness services are not convinced that JSA is delivering good outcomes for many of their clients but the data provided by DEEWR suggest a high volume of people at risk of and experiencing homelessness are receiving service offers.

Many are simply encouraged to get an exemption from activity requirements in their employment pathway plans and are then 'parked' or kept on the books for the purposes of drawing in money and not provided with the necessary *non-vocational* brokerage and assistance to address barriers to job-readiness.

There is some evidence that Job Services Australia providers are delivering good outcomes for young people who are experiencing homelessness. Data shows that they are achieving comparable outcomes to young people who are stably housed in accessing education and training and participation in work experience. In addition, JSA data shows that young people with an identifiable housing insecurity or homelessness issue are achieving employment outcomes at only a slightly lower rate than young people in JSA for whom these issues have not been identified.

According to DEEWR it is being delivered but efficacy is still debatable. DEEWR data indicates that around 70,000 job seekers experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, are receiving service from Job Services Australia providers. In contrast our member services continue to report enormous difficulties getting appropriate assistance for their clients from Job Services Australia providers.

DEEWR data indicates that in the first 27 months of Job Services Australia, nearly 103,000 job placements for homeless or at risk of homelessness job seekers alone have been achieved. More than 43,500 of these have been achieved by the most disadvantaged homeless or at risk of homelessness job seekers in Stream 4.

Evidence from DEEWR's Post-Program Monitoring (PPM) survey shows that the Personal Support Programme, which was essentially replaced by Stream 4, was achieving an employment rate for their homeless participants of around 13 per cent. For Stream 4, the employment rate for homeless or at risk of homelessness job seekers was 26.1 per cent. This outcome rate was higher than for other disadvantage cohorts within Stream 4, such as People with Disability (21.8 per cent); Indigenous Australians (17.6 per cent); or People from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background (18.2 per cent).

There are nearly 72,000 homeless, or at risk of homelessness, job seekers on the Job Services Australia caseload (as at 30 September 2011) representing 10 per cent of the total caseload. Homeless job seekers are more likely to be highly disadvantaged and receiving the most intensive Stream 4 assistance. There are around 39,000 homeless job seekers, or 55 per cent of all homeless job seekers, in this Stream. It is important to understand that Stream 4 is comprised of job seekers with multiple disadvantage. A number of factors need to be in play such as primary homelessness along with mental health conditions, drug and alcohol dependency, low educational attainment, etc.

Homelessness Australia, on the advice of the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness has proposed a data-matching exercise to determine the types of service offers that people in homelessness services are receiving from Centrelink and whether or not the homelessness vulnerability indicator flag has been attached to their customer record. We look forward to seeing the results of the trial initiated by FaHCSIA in December 2011 as this will enable us to get a better understanding of how measures to better respond to homelessness by Centrelink are working in practice.

Improve legal services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

1	2	3	**4** ✓	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Uncertain*. Legal clinics were already operating in NSW, Victoria and SA. The ACT Government provided $700,000 over 4 years for the establishment of *Street Law.* These clinics are incredibly important and should be established in each jurisdiction. They often see clients that no other law firm will and the difference that sorting out often longstanding legal issues can make to the ability of a person to access housing and support services is undervalued and poorly recognised.

FaHCSIA has informed Homelessness Australia that a call for tenders by the Attorney General's Department is in progress. This is pleasing but does not affect the rating in this case as this is a 'point in time' report card. A future report card should have a higher rating if this takes place.

Examine enrolment issues for people who are homeless as part of electoral reforms to be progressed in 2009.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10** ✓

Status: *Delivered*. People experiencing homelessness were permitted to vote in the 2010 Federal election as a result of changes to the electoral act. This is an important step in removing one layer of discrimination that people experiencing homelessness previously faced. Homelessness Australia welcomes this development that has improved opportunities for democratic participation for people experiencing homelessness.

Chapter 6: Research and Data

What the White Paper promised…

A long-term research agenda is required to improve the evidence on which our response to homelessness is based.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8** ✓	9	10

Status: *Being delivered.* $11.4 million over 4 years has been allocated to the national homelessness research agenda. Of this:

- $4.6 million has been allocated to the *Journeys Home: Longitudinal Study of Factors Affecting Housing Stability.* Follows 1500 participants over 5 years
- $4.1 million to 3 National Research Partnerships (Swinburne, University of Queensland, Flinders University of SA)
- $1.5 million for 16 short term *research projects*
- Remainder is for an evaluation of the White Paper.

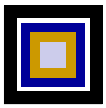
The research agenda is being pursued but there has to date been a lack of coordination and a lack of information flowing to the sector about its progress. Thus far the findings of only one project on the needs of sole fathers

experiencing homelessness have been presented. HA has been invited to participate in one study conducted by the University Queensland on the homelessness workforce. We have heard nothing in the way of an agenda from either the Swinburne consortium or Flinders Partners despite HA having agreed to partner with them to disseminate findings. A reference group was supposed to have been established by FaHCSIA. This has not happened.

Overall we are disappointed with the lack of clarity around the research agenda and the poor coordination of it and information flow to the sector. More detail in later chapter including our suggested improvements.

We are aware that the findings of research projects on the effectiveness of Street to Home initiatives for people who are sleeping rough are being presented at the Australasian Housing Researchers Conference in February. This follows on from the publication of summaries of some of the findings from some projects in the October 2011 edition of *Parity.*

This is pleasing but it also illustrates the ad hoc manner in which the findings from the National Homelessness Research Agenda are being released to the sector. Homelessness Australia has written to the Department seeking a meeting at which we want to determine how we can pursue a more systematic approach to the dissemination of findings from the publicly funded research agenda.



Investment in improving data on homelessness is required to enable progress against the goals and targets under this strategy to be measured.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 ✓	10

Status: *Underway***.** The new data collection system is operating. There were some initial "teething" problems with a privacy breach, information going to the wrong agencies and data entry problems. These were reported to us and we reported them to the AIHW. Some providers have expressed other administrative concerns about the new system. There has been positive feedback from service providers who have told Homelessness Australia that they find the new system more user-friendly. Some providers have expressed significant concerns about sub-contracting data/software management to Infoxchange.

South Australia has established its own data collection and client management system called *Homeless 2 Home.* This system was designed to align with the operation of the service system in SA following the competitive tendering rounds for *preferred housing providers* and *preferred support providers* in 2010. Sector feedback has been mixed with much positive feedback about the *Homeless 2 Home* system while others report that it is an "administrative nightmare".

The number of people supported by homelessness services in SA has increased dramatically in recent years with over 23,000 South Australians listed as active clients on the *Homeless 2 Home* system.

We have not seen a summary of new data yet but early indications are that both the AIHW system hosted by Infoxchange and the *Homeless 2 Home* system set up in SA will deliver improved data items when compared with the previous SAAP Management and Reporting Tool (SMaRT) system.

Chapter 7: Implementation and Governance

What the White Paper Promised...

The Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness will drive the reform agenda to reduce homelessness by 2020.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 ✔

Status: *Delivered*. The Council has been established and continues to provide high quality advice.

The COAG Reform Council will monitor state and territory government performance against agreed high level performance indicators and report progress annually.

1	2	3	4 ✔	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Uncertain*. While this is probably happening but HA has only been able to locate performance reports for some jurisdictions and even then they do not offer comprehensive data about who has been assisted by services funded under the NPAH, how and what outputs have been delivered or the extent to which these have contributed to the achievement of the outcomes of the NPAH much less the interim White Paper targets. There needs to be a major improvement in the coordination and public dissemination of data and reporting on outputs and outcomes of NPAH services.

To date this data has been difficult to locate and patchy in detail. Notwithstanding the fact that some services are not yet fully operational it would be helpful if the sector was able to readily access data collected by those that are from a single location.

Homelessness Australia understands that jurisdictions are current developing evaluation frameworks for NPAH programs and services. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of these evaluations.

The Social Inclusion Board, the Housing Ministers' Conference and the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference each have a role to play.

1	2	3	4 ✔	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Uncertain*. Yes they do each have a role to play, but exactly what that role is remains unclear to us.

Homelessness is certainly on the agenda of the Social Inclusion Board and the Housing Minister's Conference. The Housing Ministers' Conference developed both the *Discussion Paper* and the *Options Paper* for the National Quality Framework. The Housing Ministers' Conference is evidently monitoring the implementation of the White Paper on Homelessness. In late 2011, the council was re-named the *COAG Select Council on Homelessness*. In its December communiqué, the council noted that there had been significant progress on the following areas:

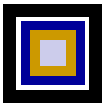
- More than 180 new initiatives were implemented and assistance was provided in more than 170,000 instances to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
- States and territories have engaged in sector reform and/or service integration to provide a framework that supports quality outcomes for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness; and
- There has been considerable sector and community engagement by state and territory governments in the planning and implementation of services across the country.

Homelessness Australia is interested in learning where the council acquired the aggregated data as our efforts to uncover data about occasions in which NPAH funded services have provided assistance have only uncovered State and Territory annual performance reports, not nationally aggregated data.

The White Paper made it clear that underpinning the new national approach to reducing homelessness is the principle that 'social inclusion drives our efforts' (page 19). The importance of providing increased opportunities for social inclusion and economic participation for people experiencing homelessness should not be overstated. People experiencing homelessness, particular those whose homelessness has been cyclical or long-term are often excluded from mainstream social structures though they will often have their own social networks.

Homelessness Australia sees the social inclusion agenda as having the potential to benefit people experiencing homelessness and people from backgrounds of intergenerational disadvantage.

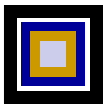
That said, the agenda has to date been largely conceptual and feedback from some of our members has been to query what tangible outcomes have resulted from the creation of the social inclusion agenda and the social inclusion board. Some have queried whether social exclusion is little more than a twenty first century concept aimed at sanitising poverty and disadvantage and framing it in a construct that places the individual at fault for having supposedly become excluded from mainstream economic and social structures.



Establish the Bea Miles Foundation to channel funding, in kind support and sponsor innovation and research to support the work of governments and the not-for-profit sector in combating homelessness.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: Apparently (according to FaHCSIA) former Minister Plibersek made the decision not to establish the Bea Miles Foundation because it would duplicate existing efforts by Philanthropy Australia who have established a Homelessness Affinity Group. This decision was not communicated to Homelessness Australia until recently. Given this decision, we have not included a rating into the overall assessment.



Implement new legislation to ensure people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness receive quality services and adequate support to meet their needs.

1	2	3 ✔	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Status: *Still waiting*. "Recognition legislation" is on the parliamentary agenda for 2012. We are awaiting a briefing on the exposure draft before we can assess its likely efficacy and scope.

An exposure draft is expected to be released later in 2012.

Discussion

One of the early conclusions from our review of the implementation of the White Paper (which we commenced in September 2011) was that while there seemed to be a great deal of information in the public domain that reported on the progress towards implementing key White Paper reforms, it was published on a variety of different websites and some materials such as preliminary NPAH performance reports and on different State and Territory web pages. Some of the material that has contributed to the findings detailed in this report card was discovered while conducting research for other pieces of work or when trying to locate information to assist us in building a case for what we believe must be included in the next National Affordable Housing Agreement and the next National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

It should be noted that this report card was produced between the last half of 2011 and the end of January 2012. Every effort was made to access information about White Paper progress to date that was publicly available at the time and attempts were made to contact relevant Government representatives.

Preparing a report card of this nature and seeking to evaluate what amount to comprehensive reforms to the funding arrangements for the homelessness sector and allied service providers has not been an easy task. More information and data is available from some new service models and initiatives than others.

The funding instrument for most of the White Paper initiatives, the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)* which tied funding to four core outcomes was not overly prescriptive and left jurisdictions with significant discretion over how they allocated partnership dollars. This has been positive in some respects as States and Territories have been able to develop program responses and service models that they believe add value to the homelessness response in their local and regional contexts.

It has however probably made the Australian Government's task of tracking which services are delivering what in each State and Territory more challenging.

It has also meant that measuring the impact of some initiatives is easier to quantify than for others, particularly in the case of the *A Place to Call Home* initiative where concrete data is in the public domain that tells us how many units of accommodation have been completed, how many are under construction and how many have been allocated and tenanted.

Other service models such as the FOYER developments that are being delivered in partnership with the AFL have provided good data that tells us how many have been accommodated, for how long and the types of education, employment and training that young residents are undertaking in exchange for their single room occupancy dwelling with security of tenure.

In NSW, Southern Youth and Family Services received money through the NPAH for the establishment of a FOYER service which is fully tenanted. This adds to a full suite of accommodation and support services that are enabling that provider to provide accommodation and support to young people across the continuum of care from crisis accommodation to transitional through to community housing with security of tenure and support to help young people to transition to independent living.

In the ACT, a "Foyer-like" model is up and running and supporting twenty young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It has been more difficult to obtain concrete data about the numbers of people assisted by other NPAH initiatives and service models and the support services they have provided. As is the case with other areas of human service delivery, some outcomes are more tangible and easier to document than others.

At an Australian Government level, FaHCSIA is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the overwhelming majority of initiatives detailed in the White Paper.

In addition, FaHCSIA provides funding for two programs that were earmarked for expansion in the White Paper; Reconnect and the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMS).

Agencies such as Centrelink have implemented a series of reforms that are improving the identification of customers who are either experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

The impact of these changes is difficult to quantify but Homelessness Australia enjoys a constructive working relationship with Centrelink and we are keen to explore how we might be able to make use of the homelessness indicator data. Measuring the benefits of other initiatives such as weekly payments is obviously more challenging in a report such as this.

