

Twelve months ago the Australian Government released its White Paper on Homelessness: *The Road Home*.

Over the last twelve months, all levels of Government have been working to build more affordable homes, establish new services and achieve better results for people who are homeless.

This document outlines some of the achievements from the last year including case studies from individuals that have been helped by the new reforms.

The Road Home, the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness outline the process for formal reporting on our progress in reducing homelessness.

Strategies

The Australian Government is using three strategies to guide our work to reduce homelessness:

- » **Turning off the Tap:** preventing homelessness, wherever possible, through early intervention and prevention services.
- » **Improving and expanding services:** improving service quality and building better connections between services so clients who are vulnerable to homelessness achieve sustainable housing and improved economic and social participation.
- » **Breaking the cycle:** ensuring that people who become homeless move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

Every time we house a person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness, help them to find a job or reconnect them to school, we are working to end homelessness.

This document sets out the achievements over the first year of the White Paper on homelessness.





Reducing Homelessness – a Government Priority

December 2008:

- » Release of **The White Paper on Homelessness: The Road Home**.

January 2009

- » Allocation of \$3 million **aged care capital** funding to Wintringham for Eunice Sneddon Aged Care Home in Dandenong in Victoria providing accommodation and care for 60 frail aged homeless people.

February 2009:

- » Announcement of the **Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan** – an investment of \$5.6 billion to build more than 19,300 homes and repair and upgrade a further 70,000 existing social housing dwellings.

March 2009:

- » First dwellings under the **National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing** were two moveable units that were completed and tenanted in Flowerdale, Victoria.

May 2009:

- » Completion of the first house built under the **Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan-NSW**.

June-August 2009:

- » Allocation of \$16 million aged care capital funding to Mission Australia in New South Wales for residential aged care beds for 72 frail aged homeless people.
- » Australian and State and Territory Governments agree to Homelessness **Implementation Plans** under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness: from 1 July 2009, funding of \$1.1 billion to States and Territories for new initiatives to reduce homelessness begins.
- » 65 dwellings purchased/constructed under **A Place to Call Home** initiative.

July 2009:

- » \$6 million additional funding for **Community Legal Centres** to assist homeless person legal clinics in ACT and Victoria and assist victims of domestic and family violence.
- » Funding boost to 700 non-profit organisations to deliver emergency financial assistance to families in crisis - \$12 million for 50 new **financial counselling services** to help families in mortgage and rental stress and an 80 per cent increase or \$55 million increase to **Emergency Relief providers** who help provide very basic support to the most vulnerable people.

- » From 1 July 2009 the Government will be providing \$41 million over three years for **Innovation Fund** projects.
- » 1st Round Innovation Fund delivers \$20.4 million for 33 projects of which four projects are targeted to assist people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.
- » 2nd Round Innovation Fund delivers \$6.1 million for 14 projects.

August 2009:

- » First meeting of the **Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness**.

September 2009:

- » Allocation of incentives under the **National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)** reaches 10,000. NRAS properties are rented at least 20 per cent below the rental market to low to moderate income households.
- » Announcement of **Jobs Fund Australia** projects: part of the Australian Government's Jobs and Training Compact, Jobs Fund projects support families and communities most affected by the Global Economic Recession. Nine projects that have been funded that may assist people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.
- » The number of **National Partnership Agreement of Social Housing** dwellings built/purchased and under construction was 1,181 at 30 September 2009. This includes 137 dwellings where construction has been completed and 248 spot purchases that have been finalised.

October 2009:

- » **Establishment of 90 Centrelink Community Engagement Officers**, located across all capital cities and many regional centres, to offer active outreach to some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

November 2009:

- » **National Homelessness Research Agenda (2009-13)** - \$11.4 million in funding for homelessness research to improve the evidence base for preventing and responding to homelessness.

December 2009:

- » Completion of 87 homes under the **A Place to Call Home** initiative.
- » Completion of 275 new homes and commencement of a further 3,787 homes under **Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan**.
- » Construction activity is underway on 300 new houses and refurbishment of 1000 existing houses to be completed by June 2010 under the **National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing**.

Breaking the Cycle

To break the cycle of homelessness, we must match housing with specialist support so that people who were homeless are housed and stay housed.

Rev Keith Garner
CEO Wesley Mission

“... it usually takes two to three years for the benefit of new initiatives to clearly show, but we detect a sense of fresh motivation and anticipation amongst inner-city homeless services.”

More homes for people at risk of homelessness

Increasing the amount of affordable rental housing is critical to reducing homelessness.

Over the next four years the Australian Government will provide the largest ever single boost to the supply of social and affordable housing through our housing programs including the *National Rental Affordability Scheme*, the *National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing*, the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing*, *A Place to Call Home* and the *Social Housing Initiative*, part of the *Nation Building and Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP)*.

These programs combined will add 80,000 new houses to the stock of affordable housing across the country by 2012.

The \$5.6 billion under the *Social Housing Initiative* will build more than 19,300 homes and repair and upgrade a further 70,000 existing social housing dwellings (including 10,000 in very poor condition which have been returned to active use).

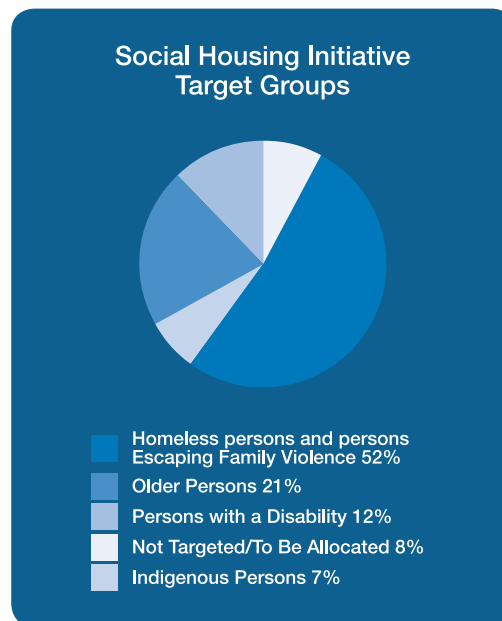
Over the last 12 months our housing programs have:

- » approved repairs on over 70,000 homes, 55,000 of these are completed;
- » allocated incentives to build 10,000 new affordable rental homes, of which over 1000 are built and tenanted, to be rented to low and moderate income households at 20 per cent below market rent.

This table shows the total number of new homes to be built in each state and territory under the *Social Housing Initiative*.

PROJECT BREAKDOWN	
NSW	6,300
VIC	4,506
QLD	4,038
WA	2,063
SA	1,360
TAS	512
ACT	352
NT	208

At least 50 per cent of these new homes will be offered specifically to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The remaining homes will be targeted towards other high needs applicants on public housing waiting lists including the elderly, people with a disability and Indigenous Australians, many of whom will also be at risk of homelessness.