The employment of the network of community engagement officers (CEOs) has been well received by providers in most jurisdictions but this has tended to depend on where services are located. The feedback from providers in the NT and Central Australia has been very positive.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is also working to improve its response to homelessness and the reforms to employment services have also been designed with the aim of seeing that people who are experiencing homelessness and unemployment are offered more appropriate and better tailored services from Job Services Australia providers.

The other Department that we need to see more evidence of an improved mainstream response to homelessness is the Department of Health and Ageing. The national mental health reform package will deliver substantial new funding for people with severe and persistent mental illness and people experiencing homelessness and mental illness but we really need to see formal linkages between the incoming National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health and the next National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Chronic illness, premature ageing and major physical health problems can also result from long periods of homelessness. We need to see health care reform align much more closely and overtly with the homelessness reform agenda.

Our members are also seeking an improved response to the problem of homelessness and housing insecurity among older Australians. The Productivity Commission report did not devote enough attention to how older people without secure accommodation will broker access to the aged care system in future years.

In addition, people who have experienced recurrent periods of homelessness often need aged care services and assisted care some 15-25 years before people with a stable housing history. The White Paper flagged the construction of one new specialist aged care facility for people at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness each year over four years. The Australian Government is delivering on this commitment made in the White Paper.

Homelessness Australia is aware that three services have been funded to date to expand accommodation and support models for older Australians with a history of housing instability and homelessness. In addition one of the largest aged care providers in South Australia has expanded its aged care programs for older people with a history of homelessness and has been funded to provide dedicated accommodation for this group.

THE VIEW FROM STATES AND TERRITORIES...

New South Wales

The New South Wales Government, sector peak bodies and services in New South Wales were invited to provide feedback about how the implementation of the White Paper in New South Wales is working to prevent and respond to homelessness.

The New South Wales Government declined the invitation to contribute information to our White Paper Report Card.

Sector peak bodies and services across New South Wales have provided input to Homelessness Australia about the implementation of the White Paper.

In NSW, it is difficult to assess the progress of many of the Homelessness Action Plan funded projects as little data on progress has been made publicly available. It is also true that several NSW HAP projects have started late due the significant work involved in establishing operating partnering and governance arrangements and recruitment of skilled staff.

Anecdotal information in relation to some of the innovative collaborations taking place in HAP projects suggests some optimistic results down the line. In some projects, there is meaningful and sustained collaboration between government and non-government partners and across the housing, health, community and corrective services fields.

Homelessness NSW understands that a further package of proposals to address the current underspending on HAP because of the late start and associated measures has been adopted by the NSW Government and has been with the Commonwealth since late November 2011 and so we await the announcement of this. We, like many others are advocating with the NSW Government for an open and consultative process to be established in which whatever longer term changes to the provision of specialist homelessness services arising from the HAP experience can be properly examined before its introduction post June 2013.

Like other jurisdictions, the 2010-11 AIHW data on SAAP services provided very sobering news about the continuing growth of certain population groups seeking assistance and the continuing high turn away rates. Whilst the impact of HAP projects would not have been expected to show up with these figures, we would hope that the August 2011 Census data, to be released in mid-2012, will show some improvement in the homelessness numbers, which HAOP projects may have contributed to.

The lack of sustainable low cost housing whether in community housing, with public authorities or in the private rental market remains a massive obstacle to reducing homelessness in NSW. If anything, the market has worsened during the period that the HAP projects have been operating in NSW. There appears to be some anecdotal joy, however, in sustaining tenancies of people at risk of homelessness in private rental and with the promise of new boarding house sector regulation and some innovation in new boarding house models, there may be some improvement in this type of low cost housing for people who are or at risk of homelessness over the next 5 years in some parts of the State.

In regional areas, the potential impacts of large scale coal seam gas and other mining ventures displacing low income households through the need for miners housing and associated trades especially during construction is an issue that several SHSs have raised with us, as is the continuing gentrification of residential parks in holiday destinations.

In addition, Women's services in NSW provided feedback to Homelessness Australia about the implementation of White Paper reforms to date.

Some services felt that there had been improved access to housing as a result of investment following the stimulus package for social housing.

The NSW Women's Refuge Movement provided the following feedback about the HAP capacity building project.

"...The capacity building project has been good at engaging the sector more in the reforms, however it is not possible to know how much traction the regional and state wide reports will get or if any of the actions suggested in these reports are progressed. Yrs 2 to 3 of the project are focused engaging the mainstream and increasing collaboration between SHS and other services..."

"our understanding is the DV services established in the Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney are working well. "

"Whilst there were many examples at the forums of responses aimed at improving integration much of this was being driven by SHS services, of course it is far more difficult for NGOs to get buy in from govt agencies if the will does not exist within those particular regions or government agencies. In many regions services reported on the need to improve responses from Police and to strengthen collaboration with Police, however I will note that there were a couple of really good partnerships with Police but this was dependent upon the Police Local Area Command (and no doubt the Local area commander)."

"Seems to be little understanding or articulation within policy frameworks and other govt actions that acknowledges the need for coordination between structures established to improve integration
within different policy frameworks and plans (eg lack of coordination between Regional Homelessness Committees and DV Regional Coordinators)."

"SHS services across the majority of regions also had commented on the lack of collaboration or engagement between Regional Homelessness Committees and SHS services with no defined communication strategies between RHCs and the SHS services. There is a lack of monitoring and reporting on what is being done at a regional level to improve coordination between mainstream services and SHS. This is the same for DV responses across the state there are some regions where more is happening than in other areas, there is a lack of monitoring and reporting on what is happening across the state. There is some frustration that attempts at improved coordination are occurring through one-off projects not on building long term coordination and integration across service systems."

"I don't know if it is realistic to attribute any reduction in homelessness in particular regions to one service or model on its own. If there has been reductions in particular region then consideration should be given to operations across the service system what has changed, how are the new service/models partnering within existing services, what actions have occurred in that region to improve integration. In any event I don't think the data or feedback from services is indicating any such change, in NSW it is difficult to think that there will be unless further action occurs to improve coordination and integration across broad range of systems and services or without longer term investment"

"Very little meaningful engagement with existing SHS services, see previous comments on Regional homelessness committees and SHS. So many, I believe, are frustrated with this overall lack of engagement, lack of understanding of the strengths of their services and how these could have been built upon. What is concerning to us is that whatever reforms do occur will be based on this limited understanding or knowledge of the existing service system."

"Responses need to be diverse and should aim to improve coordination between different service systems that respond to the different drivers of homelessness such as domestic and family violence. Increased understanding and recognition of the strengths of the existing services is needed and these strengths should be built upon."

"Very little attention has been paid to addressing homelessness driven domestic and family violence whilst the HAP did fund three DV services this is very little comparatively speaking. Other projects included women and children in their target groups but I have not seen any data from these services yet nor does there seem to be any recognition or articulation of the different needs for differ-

ent target groups."

(Client groups not served well by the White Paper include)

[regarding accompanying Children]." We might now be counting them as clients in their own right and whilst our members have dedicated child support workers very little action has been taken to improve service delivery and response to children who are homeless more broadly. As you mentioned before as DV was not a core outcome in NPAH this target group has not been served well in the NSW HAP with very little investment in this target group."

Victoria

The Victorian Government, the Council to Homeless Persons (Victoria), Domestic Violence Victoria and services in Victoria were all invited to provide feedback about how the White Paper is working to prevent and respond to homelessness in Victoria.

The Victorian Government has indicated that:

"...Unfortunately we are not in a position to contribute to the report card on the White Paper on Homelessness at this time. However, [we] look forward to reading the report once it is released..."

The sector in Victoria has provided mixed feedback about the impact of the White Paper and the funding that flowed from it for new programs and service models in Victoria.

Victoria established its *Opening Doors framework* in 2008 with the intention of providing equitable access to the resources of the homelessness service system and transitional housing managers (THMs) and to establish 'visible entry points' to the service system.

Local Area Service Networks (LASNs) were established in Department of Housing regions across Victoria. Each LASN is headed by a homelessness networker and there is also a networker for Indigenous services who works across the state.

There are indications that the *Opening Doors framework* has improved system accessibility and the appointment of a dedicated homelessness networker has helped to drive collaboration and constructive working relationships between service providers in each region.

Though the framework was established prior to the release of the White Paper, it meant that Victoria was well placed to implement one of the cornerstones of the White Paper approach to reducing homelessness, the 'no wrong door'.

The Australian and Victorian Governments have allocated $207.5 million to new programs and services under the NPAH.

The main initiatives in the Victorian Implementation plan are:

- Common Ground Elizabeth Street (118 units of permanent supportive housing)
- A regional FOYER like service providing 45 units of Single Room Occupancy accommodation for young people in regional Victoria
- 50 psycho-social support packages
- The expansion of the Social Housing Advocacy Support Program including in regional Victoria
- Assertive outreach for people sleeping rough and staying in rooming houses to support access to housing with support and security of tenure
- Housing support workers for people exiting prison
- Safe at Home models for women and children experiencing do-

mestic and family violence

- Expansion of support programs for Indigenous Tenants at Risk (the ITARP)
- Increased support for Indigenous women and children experiencing domestic and family violence in the Gippsland and Loddon-Mallee regions.

Feedback from the homelessness sector in Victoria has been mixed.

The sector notes that the Green Paper/White Paper process caused a great deal of excitement in Victoria as it made homelessness a public policy priority and led to a 'solutions oriented' approach to the issue.

The White Paper provided a great boost to worker morale and through the networkers it provided the drive for increased collaboration and a partnership approach to ending homelessness for people.

The sector also praised the significant investment in social housing under the Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) which provided funding for 4500 new social housing dwellings and restored thousands of others to an inhabitable standard. The sector notes that thousands of people at risk of homelessness including people on the priority waiting list for social housing because of domestic and family violence and homelessness are now being housed in these properties and this has increased the available exit points from the homelessness service system.

Another positive flowing from the White Paper that has been noted by the sector is that it confirmed that much of the good work being done by services in Victoria to end homelessness for people was reflective of good practice as articulated in the White Paper.

Domestic violence services noted that the implementation of eviction orders for perpetrators of domestic and family violence and the provision of support to stay in the family home that commences at the time the order is drafted was a positive step forward.

They noted that the response needs to be integrated and focus on victim safety and perpetrator accountability and that steps were being taken to ensure this was standard practice.

That said, services noted that there had been a steady increase in the number of reported cases of domestic and family violence to Victoria Police and this was placing enormous pressure on the service system, in particular refuges that were struggling to meet demand.

There is support for an increase in funding for domestic and family violence services in Victoria in particular refuges. Too many women are being placed in unsafe environments such as hotels and motels with limited outreach support because crisis services and refuges are full. This is placing the safety of women and children at risk.

The biggest concerns identified by the homelessness sec• The lack of consistent data documenting who is being supported by new service models and the types of support services being provided

- The lack of data documenting how new services are contributing to the delivery of outputs in the NPAH and how this is contributing to the achievement of the outcomes of the agreement
- There is limited evidence available to enable us to determine what service models are preventing/ending homelessness and those that are not
- The National Homelessness Research projects failed to meet all of the strategic directions of the White Paper. There were gaps in research projects in the areas of prevention and diversion, cost-effectiveness and young people leaving care
- Generally there does not seem to have been a systematic way of

choosing what to fund, based on what we need research to tell us about preventing and ending homelessness

- Comprehensive national and state level action-plans have not been developed. This has impacted both on capacity to meet the White Paper targets and on how effectively the states can collaborate
- The early momentum and enthusiasm the White Paper generated has waned somewhat in Victoria. Some members of the sector sense that one factor relates to homelessness no longer being as high a priority for the Federal Government
- Milestone reporting by the Government on outcomes achieved by the White Paper has been sporadic and not comprehensive
- It is difficult to assess its overall effectiveness in Victoria in terms of preventing homelessness and ending homelessness for people as there is a lack of data in the public domain in Victoria.

Additional feedback we received from the sector in Victoria was:

- The White Paper does not appear to have generated a new level of inter-sector collaboration or led to a discernible increase in services from other sectors entering the homelessness space. The exception to this has been Centrelink, which as noted, have introduced Community Engagement officers that link people experiencing homelessness with income support
- The absence of articulated KPIs makes measuring or determining outcomes problematical
- Good: homelessness as a policy priority, the commitment to ending homelessness, the positive energy it brought to the HSS, and
- Bad: no outcomes framework, loss of momentum.

Queensland

The Queensland Government, the state housing peak body and homelessness services in Queensland were all invited to provide feedback about how the White Paper is preventing and responding to homelessness in Queensland.

Some providers have told Homelessness Australia that they have concerns that the scale of most of the measures in the Queensland NPAH Implementation Plan will not be sizable enough to support sufficient numbers of people to reduce homelessness significantly over the next decade.

Homelessness Australia sees this as a significant risk inherent in all of the State and Territory Implementation Plans and notes that Queensland has designed its plan to ensure there is good geographical coverage by its new initiatives even if the numbers of people supported are small when compared with number believed to be homeless in Queensland on any given night and when compared with the high volume of people who are supported by specialist homelessness services but in part this is because of the longer term security of tenure offered by models such as permanent supportive housing.

The total value of the NPAH and *A Place to Call Home* investments in Queensland is $284.6 million with the Australian Government committing $135.1 million and the Queensland Government committing $149.5 million.

The main initiatives in the Queensland Implementation Plan are:

- 143 housing and support packages with at least 12 months security of tenure and support provision under the A Place to Call Home initiative (cost $19.999 million over 5 years)
- A 150 bed Common Ground-like facility of which 50 properties will be for people deemed 'chronically homeless', 50 will be for people at risk of homelessness and 50 will be for people on low incomes ($4.38 million capital works and $1.239 million recurrent

NPAH funding for support)

- Street to Home initiatives for rough sleepers (funded by NPAH, NBESP and social housing NP funds). ($8.374 million to support 2580 people)
- Youth Housing and Re-integration Services- Supervised community accommodation ($4.299 million to support up to 180 young people leaving detention over four years in Townsville)
- Expanding the Homeless Health Outreach Teams to the Sunshine Coast and Logan ($9.7 million over 4 years)
- Enhancing crisis accommodation across Queensland ($18 million over 5 years)
- Expanding the Rent Connect program to support up to 7000 additional people across Queensland
- Establishing Home Stay Support to assist 4200 vulnerable families, single people and older Australians in 15 locations across Queensland to address financial and behavioural issues placing their tenancies at risk ($19.238 million over 4 years
- Initiatives to prevent more than 3300 Queenslanders from exiting prisons, alcohol and other drug services, accident and emergency departments and statutory care into homelessness
- $2 million over four years for a Youth 'foyer-like' model to support 22 young people who are experiencing homelessness to become stably housed in exchange for participation in education, employment and training
- Bungalows for young people exiting state care
- Individualised care packages for young people leaving the care of the state ($25.2 million over 4 years)
- Aftercare service for young people leaving state care ($4 million over 4 years)
- Integrated re-integration service for offenders to transition to independent living
- Improved administration, system coordination and planning.

The Queensland Government has expressed concerns to the sector that the National Partnership may not be re-funded, and this is causing a great deal of anxiety.

The shortage of affordable rental housing, not only in Brisbane but also in towns near mine expansion sites such as Gladstone and Mackay is an often-reported problem.

Some advocates in Queensland believe a second social housing stimulus is needed in order to begin to address critical gaps in housing supply in that state.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, the Department of Child Protection is the lead agency for the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

The Western Australian government provided Homelessness Australia with information relating to their work.

The Western Australian Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) is fully operational and achieving excellent results in the first full year of operation. Eighty new specialist homelessness services are operating across the state and providing support to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to:

- Obtain accommodation and sustain their tenancy in the long term
- Stabilise 'at risk' tenancies and address the issues impacting on the tenancy
- Remain in their own home following domestic violence, when it is safe for them to do so, and/or

- Minimise the impact of homelessness on children in order to break the cycle of intergenerational homelessness.

Fourteen new NPAH funded initiatives have been established across the State and the community services sector has been funded to employ an additional 110 workers to support people to obtain and maintain long term stable housing. All new initiatives are operating and services are working with clients. In 2010-11, the target for all programs was for 2,159 clients to be assisted under the NPAH. Preliminary data from service providers indicates this target has been exceeded with over 2,700 primary clients assisted. In addition to these primary clients, their accompanying family members are also beneficiaries of the services, and therefore the overall impact of the NPAH goes well beyond the 2,700 primary clients.

The NPAH funding has been critical in providing the opportunity to leverage reform in the existing homelessness service system in Western Australia. NPAH services do not operate in isolation, but rather are provided by specialist homelessness services with specific expertise in supporting people who are homeless or at risk. The roll out of the NPAH has brought both National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and NPAH specialist homelessness services together to work collaboratively with mutual clients and critically has provided the impetus for specialist homelessness services to work in an integrated manner with mainstream services.

Five of the new NPAH programs involve assisting people who are homeless to find appropriate long term housing, with support provided to ensure the tenancy is sustainable in the long term. This housing is sourced through the Department of Housing's existing stock allocations and through new properties provided through the Social Housing and National Building and Jobs Plan National Partnerships. In addition, housing support workers assist people who are homeless to access community housing, private rental and other appropriate accommodation options. In the first year of the program, approximately 50% of the properties for people supported through these programs have been provided by the Department of Housing.

The Western Australian State Plan on Homelessness 2010-13: Opening Doors to Address Homelessness provides the overarching framework for communities to work together to address homelessness. The State Plan outlines the outcomes and key principles for implementing an improved integrated approach to homelessness and aims to bring all relevant agencies and services to work together to open doors and improve circumstances for people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. It also identifies the action areas to support flexible and responsive services for people when they are homeless and to prevent people from slipping back into homelessness.

The diversity of Western Australia and the unique issues across the regions require customised approaches. Based on the State Plan's overarching outcomes, principles and action areas, regional plans have been developed across the state to implement an integrated service system responding to homelessness at a local level. Mainstream agencies, community services sector and specialist homelessness services have all contributed to the reform of the system in line with the principles and outcomes set out in the State Plan. The local regional plans identify ways in which local agencies and work practices can contribute to the reform agenda.

Housing affordability is a very significant issue in Western Australia and will continue to impact on the capacity of the most vulnerable to move from homelessness into long term, stable housing. In September 2010, a family in Perth earning a median income of $73,300 per annum needed 6.5 times their annual income to purchase a property - as opposed to 3.9 times their annual income in 2000[v]. It has also become extremely difficult for low income earners to find appropriate rental accommodation, with only four per cent of rentals in Perth being affordable for people earning less than $35,000 per annum as at December 2010.

In order to address this issue, in May 2011, the State Government released the *Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-20: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing* which aims to provide at least 20,000 more affordable homes for people on low to moderate incomes over the next 10 years. The strategy outlines how the Government will work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, non-government agencies and local governments to increase the supply of social and affordable homes.

The Western Australian Implementation Plan is making a significant contribution to the following outcomes of the NPAH:

(a) Fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough

(b) Fewer people will become homeless more than once

(c) People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation, and

(d) People at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

The NPAH programs are specifically designed to address these outcomes. New NPAH services are operating and supporting people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness across the state. As stated previously, services are achieving excellent results, with preliminary data indicating over 2,700 clients were assisted in 2010-11. Many of these clients are accompanied by family members including partners, children and other extended family also befitting from the programs.

The NPAH also complements and builds on the existing homeless service system and has been an important mechanism for leveraging reform in the way mainstream and specialist homelessness services respond to the needs of people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. Western Australia is working towards a holistic service system that builds on the strengths of the existing services and moves towards a fully integrated homelessness response in Western Australia.

Improving service integration is a key principle underpinning all NPAH activities in Western Australia. Significant effort has been invested in strengthening and developing relationships between specialist homelessness services and mainstream services, in order to ensure people are able to access the most appropriate services to sustain their housing long term.

A number of regular meetings and forums are in place to promote a better connected service system. These include; Western Australian Council on Homelessness (WACH); NPAH Senior Officers Group, NPAH Service Provider Forums, and Centrelink Reference Group. Each of these plays an important role in fostering stronger integration and a strategic focus on homelessness across government; between community services sector providers; and across mainstream and specialist homelessness services.

Testimony from senior managers of specialist homelessness services, including managers of agencies that have not received funding for NPAH services, indicates the NPAH services are making a significant impact on the outcomes for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

Through the Western Australian Council on Homelessness (WACH) and the NPAH Senior Officers Group, Government agencies have indicated that referring mainstream agencies, such as mental health inpatient units, drug and alcohol treatment services and correctional facilities, report that the programs are meeting a significant need and achieving excellent results for clients involved with these government and mainstream agencies.

The Department for Child Protection is working in partnership with the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) known as the Women's Council. The partnership has been instrumental in the successful development and implementation of the *Safe at Home* and *Domestic Violence Outreach* Programs in Western Australia.

The partnership approach with the Women's Council recognises the expertise of

the existing domestic violence sector in working with women and children following domestic violence. The new services are being provided by existing domestic violence refuges and this ensures an integrated response for women experiencing domestic violence. It also provides the opportunity to move the sector forward in the understanding of new service models and other options for women and children. The result has positioned the sector for future broader service system reforms.

Additional mapping and reform of the domestic violence sector, including women's refuges, is currently being undertaken and will include revising the service standards and developing a more integrated service system. Ongoing sector reform will occur, from a service system perspective with an emphasis on working together to build a comprehensive response to domestic violence to allow ease of access between services.

A significant achievement of the program is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WA Police and the non-government service providers. The MOU allows for the WA Police to provide an incident report to non-government services. This is an important component that ensures service providers have the full picture of the incident before they make contact with victims or perpetrators and embeds the program into WA Police procedures. WA Police make an offer for support when attending a domestic violence incident to both the victim and perpetrator if both parties are present. Police make referrals to the relevant support service as soon as practicable following the domestic violence incident by email with the Detected Incident Report attached.

The signing of the MOU with the WA Police underpins the new working relationship and demonstrates a commitment for all parties to ensure a coordinated response for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

A vital component of the sector reform is the new legislation to strengthen Violence Restraining Orders (VROs). One of the main features of the legislation is the 'presumption of imprisonment' when the VRO is breached three times. Another valuable feature of the legislation will allow WA Police to extend the duration of the on-the-spot VROs (Police Orders) they can hand out from 24 to 72 hours without needing victim consent. This removes the respondent from the situation so that the victim has more time to decide if they would like to go to court and apply for a more permanent order and to link into a support service. Changes to the legislation provide additional protection to women and children remaining in their own homes following domestic violence.

The development, implementation and ongoing learnings from *Safe at Home* and *Domestic Violence Outreach* services, has enabled the Women's Council to be well informed about the issues experienced for women who choose to stay safe at home where appropriate following removal of the perpetrator. As a result, the Women's Council has provided advice to ensure tenancy legislation supports positive outcomes for women experiencing domestic violence when the *Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2011* was introduced into the Parliament of Western Australia on 18 May 2011.

In Western Australia, due to the implementation of new support services such as the Case Management and Coordination Services and the Department of Child Protection co-located workers in Police Stations, it will be vital to monitor the interface between services to ensure an appropriate response and a seamless referral process for women and children. The Women's Council will facilitate this process and inform the new directions of the domestic violence service system.

The collaboration with the WA Police, the Women's Council, the domestic violence sector and the Department for Child Protection in the development and implementation of NPAH *Safe at Home* and *Domestic Violence Outreach* has been critical in providing a fully integrated response for women and children experiencing domestic violence. A response to the perpetrator of the

violence, to maximise the safety for women and children, is also provided, and works in collaboration with *Safe at Home* and *Domestic Violence Outreach* services.

NPAH specialist homelessness services have indicated the inclusion of flexible, self-directed brokerage funding into the overall homelessness responses has been a critical success factor and made a significant impact on client outcomes. Brokerage funding has been used to purchase services or goods to address individual client needs and identified barriers to optimise case management outcomes. The use of funds has been flexible and tailored to the individual to assist clients prevent homelessness or to move out of and beyond homelessness. Clients have been supported to recognise their own strengths and issues and to identify possible solutions within a case management approach and assistance is provided in a way that maintains client dignity and enhances their self-reliance. Case studies have demonstrated a variety of uses for brokerage funds and the significant impact this flexible funding can have on a clients.

A key strategy in continuous quality improvement and sharing the learning to promote best practice regarding service integration and evidence planning is the development of Best Practice Forums for specialist homelessness services. The Department and Western Australian Council on Homelessness hosts regular forums for workers in specialist homelessness services, involving NAHA and NPAH services as well as mainstream government agencies to ensure quality services are provided for clients by providing training and information for workers to assist in accessing mainstream services for clients. For example, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and a number of Job Services Australia providers conducted workshops and presented information at the April 2011 forum on assisting clients to access services forging greater access and improved referral processes, better information at the local level.

These forums facilitate improved access to services at the local level and provide the opportunity for mainstream service providers to better understand how specialist homelessness services operate at the local level, referral and assessment processes and the needs of people experiencing homelessness. The forums also provide valuable workforce development opportunity for specialist homelessness service workers, in particular for those workers from rural and remote locations to come together and identify strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities to achieve better outcomes. They are a key strategy in bringing mainstream and specialist homelessness services together to enhance service integration for mutual clients.

Unlike most jurisdictions, Western Australia focused much of its NPAH money on expanding existing services with a proven track record of ending homelessness for their clients.

Organisations generally report being happy with the way the NPAH Implementation Plan was designed and felt that consultations were well targeted and that the views of the sector were both heard and significantly, taken on board when determining how to utilise the new funding to improve the service system.

Many providers have told Homelessness Australia that they believe that WA has tried to make good use of the $135 million it received in NPAH funding. Services caution however, that the number of people supported will not be sufficient to achieve the size of reduction in homelessness necessary to ensure WA meets its share of the headline goal of halving homelessness by 2020.

One of the more successful initiatives to date has been the *A Place to Call Home* initiative which has seen 34 properties purchased and support delivered for at least 13 months with security of tenure by 13 community services organisations: Anglicare, Centrecare, the Fremantle Multicultural Centre, Hills Community Support Group, Mercycare, Mission Australia, Ruah Community Services, St Bartholomew's House, St Patrick's Community Support, the Salvation Army and Swan Emergency Accommodation.

Western Australia has also used NPAH funding to expand its private rental tenancy support services to ensure there is greater geographical coverage in regional cen-

tres outside of Perth.

The expanded services are a core component of Western Australia's early intervention and prevention focus of its White Paper reforms. The WA division of the Red Cross Society, Anglicare, the Multicultural Services Centre, Anglicare- Great Southern and Accord West are the agencies who have been funded to deliver expanded services.

They will contribute to the achievement of the second outcome of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness which seeks to prevent people from becoming homeless by intervening early after problems emerge in tenancies and connecting people to appropriate tenancy support services.

The reach of its public housing tenancy support services will also be expanded.

This will be important given recent changes public housing policy in Western Australia which enable Housing WA to evict tenants from public housing if 'three strikes' are recorded against them in a move that would seem to contradict the homelessness prevention focus and the ethos of the WA NPAH implementation plan.

Homelessness Australia has received feedback from service providers in WA about the impact of the policy with reports that Aboriginal tenants and people with living with mental illness are being disproportionately affected by the policy because of reported breaches for 'anti-social behaviour' which have, we are informed, included crying loudly.

The reason this policy is discussed here is because Homelessness Australia believes in the White Paper principle that 'homelessness is everyone's responsibility'. This includes ensuring that policies that enhance prevention of homelessness such as tenancy support programs are not undermined by contradictory policies in other areas of housing and community services.

The WA Implementation Plan also includes funding for Homelessness Accommodation Support Workers who are based in specialist homelessness services in WA in a number of sites in metropolitan Perth as well as regional areas including Bunbury, Derby, Esperance, the goldfields, great southern, the Pilbara and the Wheat-belt. Their main role is to assist people exiting specialist homelessness services to address a range of issues that impact on their ability to access and sustain stabled housing including employment, health, financial management health and social integration.

Western Australia has established a partnership of nine agencies to deliver assertive outreach, clinical services, housing support and rapid access to housing through Federation Housing and Housing WA.

WA is also delivering assertive outreach to rough sleepers in the Kimberley and Goldfields areas of the State in response to Census data that showed that both of these regions had high rates of rough sleeping.

The fourth outcome of the NPAH required States and Territories to develop programs and services that would assist people leaving alcohol and other drug treatment services, care and protection, hospitals, mental health settings and those serving prison sentences of twelve months or longer to attain stable housing.

This outcome is the core component of the policy of 'no exits into homelessness' from these settings. WA has funded housing support workers in corrective services drug and alcohol and mental health services and constructed new units of accommodation for young people leaving child protection settings. These are managed by Parkerville Children and Youth Care.

For its optional output under the NPAH, WA has chosen to concentrate its efforts on enhancing the response to women and children at risk of or experiencing homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence. They have done this by increasing support dollars for children in specialist homelessness

services, the implementation of 'safe at home' models that aim to support women and children to remain safely in the family home and through the expansion of domestic and family violence outreach services in regional, rural and remote locations.

Domestic and family violence services were positive about aspects of the WA implementation plan, in particular the new safe at home models, the support component of which went to tender for refuges and specialist domestic and family violence services. Four such models have rolled out in metropolitan Perth and two in rural areas.

The increased funding to support the provision of services for children in refuges was also welcomed.

The feedback from the sector in WA has been largely positive. There have been many positives flowing from the White Paper implementation in WA. The biggest positive identified by the sector is the recognition at both a state and national level that homelessness is a significant issue that requires a whole of government and whole of community response to find solutions.

The housing peak also noted that the implementation plan for the NPAH was realised in a timely manner and most of the new and expanded initiatives are up and running and providing accommodation and support.

The increased brokerage funding is also greatly appreciated by services who constantly struggle to meet demand for accommodation and support.

The sector also notes that a number of innovative programs and service models have been funded by the NPAH and expansions to programs that were achieving good outcomes have boosted the capacity of the service system to support people with higher needs.

The sector also sees the development of strategic plans to address homelessness for specific demographics and at a regional level as positive and they note the establishment of the WA council on homelessness as further evidence that the WA Government is committed to addressing the issue.

There is much work to be done in order to address deeper, structural problems that contribute to homelessness and housing insecurity however.

In spite of the significant new funding for social housing in WA, waiting lists remain very long. The average wait for priority housing in metropolitan Perth is 78 weeks and if you do not meet the criteria for priority listing, the wait can be as long as eight years.

The sector believes there is a need to significantly increase affordable housing supply in WA as there is currently a dearth of accommodation options for people with low support but critical housing needs. This is primarily due to a dysfunctional private rental market particularly in areas in and around mining sites where the rent can be as high as $1400 per week for a three bedroom brick- veneer house.

Homelessness Australia received case studies of people who had been living in cars for twelve, fifteen and twenty months. In one case, a couple are willing and able to work and require minimal support as they have a recent rent history. Their biggest need is a rental property that is affordable. Like many people experiencing homelessness, they face relatively straightforward barriers to finding employment such as the inability to bathe/shower easily each day and the high cost of transport (they have to leave the Perth CBD/inner-city each night to avoid being fined.

All services that provided feedback to Homelessness Australia cited the inability to access social housing and affordable private rental properties as two of the biggest barriers to ending homelessness for people in WA. The flip-side of the mining boom that has generated significant economic growth and made WA the economic envy of the nation, is a surge in private rental prices not only in Perth but also around the Gascoyne, Goldfields, Kimberley and Pilbara regions where three bedroom houses are often listed at more than $1000 per week making them cost-prohibitive for people not directly employed by the mining industry.

There is a shortage of accommodation for older people in WA and couples without children.

The lack of exit points means that people are staying in homelessness services longer even when they are housing ready.

Some providers felt that the roll-out of the implementation plan was very rushed.

The next major issue highlighted by providers in WA was the continuing inability to access mental health and primary health care services in a timely manner.

As our research for a recent policy paper on mental health and homelessness found, this is an issue for people experiencing homelessness across Australia and one that requires urgent attention.

Services in WA report that the 'street doctor' is a very effective service but cannot attend to the volume of cases that homelessness services are dealing with. There is an urgent need to increase access to GP services as well as mental health, primary health and specialist services.

Services report that there have been some 'amazing outcomes' for people sleeping rough in WA.

South Australia

In the months prior to the release of the White Paper, the then Department of Families and Communities commenced an extensive reform process in preparation for the changes to funding arrangements for specialist homelessness services that the replacement of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and the loss of SAAP as a dedicated homelessness program foreshadowed.

South Australia had already established a *Street to Home* program in 2005 and a Common Ground development above the old interstate bus terminal in 2008 following visits by Common Ground founder Rosanne Haggerty as part of former Premier Mike Rann's *Thinkers in Residence* program and arising out of the *Smart Moves: Spending to Saving, Streets to Home* report.

These programs are now embedded in the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and *Street to Home* initiatives for the so-called 'chronically homeless' are being established in every jurisdiction while Common Ground supportive housing models are being established in each of the six states with a feasibility study underway in the ACT as well.

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion lists the following highlights in the SA homelessness strategy 2009-2013 that have been funded under the NPAH and are anticipated to contribute to the achievement of the core outputs in the agreement:

- Common Ground Port Augusta (funded by A Place to Call Home money.) $5.6 million in 'start-up' costs plus $1 million recurrent funding over four years
- The Ladder St Vincent Street Foyer development (funded through a partnership between the AFLPA and Housing SA using A Place to Call Home funds, support delivered by St. John's Youth Services). $9.5 million 'start-up capital', plus $2 million in recurrent support funding over four years
- The Uno Apartments (mixed tenure development in the CBD using NBESP money and incorporating St John's youth homelessness services, affordable rental apartments and affordable home-purchase dwellings)
- The Aged Housing and Assistance Service (A partnership between Housing SA and Helping Hand Aged Care)

- The Integrated Housing Exits Program (housing and support for ex-prisoners).

In addition, South Australia has expanded the capacity of its pre-existing *Street to Home* program and the successful *Supported Tenancy Program* is now a service element incorporated into generic homelessness services' agreements in SA.

The new initiative funded under the NPAH is the Intensive Tenancy Support Program which aims to prevent 725 families from being evicted from Housing SA properties each year by connecting them to NGOs who will deliver support packages to address issues placing families at risk of eviction.

The *Street to Home* philosophy of assertive outreach is being applied to the *regional assertive outreach initiative* which will support 220 rough sleepers per annum to access stable housing (should it be available).

Other initiatives include the expansion of the Therapeutic Youth Family Reunification Service (formerly known as Ruby's), the establishment of a *Perpetrator Housing Program* and the development of a service model for young people aged 12-15 years, something that had long been identified as a gap in that state.

In addition, in line with the fourth outcome of the NPAH, South Australia expanded existing service models for guardianship kids and young people leaving care and its Transitional Liaison Officer program which assists people to connect to accommodation prior to being discharged from the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

In addition to successful programs supporting people to access housing and remain housed following exit from prison, delivered by the Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Service (OARS) Community Transitions, SA has created the *Integrated Housing Exits Program* for people exiting different care and protection settings in SA including prisons and secure care/juvenile justice settings.

The Integrated Housing exits program will provide 84 housing and support packages to people leaving care and protection settings each year and is intended to ensure that people can access the full range of support services that they need to transition to independent living.

The program will support sixty-four adults and twenty young people each year. Housing has been funded via the NBESP.

South Australia has also recently initiated *intervention orders* in response to substantiated reports of domestic and family violence.

Homelessness Australia understands that the *intervention orders* provide SAPOL with the authority to evict perpetrators of domestic violence from the family home while arrangements are made to support those exposed to the violence to find safety and eventually return to the family home when it is safe to do so.

We are awaiting more information about this measure but it seems to be consistent with the principles of *safe at home* models rolling out in other jurisdictions.

South Australia undertook comprehensive reforms to its homelessness service delivery system and established preferred provider panels for housing and support.

South Australia has undertaken to clearly delineate housing/tenancy management functions from the provision of support for people who are in community and Housing SA tenancies of 6 months or longer who are covered by the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995.*

The Department believes the reforms are helping to drive integration within the homelessness service delivery system and a core component of this integrated approach has been the establishment of a 'no wrong door' model of service access which includes three homelessness gateways:

- Youth gateway (formerly Trace A Place)
- Generic gateway
- Domestic and Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway.

The gateways are hosted by NGOs and based in the Adelaide CBD. In Housing SA regions (outside of the CBD), the reforms have meant that services are now effectively gateways, of which there are four:

- Regional youth service
- Regional ATSI service
- Regional generic service
- Regional domestic and Aboriginal family violence service.

In addition to the reforms to system access, South Australia allocated approximately $3 million (according to Housing SA) of NPAH funds to the development and operationalisation of the *Homeless 2 Home* data collection and client management system which it has successful aligned with the new national data collection system hosted by Infoxchange on behalf of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The reform process and the establishment of the new data collection and client management system are key components of the state's *homeless to home* strategy that is focused on early intervention, service system integration and a 'housing first' approach to the provision of supportive housing.

In addition, the SA NPAH implementation plan set aside some $700,000 in funding for workforce development initiatives. Homelessness Australia has not been able to determine how this was allocated but understands that a component of the funding went to Homelessness SA.

The reform process, in particular the two rounds of competitive tendering caused a great deal of anxiety within the homelessness sector in South Australia.

The sector and in particular service providers in inner-city Adelaide have informed Homelessness Australia that they believe the process of determining preferred support providers and preferred housing providers and tendering for service offers was incredibly damaging for sector morale.

Furthermore, some providers have stated that it had create a culture of suspicion and 'protecting your patch' where previously services had freely shared information and worked closely together to maximise use of finite resources.

Some providers have expressed serious concerns about the consultation processes around the reforms and have stated that they felt some services were excluded from consultations and in any case the sector was only invited to receive information about what would happen to it rather than being invited to provide feedback about how the 'reforms' could work best for all parties.

Another major concern expressed by providers in South Australia is that they feel they are lacking in their ability to advocate on behalf of the sector without being threatened with a loss of funding. This is seen as a consequence of an unfunded homelessness peak body which means that individual providers elected to the board of Homelessness SA are required to do the advocacy. This places them in a difficult position because if they speak out as individuals during a tendering process, there is a real fear that their service will lose funding.

The Independent Community-wide Homelessness Administrators Group report highlights this problem in its presentation of findings from a survey of providers' views about the reform process; it found:

- 93% agreed that fear of retribution (funding loss) exists in the homelessness sector about speaking out in disagreement with Government
- 80% agreed that SA lacks strong, independent voices on homelessness issues
- 85% agreed that there had been negative outcomes for clients as

a result of the 'reforms'

- 67% disagreed that there was more diversity in services provided
- 67% agreed that collaboration, constructive working relationships and communications between providers and Government had deteriorated as a result of homelessness reforms.

In addition, the sector in South Australia reports always having to do 'more with less', despite the significant new funding that came to the sector via the NPAH. All providers surveyed stated that they did not believe funding allocated to their services reflected the true cost of service delivery.

There was strong support for the outcomes of the reform process, namely;

- Halving overall homelessness by 2020
- Providing increased accommodation/housing options for rough sleepers
- Increased integration of the service delivery system
- Improved access to homelessness services
- Longer term support attached to housing
- Faster access to housing (for some cohorts) and
- Children being counted as clients and receiving services in their own right.

There were also significant concerns about the process of delivering the reform agenda with most services reporting that consultation was poor, they felt reform was being "done to them" and that it was not being implemented as 'a partnership approach'.

The sector reported having developed positive, constructive working relationships with other providers, mainstream agencies and the funding body in the past. There was a sense that these relationships were harmed by the competitive tendering rounds and that there was less collaboration and service integration now than there had been previously.

The following negative outcomes were reported by services:

- Increased administration and less client centred time
- Increased competition and less collaboration between services
- An inordinate amount of time was spent on getting tenders right
- There are fears about the future role and function of day centres
- There has been a significant drop in morale
- There has been a reduction in sector diversity
- There is an increased need to rely on the services of volunteers as paid staff cannot meet the increase in demand for services
- There is an awareness of not being listened to by Government
- There has been a proliferation of assessment and referral agencies but no commensurate increase in beds
- Secrecy- not answering questions about access
- There are real concerns about employment security
- Referral processes are more difficult, not less following the reforms
- There has reportedly been an increase in Government staffing to manage the White Paper implementation but no increase in funding for workers at a service level
- Workers and clients are overwhelmed by the amount of information they are required to provide and data entry requirements are a major burden
- Smaller providers are being squeezed out of the sector leading to consolidation and less client choice
- Micro-management of services is frustrating
- Poor contracting practices are inhibiting flexibility and service planning

- Mainstream agencies have not improved their response to homelessness (Centrelink seen as an exception)
- SA's 'new' data/referral/stats base program has created a whole lot of headaches for services, and doing it on our own – i.e. the only state to do it differently from the rest of Australia, is not best use of time and resources. Workers have had to use huge amounts of time learning the system, making it work for the clients, and ultimately this takes away from client service time, and
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people were not recognised at all (this is a particular concern for the domestic and family violence sector).

The separation of property/tenancy management from support was not received well by some services who believe they were well placed to provide both.

The other major concern that has been conveyed quite strongly to Homelessness Australia is the need for better access to mental health services.

Mental health reform was the subject of a landmark report by the Social Inclusion Unit in SA but homelessness services report getting access to the services they need is more difficult than ever.

The sector has reported positive outcomes from the reform process too, these can be summarised as follows:

- KPIs are now clearer
- Improved data collection may mean trends in homelessness are better captured and responded to
- People can access the system for easily (even if they can't exit it)
- New service models offering long term accommodation and support are positive
- A focus on regional alignment and the creation of regional roundtables may in time improve collaboration
- Youth services report that they fared comparatively well out of the reform process
- There has been improved access to social housing for people experiencing homelessness as a result of the stimulus
- There is support for the goals and targets in the White Paper
- Children are now counted as clients in their own right and able to receive a service
- Support is able to be provided for longer periods of time
- The focus on long-term supportive housing as a homelessness solution is good but needs to be extended beyond rough sleepers, and
- The separation of domestic and family violence from homelessness has been welcomed by many domestic and family violence services but not others.

In addition to the concerns and benefits outlined above, the lack of exit points is a major issue for many services in SA but was particularly highlighted by providers of generalist services.

While SA is doing better than many states and territories as median weekly rental costs are lower and vacancy rates are higher, private rental is still too expensive and difficult to access for people experiencing homelessness due to housing discrimination and strong competition for rental properties.

Finally, in a recent submission in response to the Housing Strategy Green Paper, Shelter SA expressed significant concerns about the methodological accuracy of the inner-city street counts that were used by the Social Inclusion Unit and the former Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon. Jennifer Rankine, MHA to make the claim that rough sleeping had been

halved in inner-city Adelaide since the counts had commenced in 2007. Shelter SA was blunt in its submission; recommending:

> *"State Government to remove all references to halving the number of rough sleepers in the inner city from the Strategy and government websites."*

This criticism has been backed by some service providers who have told Homelessness Australia that people who are sleeping rough have taken to "avoiding the day centres" on the mornings on which the counts are conducted.

Other recommendations in the Shelter SA submission were:

- State Government to cease conducting the Street Count survey unless the ethics around the way it is administered and reported are reviewed and changes implemented
- State Government to work towards increasing public awareness of how to access homelessness services and counter negative experiences of accessing emergency assistance
- Instead of comparing inputs to outputs (funding versus numbers of clients), State Government must compare inputs to need AND outputs to outcomes, to measure quality and the impact of services on clients. For example, when a service has been accessed by a homeless person there are often no further details about whether that led to an appropriate intervention or other outcomes for the client
- State Government to develop research funding applications to access funding (separate from that allocated to homelessness services) to measure outcomes and the quality of services being delivered, according to clients
- State Government to consult homelessness service providers to examine how to reduce the impact of data entry requirements on direct service provision and make changes accordingly
- State Government review and refine its competitive tendering process to allow agencies to work together and foster collaboration for the benefit of clients.

Concerns about a lack of access to housing expressed to Homelessness Australia during our consultations for this report card were reflected at a 2011 Shelter SA consultation that found:

> *"The 2011 Shelter consultation participants also flagged that a lack of housing is a critical issue, especially emergency accommodation that affects the capacity of homelessness services to respond appropriately to crisis situations."*

Tasmania

Housing Tasmania's provided input to Homelessness Australia. There are six major initiatives under the Tasmanian Implementation Plan to address pressure points and gaps in the specialist homelessness service system. The initiatives are:

- KEYS to the Future service – previously called the Same House Different Landlord program
- Stay service – previously called the Specialist Intervention Tenancy Service
- Supported Accommodation Facilities – previously called Dedicated Homeless Facilities
- Service Coordination and Improvement Program including the Tasmanian Housing Register, the Common Assessment Framework and Tools, and the Support and Accommodation Assistance Review
- Tasmanian Homelessness Plan 2010-2013: Coming in from the cold
- Workforce Capacity Audit and Development Plan.

Five new supported accommodation facilities are being established across Tasmania. The facilities are located at:

- Liverpool Street, Hobart

- Campbell Street, Hobart
- Grove Street, Ulverstone
- Thistle Street, Launceston
- York Street, Launceston (a dedicated youth facility).

Together, the five facilities will provide an additional 165 units of safe and affordable accommodation.

In addition to the independent units, each development will also include on-site manager's accommodation, office spaces for support staff, communal areas such as kitchen and laundry facilities and space for other opportunities such as an internet café, meeting and training facilities and rooms for visiting support services. The provision of on-site support will assist people to access education, training and employment opportunities, and develop independent living skills.

The 'Dedicated Homelessness Facilities' initiative within the original Tasmanian Implementation Plan was intended to provide long-term housing exclusively for people who were homeless. However, community consultation for the dedicated youth facility in Launceston reinforced the fact that communities are often opposed to high density housing for homeless people or people perceived to have high support needs. It was felt that a 'mixed model' of tenant support needs would be better received by the local communities. Moreover, it was acknowledged that mixed models of support result in better economic, educational and social outcomes for tenants and improved financial viability for housing providers.

The final operational model was developed in consultation with a Working Group which included representatives of specialist homelessness and mainstream services. It was agreed that the facilities would accommodate a mix of tenants including people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and on low incomes. It was projected that around 20 per cent of tenants would have medium to high support needs. The initiative was renamed 'supported accommodation facilities' to reflect the changes to the model.

The Tasmanian Government says that it has adopted a long-term view of homelessness reforms in the state. Reviewing the achievements since the commencement of the NAHA and NPAH in 2009, Housing Tasmania notes the following:

- In 2009-2010 in Tasmania there was a focus on planning to establish new initiatives with an emphasis on best practice, research evidence and financial modelling. This was to ensure that new initiatives address service gaps, meet client outcomes and are viable within the budget provisions
- In 2010-2011 there has been a focus on implementation. Many of the new initiatives have now been delivered and excellent outcomes from programs can now be seen.

There is also a significant focus on integration and service system reform.

The Tasmanian Homelessness Plan 2010-2013: *Coming in from the cold* was launched in September 2010. This is a whole-of-government and community approach to preventing and responding to homelessness. There has been excellent commitment to the Plan and Housing Tasmania notes that actions arising from the strategy are progressing well.

The Tasmanian Government has made 'service system integration' a core component of its homelessness implementation plan and the 'Coming in from the Cold' homelessness strategy.

A number of service integration initiatives have completed planning, consultation and change management activities and are well on the way to improving integration between housing, homelessness and mainstream services.

The review of the service system under the Support and Accommodation Assistance Review is well underway. Many project stages have been achieved:

- Sector consultation
- Analysis of the current and future demands on the service system and;
- The identification of existing services gaps, duplications and opportunities to improve client outcomes.

The KPMG paper has proposed three models for a new service system in Tasmania for the sector to consider. All of the models would see the establishment of a single access 'front door' or 'gateway' to the homelessness service system and the proposed Tasmanian Housing Register (THR).

The sector in Tasmania is rightly very concerned about the potential wide-reaching implications of the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Review for Tasmania.

What KPMG has proposed is not 'reform' but a complete transformation of the homelessness service delivery system in Tasmania.

The three models proposed would require a significant transfer of services to the front end of the service system.

The reforms will require a major reorganisation of the service system and may trigger significant changes to staffing levels in organisations.

The sector is concerned that it is not being listened to and that models of best practice are being presented by KPMG with limited evidence demonstrating to the sector how they will work in practice and how they will improve outcomes for clients.

Tasmanian providers have reported that consultation around the Tasmanian Homelessness Strategy, *Coming in from the Cold* could have been better and there is a sense that the strategy is being imposed on the sector rather than being implemented in partnership.

In addition to conveying significant concerns to Homelessness Australia about the potential implications of the KPMG review, the following feedback was provided about the implementation of White Paper Reforms in Tasmania.

- Specialist Intervention Tenancy Service (since renamed STAY) – 100 households to be supported (25 in each region – NW, Nth SE & SW) intensively by support workers. Households are traditionally those with high and complex needs/multiple needs/difficult to house. This service is currently providing support in excess to the 100 households initially targeted (although those over and above the quota will obviously not be provided with a Housing Tas property through the KEYS program)
- Same House Different Landlord Program (since renamed KEYS) – 100 properties across the state – same regions as above for those STAY clients to move straight into – principle of getting people immediately into a house they can stay in long term so issues leading to homelessness can be worked through and they can get established within their community – children settled into school etc. Support from STAY and KEYS is up to 2 years at which time support would (hopefully) have tapered off/been transferred and be low level and leases would transfer to general public housing leases.
- RFPs were sought for both above programs with Centacare in partnership with Red Cross being announced as successful for the STAY program State-wide and Colony 47 in partnership with mainland provider Housing Choices as successful for KEYS (towards the end of last year). Referrals have been made to these services and they are at capacity (in terms of referrals) and in the throes of getting people into properties.

There have been difficulties getting properties from Housing Tas to meet the 100 property quota and at this time they still do not have the 100 properties. Initially

the 100 properties were going to all be new however the number of 'new' has been continually revised down so that the majority are now ex- public housing stock.

Supported Accommodation Facilities were the next services to be tendered – same RFP process. This includes a 20 bed facility in Ulverstone (in between Devonport & Burnie – NW of the state); 20 bed facility in Launceston and 30 bed youth facility (16 to 25 years) in Launceston. Anglicare were successful in getting the support component of the facilities in partnership with Community Housing Limited who will be undertaking the property/tenancy management (1 organisation was not allowed to tender for both). The Ulverstone facility is due for completion and handover to us by end March 2011. The adult Launceston Facility by end April 2011 and the Youth facility by start June 2011. These facilities provide long term housing – youth only until 25 years.

Apart from the facility in Ulverstone, the other 2 have been **very** slow in coming on board! The youth facility started taking tenants in the week starting 21st November 2011. The adult facility in Launceston was supposed to be operational prior to the youth facility however the keys were only handed over to CHL/Anglicare on 4th of January 2012 and thus, still does not have tenants in residence (the Minister launched the facility in May 2011…). The delay related to issues with the lease that Housing Tasmania have with the owners. The completion/handover dates of these properties have been significantly delayed.

These facilities are one of the key initiatives in the Tasmanian Homelessness Plan which may give the (incorrect) impression that all the beds in all facilities are targeted at people who are homeless. In reality however the models talk about a 'tenant mix' (10% high need, 10% medium need, 40% low need & 40% independent) so whilst it is not stated up front that they all *can't* be homeless; particularly the 40% independent and to a large extent the 40% low needs, just need affordable accommodation i.e. in a 20 bed facility this means 4 beds for high & medium needs clients.

The other 2 facilities are the 2 Common Ground properties in Hobart (1 X 50 beds and 1 X 47 beds). Anglicare will be providing support services for the 2 facilities and sub-contracting Community Housing Limited to undertake the property management functions (announced in December 2011). The first facility is due to be operational in March and the second mid-year (June/July). The model will be consistent with the Australian Common Ground alliance model of supportive housing (e.g. 50% chronically homeless as per their vulnerability index and 50% independent). The State's 'Street to Home' dollars were allocated to this project.

- Service Coordination & Improvement Program engaging mainstream services, consumers, integrating social housing and homelessness with health & human service reforms, common assessment and allocations framework. There have been meetings with services about their various intake and assessment procedures. The plan is to have a common wait list for Public and Community Housing providers by 1 July 2012 and then widen the scope over time e.g. supported residential facilities, supported accommodation facilities etc.

There has been quite a bit of work done in this area. The SCIP team from Housing Tas have developed a common assessment framework in consultation with the sector that they are trialling with some select services. The Tasmanian Housing Register has also been developed and an IT company has been employed to develop a system/database that can be widely accessed. This will enable many and varied services to undertake assessments for public housing. The waiting list will at first be used by public and community housing to select tenants but will eventually encompass as all social housing such as the Supported Residential Facilities and Supported Accommodation Facilities.

There has also been some work undertaken with mainstream services to identify clients and streamline pathways for people who are homeless or at risk. This has been done to varying success across the State e.g. the Northern Health Working Group met regularly and developed some protocols and procedures e.g. identifying people who are homeless or at risk who present to the hospital and making appropriate referrals prior to discharge This was achieved to a more limited extent in the South & NW. In addition, despite the good work done in the North, there is a risk these processes will 'fall over' as other protocols have done in the past due to it not being the Hospital's 'core business' (and they are of course very busy – particularly with current cut backs) and because there have been no resources allocated to their implementation/no training for staff/no accountability e.g. making it part of their KPIs.

The Consumer Engagement Strategy that was going to be developed appears to have been 'shelved'. It was initially to be undertaken in conjunction with the work on the Homelessness Charter. The sector believes that the Consumer Engagement Strategy would have been a more worthwhile project than the Homelessness Charter.

- Workforce Capacity Audit and Development Plan – focus on training and development needs of the sector and quality assurance. This will obviously dovetail into the National Quality Framework initiative. The capacity audit and plan has really been shelved and focus has been more on the other initiatives.

The sector is extremely disappointed that (once again) the training and development needs/opportunities for the sector have dropped off the priority list! Currently the sector have no scope to provide staff training and development with the $100k that was previously allocated (but not rolled out effectively) seeming to have completely disappeared! Capacity building for the sector always seems to be the lowest priority!

The sector acknowledged that the work that went into the Green Paper and then the White Paper was an enormous positive in itself in terms of acknowledging the issue, importance and complexity of homelessness. The additional dollars that followed were also welcomed. The Commonwealth put homelessness on the Tasmanian State Government agenda; also making it a priority in the State's Social Inclusion Plan. The theme of homelessness being "everybody's business" has certainly raised the profile of the issue amongst mainstream services however it needs to go further to make any real difference i.e. be written into mainstream funding contracts and have KPI's attached. ($18.9M of Commonwealth/State funds being spent over the 4 years in Tasmania).

Tasmania included as part of their commitment to halve 'rough sleepers' (their count was 385) however what they ended up doing in reality was counting beds e.g. put a 30 bed facility on the ground and then take 30 off the 385. Whilst the new beds are of course welcomed, they weren't all filled with rough sleepers. In addition to this there were some counting of beds from previous State Government initiatives (The Affordable Housing Strategy) e.g. they counted as part of THP response Bayview Lodge (27 beds – managed by Anglicare) which came out of the AHS dollars but was delayed in becoming operational.

There has been funding for new programs to increase the supply of social housing e.g. Common Ground Tasmania and the 3 new Supported Accommodation Facilities.

On the not so positive side, the new programs have been very slow to be operationalised and provide a service to primary homeless people.

If you talk to staff and services on the ground, the new services and affordable housing created have not meant a decrease in people they are seeing or assisting with exit points.

"We are so far behind in the provision of affordable housing it would take a few more stimulus packages to see some of these changes."

Exit points continue to be the main issue facing both clients and service provid-

ers. It is unfortunate that the State Government's focus has been on getting people into homelessness services e.g. SAAR 'gateway' models rather than on exiting people; which is what the sector have been saying the focus needs to be.

Other than the 30 bed youth facility in the North of the State (which is really a drop in the ocean), staff in the sector continue to talk about the lack of affordable housing for young people. The under 18 age group is of specific note with particularly limited options. Long term youth accommodation really needed to be targeted in each region of the State – particularly the South which has nothing comparable.

There has been a lot of focus from Government about not exiting people into homelessness. However crisis services are continuing to see people who are being evicted from public housing into homelessness.

The White Paper provided a welcome injection of Commonwealth funding into the homeless sector but it could have been better targeted to make an impact on primary homelessness. The state government has equated the supply of social housing (bricks and mortar) with increased service provision to primary homeless people, but they will not be able to access the social housing if they lack independent living skills.

Due to an apparent error in communication, the Tasmanian State Government were insistent that none of the new Commonwealth dollars could be spent on existing services; they had to be spent on new services. This is in fact not the case and the homelessness sector was very disappointed that none of the dollars were put into expanding existing services that were already delivering good outcomes and are under resourced.

> *"The White Paper was a good start but the Government needs to provide ongoing commitment to make any real difference."*

In the THP it lists one of the priorities for the Tasmanian Government: "new ways of doing business – improve service integration and collaboration for people who are homeless or at risk" (pg 29). This is possibly where they see the SAAR slotting in! This probably fits in with the 'no wrong door' (or various variations) described in the White Paper however the Tasmanian homelessness sector is already well integrated and works together well (which was the feedback KPMG received in their scoping part of the review). In addition there is already a 'Gateway' type model operating. The integrating that needs to happen is with mainstream services. This could have been achieved without a radical reform of the sector.

As described above, Anglicare, Colony 47, Centacare and Community Housing Limited and Housing Choices all received additional dollars to provide new services. See above for information on how they are tracking.

> *"In my opinion, the observable changes have been in long term accommodation not crisis/primary homelessness. To expand, the boost to affordable and social housing is providing additional exit points only when projects are completed and are not coming close to counteracting increasing demand for affordable housing, due to increased numbers of households (vs vacancy rates) and increasing percentage of households in housing stress. Day to day, my client load has not reduced and I can't see any decrease in the number of homeless people in our community. Meanwhile, there has been absolutely no improvement in our ability to provide crisis accommodation, no extra shelter beds etc. so SHS crisis accommodation provision is no better than pre whitepaper" (quote from Case Planning & Transitional Support Worker)"*

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Homelessness Implementation Plan includes $20.2 million in NPAH funding and just under $3 million in funding for the *A Place to Call Home* initiative.

The ACT has established a *Street to Home* service that provides assertive outreach to people sleeping rough and seeks to support people to access stable housing.

The ACT has also implemented a version of the successful NSW program the *Housing and Support Initiative* which provides specialist mental health and social support to assist people with mental health conditions to stay housed and participate fully in the community.

In addition the ACT has developed managed supported accommodation for people exiting the Alexander McConochie Centre and contribute to the NPAH outcome of preventing exits into homelessness.

A youth housing/education and training model applying the principles of the successful FOYER model has also been funded and will support twenty young people by providing long term housing with security of tenure in exchange for participation in education and training activities or employment.

The ACT has used funded under the NBESP to ensure that there are increased exit points from homelessness services in the ACT.

There is a focus on enabling women and children to remain safely in the family home following substantiation of cases of domestic and family violence. This applies the principles of the *Safe at Home* models and brings together ACT policing, justice, specialist domestic violence services and the Department of Housing and Human Services (DHHS).

In addition, the ACT Government has established *First Point,* a single access gateway to homelessness services and social housing in the ACT. These can now only be accessed via *First Point* which is contactable via a 1800 number and a website.

One of the key strengths of *First Point* is that people now know where to go to access homelessness services and social housing in the ACT and we now have a central collection point for data which tells us about the demographics of people experiencing homelessness in the ACT who seek assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services.

The ACT Government has provided funding for the establishment of *Street Law* a legal service for people experiencing housing instability and homelessness in the ACT. The service has already found strong demand within the ACT for legal services and has determined that many people need the services it can offer because, for a variety of reasons, their cases will not be taken on board by other legal services and legal aid has a full case load.

Homelessness Australia understands that *Street Law* has commissioned an evaluation of its services. Homelessness Australia is represented on the *Street Law Advisory Group* and contributed to the evaluation of the program and the services it offers.

A feasibility study has been funded to determine whether or not a *Common Ground* facility can be established in the ACT to provide market style accommodation to people who have experienced long periods of homelessness.

Though not specifically a White Paper initiative, the ACT Government has also commissioned a comprehensive review of the funding and design of services for young people in the ACT. This will have implications for youth homelessness services in the ACT and needs to be considered in the context of this report card for this reason.

The following feedback was provided to Homelessness Australia by service providers in the ACT.

> *"There is generally increased awareness of homelessness, not as swept under the carpet as previously. The increased awareness is also about more understanding and discussion within the govt and the community sector (and between government and community sector) about what is homelessness, so couch surfing, staying with friends and relies but only on a short term basis is now considered homeless."*

"The past idea of a homeless man sleeping rough has expanded, all this is positive."

"Having the outcomes attached to funding (NAHA to States/Territories) makes governments more committed and accountable to achieving the set outcomes with timeframes, that is positive."

"For us, it has also increased awareness about DV, both in govt and community, and the ongoing consequences of homelessness for so many women and children. There have also as a result of white paper been a lot of system changes both within government and community sector as a direct result of white paper, a strong focus on improving service delivery to people homeless or at risk of homelessness, all good and positive. More public housing was provided but as we know, there is never enough, still it is good there were so many additional housing options."

"I guess it means that there will be less funding coming to the ACT so that can't be good. Also, what are we left with when the issue is put on the shelve, as it will be, by all governments (state and federal), there have been a lot of shake-ups but without a continuing commitment to homelessness will it ultimately mean the service systems etc are better or worse?"

"While I certainly don't believe it will achieve its original aim of decreasing homelessness by 2013, I think that is an aim it could never have achieved. That aim is more about politics and politicians just high-noting but not understanding the complexities of the issues. Apart from that, for the reasons listed above, I think it has been more effective than not."

"DVCS receives NAHA funding to provide our court advocacy program. This in itself is interesting as that acknowledges the link between DV and homelessness for women and children."

In the words of sector members from the ACT, the White Paper is viewed as:

"Having shone a light on homelessness"

"Giving the ACT some opportunity to see where they were compared to nationally in terms of models"

"Promoting sharing nationally"

"Opportunity to review how things are being done"

"Combined with National Partnerships allowed new income stream to increase the number of dwellings in Public Housing in the ACT"

"ACT government was able to contribute some more in terms of land to do a right sizing program and free up some bigger houses for families"

"Added some legitimacy to the sector"

"Made space for some extra critical thinking in terms of pathways to homelessness"

"Made some extra noise so mental health and perhaps some other lead agencies could get on board."

It also was viewed in the following way:

"Sometimes to be seen to be doing something different is mistakenly taken for positive change and there was a bit of that about"

"Without a greater emphasis on affordable housing the newest homeless group push into the homelessness category but need different responses"

"There are those people that required support to sustain a tenancy and there is another group who will transcend their homelessness with support. Need to make more of that and be clear about criteria for evaluating change"

"On the ground workers did not really benefit much from the exposure. For

instance for the ACT to be able to see what happens in other places would be good. Conference presentations usually try to show how successful everything is and is not necessarily bring forward the experiences of those at the centre of homelessness"

"Still a very "loose" use of the word homeless. In fact lots of people in homeless services have great security of tenancy through their Occupancy Agreements and have rebated rents while there are others outside this system doing it much tougher and would never be seen as "homeless". Not enough done for these groups."

"Broadened who was involved but the silo-ing of these community services away from the Homeless sector means that there is no benefit to the Sector."

Northern Territory

The Australian Government committed $29.389 million in funding under the NPAH while the NT Government committed $25.604 million. This does not include NBESP funding which the NT has allocated to increase the provision of new social housing dwellings for people experiencing homelessness and for new units of accommodation for specialist homelessness services in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Maningrida, Palmerston and Tennant Creek.

In total more than 600 public housing dwellings and new units of supported accommodation will be added through a mix of *A Place to Call Home, NPAH* and NBESP funding.

Like all jurisdictions, the NT has committed to achieving a 7% reduction in overall homelessness in the Territory through the initiatives funded with its share of the NPAH funding.

Due to its high rate of primary homelessness however (as opposed to overall homelessness), the NT Implementation Plan notes that the separate target of reducing primary homelessness by 25% means that if it is to achieve both targets, its primary homelessness reduction will in itself be greater than 7% of the total population counted as homeless in the NT on Census night 2006. In other words the greater number of primary homeless including long grassers in NT, means they may approach the targets differently.

The main initiatives in the NT Homelessness Implementation Plan are:

- A Place to Call Home (APTCH) – thirty two new social housing dwellings for medium need clients on the public housing wait list. Targeted and intensive support will be provided to clients for one year under the APTCH with clients transferred to public housing once they are able to sustain and maintain an independent tenancy
- Assistance for Rough Sleepers – an Intervention and Case Management Service for people sleeping rough in town areas provides return to country, intervention, referral and identification services for homelessness and itinerant people across the Territory
- Youth Development Crisis Accommodation – accommodation and support services for 44 children and young Indigenous people per annum in Tennant Creek to assist them to access secure accommodation, attend school and training, remain engaged with family and to build their life skills
- Tenancy Sustainability Program – intensive case management and life skills training for public housing tenants and applicants, as well as residents of Community Living Areas (town camps), who require assistance to manage and sustain their tenancies
- Assistance for People Leaving Correctional Services – support for people exiting prison and juvenile detention to enable a smooth reintegration into community with strong case management to assist people to over-come barriers to reintegration and reduce reoffending behaviour

Domestic and Family Violence Support –assistance for families, children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence who are at risk of homelessness, through support services, residential care, domestic and sexual assault services and crisis support.

Sector Feedback from the NT included that Commonwealth funding for NT housing and homelessness services over the 5 year term of the NAHA has fallen due to changes in funding allocation arrangements under the then new national agreements. The NT share of the total Commonwealth NAHA funding pool will drop from 3.5 per cent in 2008-09 to approximately 1 per cent of the total funding pool by the end of 2012-13- in line with a per capita vs a needs based Commonwealth funding formula.

There are concerns that the NT will not meet its rough sleeping reduction target of 25% fewer rough sleepers by 2013 due to a lack of exit points from homelessness services and an under-developed community housing sector.

In response to concerns around timelines, the Department of Children and Families (DFC) established a Data Reference Group to enable close sector engagement with implementation of the new collection in the NT.

The transition to the new SHCS and SHOR and the ongoing training and information delivered by Departmental officers has been very positively received by the sector.

The sector has recommended that the NT homelessness sector be much better resourced, stronger and more stable before an external accreditation system could be implemented.

The NT has the least developed quality framework system in the country, a small sector and significant workforce retention issues. There are definite benefits to implementing a NQF in the NT, but timeframes must be achievable. The NT is advocating for a phased, realistic approach to the NQF.

The sector has concerns about the NT Treasury's willingness to provide any more additional funding to implement an accreditation scheme under the NQF.

The sector is very concerned about workforce issues in the NT. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit skilled staff across the Territory, but especially in regional areas. Salaries do not cover cost of living and housing is prohibitively expensive or unavailable. To quote one provider

"The gap is closing between the social services sector and our clients.... We may all be homeless."

There is no way the NT can manage the whole national reform agenda without stable, skilled staff.

Communications between agencies has always been good in the NT however specific service integration models have proved challenging and complex and we have developed only a few small scale examples.

Agencies have expressed concerns that without adequate funding, guidance and a well understood service integration strategy this may continue to be the case.

"The size and scale of the NT has a significant impact on our ability to design integrated services for quite small sub-sets of the homeless population. While we have 5 times the national rate of homelessness we are only 1 percent of the Australian population and therefore our actual numbers of homeless people is quite low in comparison to other jurisdictions.

The Department of Children and Families and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services have made responding to the White Paper a priority.

Since the implementation of the White Paper on Homelessness, there are

more facilities available largely due to the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) and several new and expanded services on the ground.

Without an initial baseline which isn't dependent on the 5 yearly census count it will be difficult to evaluate whether homelessness is reducing at all. From the perspective of agencies working with homeless people in the NT this is certainly not the case.

The sector fear the NT will continue to have 5 times the national rate of homelessness without at least a needs-based share of Commonwealth funds

HOMELESSNESS AUSTRALIA SEEKS FOLLOW UP INFORMATION ON

Discrepancies in targets

The White Paper set an interim target of reducing overall homelessness by 20% by 2013 but States and Territories have only signed up to achieving a 7% reduction in overall homelessness by the same year in the NPAH.

At a recent youth homelessness conference, Homelessness Australia sought clarification about this discrepancy from a Housing NSW representative and were given the following response:

> *"The NSW Government did not commit to the 20% reduction target, we only committed to reducing overall homelessness by 7% as is stipulated in the National Partnership Agreement so that is what I'd say in response to that. We've committed to a 7% reduction and that's what we're aiming to achieve"*

Homelessness Australia remains concerned about this differentiation in targets and questions whether other jurisdictions will also default to the apparent position that NSW has adopted which is that they never signed up to the target of reducing overall homelessness by 20%.

Homelessness Australia finds it difficult to see how we will achieve the headline goal of halving homelessness by 2020 if States and Territories do not believe they can achieve a 20% reduction by 2013.

We are seeking clarification from the Australian Government as to what its understanding of commitments made by the jurisdictions is and whether or not it believes achieving a 20% reduction in overall homelessness will be possible by 2013.

Evaluations

Homelessness Australia understands that evaluations of the NAHA and NPAH are currently being conducted in each jurisdiction.

We are aware that Queensland has contracted the task of evaluating the NPAH out to an external consultancy firm, Anne Markiewicz and associates. At the same time the Queensland Department of Communities is currently seeking a Principal Evaluation Officer to undertake 'a multi-phase evaluation' of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness in that state. The position will be located in the homelessness evaluation branch of the Department of Communities.

South Australia has employed a Principal Evaluation Officer in its Homelessness Strategy division of Housing SA, and has completed an evaluation framework with assistance from Academics at the three South Australian Universities.

The framework has established three streams for the evaluation of the NPAH:

1. Achieving sustainable housing outcomes
2. Reducing Aboriginal homelessness and
3. Building sector capacity: Regionalisation and services to children.

Western Australia commenced its evaluation in 2010 and has developed an evaluation framework that will be applied to programs and service models funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Tasmania is currently in the process of evaluating its entire homelessness and supported accommodation sector having commissioned consultancy firm KPMG to review its supported accommodation and assistance service delivery system and policy response.

We can only assume that other jurisdictions have commenced or are about to commence evaluations of their National Partnership programs and service responses and of the NPAH as a whole as we have not received any specific information from NSW, Victoria, the ACT or the NT to indicate otherwise.

In its report on the progress of the Federal Financial Relations Reform Agenda released in November 2011, the COAG Reform Council notes that the evaluation frameworks for the NPAH were to have been developed by the end of November 2011. This is pleasing but without having seen the frameworks, Homelessness Australia is unable to comment on them further much less make any determinations about their efficacy.

The same report noted that the evaluation framework for the NAHA which provides funding to over 1500 specialist homelessness services that were formerly funded via the SAAP V multi-lateral agreement will be developed by the end of June 2012.

Once these reports are completed and released it is likely that Homelessness Australia will be in a better position to determine the successes and areas where improvement may be needed in the new approach to homelessness.

For the time being, we are relying upon information conveyed to us by our member services, State and Territory Government representatives and that which is presented in various annual reports and performance reports on homelessness and housing produced by the AIHW, FaHCSIA, the COAG Reform Council and the Productivity Commission.

While it is true that both the NAHA and the NPAH are still active federal funding instruments for housing and homelessness programs, the publicly available information, specifically data around service use, client statistics and outcomes is more fragmented for the NPAH than it is for NAHA funded specialist homelessness services.

The NAHA service use data is contained in a single comprehensive report (The Use of Government Funded Specialist Homelessness Services 2010/11), whereas the NPAH annual performance reports have proved more difficult to locate with 2010/11 reports for some jurisdictions accessible via a generic internet search while only 2009/10 reports are available for others. This has made evaluating new programs and services difficult for this report card.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Have all states and territories provided the Australian Government with annual performance reports on the NPAH for 2010/11?
2. If so, will these be made publicly available in a single location as is the case with the NDCA reports on the use of NAHA funded specialist homelessness services?
3. When does the Australian Government expect that evaluation reports for the NPAH will become publicly available?
4. Will the reports provide consistent, coherent data indicating how the programs and services funded under the NPAH in each jurisdiction are contributing to the achievement of each of the outcomes in the NPAH?
5. Will the NAHA evaluation framework be completed by June 2012? When will it be publicly available?

The National Homelessness Research Agenda

Homelessness Australia remains concerned about the limited coordination and dissemination of information about the National Homelessness Research Agenda, its research questions, where the shorter-duration 'research projects' are up to and what are the main areas of research being conducted by the three consortiums that were funded to engage in the National Homelessness Research Partnerships which were three year agreements totalling $4.6 million.

There is a need to improve the flow of information to the sector about the progress and status of the homelessness research agenda. Homelessness Australia is keen to play a role in the dissemination of findings from the research and is a partner

agency with two of the three consortiums funded to undertake the partnerships.

To date we have been privy to the findings of just one of the sixteen research projects and none of the findings of pieces of research being undertaken at the three universities that have been funded to undertake the longer term partnerships.

We are most interested in analysing the findings from the research agenda and a number of the 16 research projects appear from the title to focus on areas in which there is a need to fill in gaps in our knowledge base.

We have been seeking further information about the research agenda from the consortiums funded to conduct research partnerships as well as the Australian Government with limited success.

We were then somewhat surprised to see that the findings from a number of pieces of research were outlined in a recent edition of *Parity.* While it is pleasing that information has come to light about the research agenda we believe that the findings must be disseminated in a more coherent and strategic manner and that the National Homelessness Clearinghouse seems like the logical mechanism for making the findings and information about the progress and status of the research agenda accessible to the homelessness sector and researchers.

Thus far, Homelessness Australia has been interviewed for one study on workforce needs of the homelessness sector and been invited to attend a presentation of the findings of one study on the needs of sole fathers in the homelessness service system. This level of involvement is underwhelming to say the least.

What needs to happen?

- When applications for funding were sought in May 2010, the establishment of a reference group to provide advice and guidance about research gaps and priorities was flagged. This has still not been established. HA will urge FaHCSIA to establish the group.
- The importance of having a coherent strategic framework that is linked to the key policy drivers for the reform has not yet been demonstrated.
- HA has told the Department that we urgently need to see a more systematic approach to the coordination of the research agenda and dissemination of information about the progress of the agenda and preliminary findings from research conducted to date.
- The importance of having clear coordination with other research that is happening across the academic sector as well as the community sector needs to be prioritised.
- There is a need to ensure that all cohorts within the broader homelessness population have equitable attention in relation to the research that is carried out (especially those with considerable vulnerabilities to the effects of homelessness).

Questions for the Australian Government

1. When does the Australian Government expect that findings from the 16 short term research projects will be made available to the sector?
2. Summaries of some of the findings from some of the pieces of research were included in a recent Parity publication on homelessness data and research. Does this mean that FaHCSIA has been provided with more detailed research findings?
3. When will the reference group promised in 2009 when expressions of interest for funding under the research agenda were sought, be established?
4. Does the Australian Government agree with Homelessness Australia's assertion that their needs to be a more coherent, coordinated and systematic approach to the dissemination of findings from the pub-

licly funded national homelessness research agenda?

5. Homelessness Australia is keen to play a role in disseminating research findings and updates on the progress of the national homelessness research agenda to the sector. Would the Australian Government be amenable to providing us with the research findings so that we can convey them to our members?
6. When does the Australian Government expect to receive detailed research agenda items from the Universities funded under the National Homelessness Research Partnerships? Will these be made available to the sector? When?
7. As far as possible, does the Australian Government believe that the research conducted thus far:
    a) Aligns with strategic national homelessness priorities
    b) Goes some way to bridging gaps in the homelessness evidence base?
    c) Improves our understanding of the causes of and solutions to homelessness for particular groups and how their needs are being or could be addressed?

Job Services Australia

The Australian Government implemented reforms to the contractual arrangements for employment services beginning in 2009 with the establishment of the Job Services Australia (JSA) model that replaced the former Job Network, Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) and the Personal Support Programme (PSP).

The reforms are continuing with Disability Employment Services currently undergoing changes to their contractual operations. The JSA model was established following the completion of the Request for Tender process in the late stages of 2008. The new model for employment services has divided jobseekers into two categories, fully eligible jobseekers and partially eligible jobseekers[vii].

Fully eligible jobseekers are eligible for streamed services (with stream 1 being for the most 'job- ready' and stream 4 being for those with multiple barriers to employment).

The JSA model includes a requirement that employment services specifically engage with homelessness services to work collaboratively to achieve both housing and employment outcomes for people experiencing both homelessness and unemployment.

Homelessness Australia was funded by the Australian Government to undertake the Home Options and Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Project in partnership with the National Employment Services Association (NESA).

The central aim of the HOPE project was to facilitate effective linkages between Job Services Australia and Homelessness service providers which strengthen their capacity to work collaboratively to ensure that homeless people receive appropriate and tailored services which will enable them to progress to employment and offer pathways from poverty and homelessness.

A comprehensive resource kit and training package was produced and is available to both homelessness and employment services from both Homelessness Australia and NESA.

Homelessness Australia was recently provided with data from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) that showed that JSA providers had made contact with more than 70,000 jobseekers who met the criteria for homelessness or imminent risk of becoming homeless and that young jobseekers identified as experiencing homelessness were achieving comparable outcomes in employment, education and training to jobseekers with no identified housing insecurity issues.

Homelessness Australia's members however continue to report problems with in-

appropriate streaming, particularly for young people who our youth services tell us are still being placed into streams 1 and 2 even when homelessness is recognised and acknowledged as being a barrier to employment.

Conversely, other members have told us of instances in which clients are still being 'parked' (to use old Job Network terminology) in streams 3 and 4 and not offered any additional assistance to address non-vocational barriers to employment.

Homelessness Australia believes that work should be undertaken to determine whether or not clients of homelessness services with participation requirements have been connected with JSA providers and if so, where they have been streamed following a Job Capacity Assessment or the application of a Jobseeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) to determine their employability.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Is the Government amenable to the conducting of a data matching exercise to provide an insight into the appropriateness of the JSA streaming process for job seekers staying in homelessness services?
2. Is the Australian Government aware of any work currently being conducted in this area?

The establishment of the Bea Miles Foundation

On page twenty of *The Road Home* it states:

> *"...It will not be possible to meet the headline goals under this strategy without harnessing the efforts of the broader corporate and private sector... To support the White Paper, the Australian Government will establish the Bea Miles Foundation to channel funding, in-kind support and sponsor innovation and research to support the work of governments and the not-for-profit sector in combating homelessness..."*

Homelessness Australia's understands that this Foundation has not and will not be established.

While our view is that Government must take primary responsibility for funding homelessness programs and services we are acutely aware of the budgetary environment in which we are operating and of the sheer volume of new dwellings that are needed to fill the gap between demand and supply that the National Housing Supply Council estimates is currently close to 500,000 homes that are affordable for people in the two lowest quintiles of the income range[viii].

We are strongly supportive of the view articulated in the White Paper that reducing homelessness and from our point of view doing so with a longer term goal of *ending* homelessness in Australia is 'everyone's responsibility'. The establishment of a foundation that would receive and administer capital and in-kind contributions from the private sector for homelessness initiatives would enable us to tap into a source of funding that has traditionally not been relied upon by the homelessness sector in Australia.

The 'flagship' *Common Ground* model that is being rolled out in almost every jurisdiction has sourced the vast majority of its capital funding from private philanthropy. Indeed both *Common Ground* and *Pathways to Housing* (another large scale permanent supportive housing provider in the US) have more than 500 private sector partners from which they derive the majority of their funding.

The United States has an established culture of utilising the 'goodwill' of corporations and wealthy private citizens to fund not for profit ventures. Arguably, this is not as prolific in Australia where the prevailing view until recent decades has been that the Government has a responsibility to invest heavily in what political theorists have called the "welfare state".

In the new Australia the bipartisan commitment to keep the budget in surplus means that it is not possible to expect Government to fully fund the cost of housing and there is arguably a bipartisan consensus around this notwithstanding the significant investment in social housing under the Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) social housing initiative.

This is evidenced by the desire expressed by the move away from long term security of tenure and the desire expressed by the former Minister for Homelessness and Social Housing that public housing be viewed as a "a stepping stone" to the ultimate goal of home purchase, not as a long term housing option.

The capital funding required for the bricks and mortar component of permanent supportive housing models is enormous and if we are to significantly expand this model, it is doubtful that Government funding alone will be sufficient to enable this. Indeed without the contribution made by the Grocon construction company to build 'at cost', it is likely that the building costs for the Common Ground would have been significantly greater and potentially cost prohibitive.

Some members have expressed concerns about the very notion of the corporate sector and business community funding homelessness services seeing it as signifying a potentially worrying move away from what has hitherto been the prevailing view in Australia, that funding social and community services is a responsibility for Government. Others have queried how successful such as foundation would be in deriving sufficient capital and in-kind contributions from the private sector.

Other organisations, particularly the larger ecumenical social service providers however have a lengthy history of harnessing the capital of the business community to fund their services.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. What progress has been made by Philanthropy Australia is gaining funding for homelessness initiatives?

Tracking the prevention of exits into homelessness

Last year, Homelessness Australia completed a detailed evidence based policy paper on the prevention of exits into homelessness from statutory, custodial care and hospital, mental health and alcohol and other drug services.

Homelessness Australia strongly supports this policy having proposed its adoption in our 2007 election platform. We note that a number of specialist homelessness services are funded to support people leaving care and people exiting prison and that a number of new initiatives were established in each state/territory and outlined in the implementation plans for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

We concluded that the existing efforts and the new initiatives were achieving good outcomes in terms of providing accommodation and support and access to housing for a proportion of people exiting these settings but that an expansion in both scope and funding would be needed in order to achieve the goal of 'no exits into homelessness'.

We noted that there was still some confusion as to what constituted homelessness with specialist homelessness services reporting that they regularly received referrals from mental health services who believed that exiting people into supported accommodation did not constitute an 'exit into homelessness'. There is a need for clarity around this.

We also concluded that exit plans and people exiting these settings needed to be adequately resourced in order for the transition to independent living to be achievable. The policy should not be viewed in isolation from structural factors such as poverty, social inequality, the shortage of affordable housing and the inadequacy of income support in enabling many people to meet the cost of living in the private rental market.

We have been able to source data on the number of people anticipated to be sup-

ported by initiatives outlined in the NPAH implementation plans but accessing data on the number of people actually supported has not been possible.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Have states and territories provided data to the Australian Government on the number of people supported by initiatives aimed at contributing to the achievement of this outcome?
2. If so, is the data publicly available and can we see it?
3. How is the Australian Government intending to track where people are being exited to when they leave these settings?
4. Is there currently a data-mapping exercise being developed or conducted?
5. In essence, how will the success or otherwise of the policy be measured? (for example, one of the interim targets is to reduce exits into homelessness from statutory and custodial care settings by 25%, what is the baseline for this measure?)

The 'Safe at Home' models

The national peak body for domestic and family violence services the Women's Services Network (WESNET) has expressed concerns to Homelessness Australia about the implementation of the 'Safe at Home' models outlined in the White Paper.

There appears to be a lack of consistency in terms of available information about who is delivering the programs, how many women are being supported to stay in their homes and which providers are delivering the support and brokerage components.

In some states and territories women's refuges have been told that their workers are not qualified to deliver the support component because the skill-sets required are different, while in other states workers from specialist domestic and family violence services are delivering the support component.

WESNET has to date found it very difficult to get information about who is being supported and how many people are being supported by the Safe at Home models in jurisdictions that have established them as part of their NPAH implementation plans.

Homelessness Australia is aware that police and other agencies recently received information and training about *intervention orders* for perpetrators in South Australia and the implications of the new policy.

In addition to the above concerns, Homelessness Australia is concerned that the number of women projected to be supported in each State and Territory is very small in comparison to the large volume of police reports for domestic and family violence which we understand has increased in recent years owing to greater public awareness about the devastating consequences it can have and the need to report it.

The White Paper (page 33) states that the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children will:

> *"...Over time reduce the incidence of domestic violence which will have a long-term impact on homelessness amongst women and children..."*

Homelessness Australia is certainly hopeful that this is the case but we have received feedback from the domestic violence sector that there is a need to more clearly link the national plan with the homelessness agenda and the NAHA and NPAH. Members have expressed concerns that reducing homelessness resulting from domestic and family violence was not a core outcome of the NPAH and should have been. Indeed on page 7 of the White Paper domestic violence is second in the list of major contributing factors to homelessness and acknowledged as the main reason given by women for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Have states and territories provided data to the Australian Government about the number of women (and children) supported to stay in their homes after reporting domestic and family violence? If so, can we see it?
2. Is the Australian Government able to provide Homelessness Australia with information (in a manner that does not jeopardise the safety of people) about which agencies are delivering safe at home models?
3. What are the core elements of the models in each jurisdiction?

Homelessness amongst the first Australians

One of the early criticisms of the White Paper was that it paid insufficient attention to homelessness amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

On page 50, the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing is outlined which will deliver an additional 4200 new houses and upgrade 4800 in remote communities over the next decade.

There is little however in the way of specific initiatives for Indigenous people in metropolitan areas or regional centres in which the majority live.

While it is true that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be supported by many of the initiatives in the White Paper, the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in both service use and turn-away data from specialist homelessness services indicates that there is a need for more services.

While Aboriginal Hostels are specifically funded to provide short and medium term accommodation for Indigenous people we have received feedback that they are becoming too expensive for people who are entirely reliant on income support to afford. In addition, Indigenous people in the NT have reported additional problems because a proportion of their income support is quarantined on the 'basics card' leaving less actual cash for accommodation.

Some states and territories have developed Indigenous specific service models in their NPAH implementation plans and one jurisdiction (SA) has established a target of 20% service use by Aboriginal people as part of its Implementation Plan.

Western Australia has stated in its annual report for 2009/10 on the progress of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness that its new initiatives have a target of 11% service use by Aboriginal people. WA also set a target of reducing Indigenous homelessness in the state by 5% by 2009/10.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. What plans are in place to meet the shortage of 20,000 houses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, given that the majority live in cities and regional centres and the White Paper focus is on rural and remote areas only?
2. Are there plans in place to improve the identification of and response to Indigenous homelessness?
3. If so, how do these align with priorities in the Closing the Gap agenda?

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds

There is currently a limited evidence base articulating the pathways into and out of homelessness for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds save for some studies on homelessness amongst humanitarian visa entrants primarily from Africa.

The White Paper does not specifically address homelessness for people from CaLD backgrounds though evidently they will be captured in the generic models that have been funded.

People born outside of Australia are underrepresented in the specialist homelessness services data and a number of barriers to service access and service use have been documented by multicultural and resettlement services.

Homelessness Australia believes there is a dearth of literature and research on the experiences of homelessness amongst people from CaLD backgrounds in Australia and this may make determining what constitutes 'best practice' or 'good practice' in terms of homelessness service design and delivery more difficult than for some other groups.

That said, many specialist homelessness services and housing providers have established strong local connections with emerging communities in their localities particularly in areas where high numbers, if not the majority of people are born outside of Australia.

Jio0saHomelessness Australia believes there is a need for better data and information both qualitative and quantitative that can expand the evidence base on homelessness amongst Australians from CaLD backgrounds and there is a need to determine and articulate 'good practice' examples for particular cultural groups.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Is there specific research/work being done to improve the evidence base on homelessness amongst peopled from CaLD backgrounds?
2. Is the Australian Government aware of any data/research that can provide indicative estimates of the prevalence of homelessness amongst people from CaLD backgrounds?
3. What work is being done to increase service access and use by people from CaLD backgrounds who find themselves homeless?

The ABS methodological review of Counting the Homeless 2006

On page 58 of *The Road Home,* the Australian Government highlights the difficulties of using Census data to count the number of people who are experiencing homelessness at any one point in time.

The Census data is however, what will be used to measure progress towards reducing both overall homelessness and the effectiveness of responses to homelessness for particular groups.

The White Paper flagged the need for improving data collection on homelessness and expanding the evidence base.

As a result the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a methodological review of *Counting the Homeless 2006* which has revised the estimated number of Australians believed by the ABS to be homeless on any given night downwards by just over 41,000, to 63,472.

The ABS review and the conclusions it reached especially in relation to young people, women and people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caused a great deal of alarm and from some quarters, outrage, within the homelessness sector.

For the past 20 years the ABS has worked constructively with the homelessness sector on its homelessness enumeration strategy. Until recently, a remarkable degree of consensus has existed between academics, Government and workers in the community sector about the extent of homelessness in Australia, how it is defined in the Australian context and about the applicability of Census data as a mechanism through which the measurement of trends in homelessness statistics over time and regional differences between the rate of homelessness and its make up could be achieved.

Homelessness Australia believes this consensus is in danger of being shattered as a result of the methodological review and that if the sector is not convinced about the accuracy of homelessness estimates produced from Census data then services will be

reluctant to assist the ABS with its homelessness enumeration strategy in the lead -up to the 2016 Census and beyond. This is a great tragedy and one that Homelessness Australia is working with the ABS to avoid through its Homelessness Statistics Reference Group.

The ABS expects to have finalised its methodology by May 2012. Homelessness Australia believes there are a number of significant issues that must be thoroughly worked through before we can arrive at a methodology and final estimate that the sector considers reasonable and that the ABS can determine meets its requirements of reliability, repeatability and validity.

These include; arriving at a methodology to estimate the level of homelessness among young people that we can all live with including a national survey of homelessness amongst secondary school students using a methodology that enables the measurement of homelessness at a single point in time with sufficient national coverage of schools, ensuring that the level of homelessness among women and older Australians reflects emerging trends backed by academic research and maintaining a broad definition that is appropriate for the Australian context.

Homelessness Australia will continue to work through these issues over the coming months and we remain hopeful that we will arrive at a methodology and a homelessness estimate that is amenable to Government, statisticians, academics and the homelessness sector.

We are extremely concerned about the stark difference between the Counting the Homeless estimate and the ABS review estimate. It is important to remember that behind the statistics; behind the movement of numbers between categories depending upon how homelessness is defined are tens of thousands of real human beings with real stories, living in precarious circumstances. It is absolutely paramount that we count as many people as possible who are experiencing homelessness.

Difficulties in counting people experiencing homelessness aside, the consequences of missing more than 40,000 Australians who are living on the edge and who are – from a service delivery and human rights perspective – among the most important people in need of a service are something that we remain extremely concerned about.

We need to ensure we can accurately account for the stark difference in the two estimates.

Questions for the Australian Government

1. Can FaHCSIA request and analyse all submissions made to ABS on methodological review?
2. Does FaHCSIA expect that there will be significant funding implications arising out of any significant reduction in the overall homelessness estimate?
3. What, if any, are FaHCSIA's on-going concerns about the ABS review process?
4. Given that Indigenous homelessness is a priority area for both the sector and the Australian Government , are there any concerns about the ability of the Census to accurately capture Indigenous homelessness and how can HA assist FaHCSIA to address these concerns?

Overall Assessment of the White Paper progress

The overall rating was arrived at by adding the totals of each initiative and dividing the sub-total by the number of initiatives rated (ie average).

1	2	3	4	5	**6 with a bullet!**	7	8	9	10

Homelessness Australia remains supportive of the overall framework for progressively reducing homelessness that has been established as a result of the White Paper on homelessness.

It is clear that many of the initiatives outlines in the White Paper are underway and making a difference. The groundwork has been laid and the foundation is solid. We believe that around 80% of initiatives promised in the White Paper have been or are being delivered.

While it appears that the initial enthusiasm generated by the White Paper and the attention it placed on homelessness as a national policy priority has waned somewhat, (and partly, debate over the definition and methodology has caused this) there remains strong support for achieving the interim targets and headline goals outlined in the document.

There is, however, still a great deal of work to be done if we are to achieve the headline goals of halving homelessness and offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Australian Government:

1. Re-fund the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and the *A Place to Call Home* initiative with a minimum of $1.2 billion in new funding over four years from 2013-2017.
2. In the next NAHA;
    - Establish an affordable housing growth fund totalling at least $2.4 billion per financial year to begin to meet the chronic housing shortages consistently identified in the National Housing Supply Council *State of Supply* reports.
    - Ensure that existing specialist homelessness services are fully supported to continue to deliver appropriate and effective services including accommodation, supported housing and support services thus building on existing infrastructure. This will include:-
        - Increased funding to meet demand and to enable existing services to grow and expand effective programs and enhance service delivery and outcomes.
        - The provision of regular and planned annual indexation equal to at least CPI or WPI (whichever is higher).
        - The quarantining of funded programs to community services from the impact of any Efficiency Dividends.
3. Explain whether States and Territories are committed to a 7% reduction in overall homelessness by 2013 as agreed to in the NPAH or a 20% reduction as stated in the White Paper
4. Ensure that the findings of the State and Territory Government evaluations of the NPAH are made publicly available to sector peak bodies.
5. Use the outcomes of the State and Territory evaluations to determine which new programs and services are prioritised in the next funding round.
6. Develop an overarching affordable housing strategy with short, medium and long term targets to increase the supply of safe, secure, affordable housing that meets people's needs.
7. Work with the sector to develop clear definitions for the terms 'early intervention' and 'prevention' and how they are applied to particular client groups.
8. Implement a more systematic approach to the dissemination of findings from the publicly funded national homelessness research agenda.
9. Implement national standards to reverse systemic policy failures in institutional care.
10. Urgently address the issue of tracking exits from correctional services and state care to determine whether or not the 'no exits' policy is improving housing and support outcomes.
11. Focus attention on reducing *overall* homelessness, not prioritising 'rough sleepers' as if they are a separate more deserving category of people experiencing homelessness.
12. Makes improving the evidence base on the pathways into and out of homelessness for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds a priority.

REFERENCES

[i] Australian Government White Paper, The Road Home: A new approach to homelessness, FaHCSIA, 2008, p.viii.

[ii] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, The Use of Government Funded Specialist Homelessness Services 2010/11, AIHW, Canberra, p.3.

[iii] National Affordable Housing Agreement, Outcomes, Department of Federal Financial Relations, 2009, p.2.

[iv] http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/national_partnership_agreement/Pages/NPA Homelessness.aspx

[v] Real Estate Institute of Australia Data, September quarter 2011, median weekly rentals for capital cities, www.rei.com.au Accessed 22 November 2011.

[vi] Department of Human Services, Centrelink Annual Report 2010/11, DHS, Canberra, 2011, p.133.

[vii] Australian Government Request for Tender for Employment Services, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008, p.11.

[viii] The National Housing Supply Council, 2nd State of Supply Report, Australian Government, Canberra, 2010, p.94.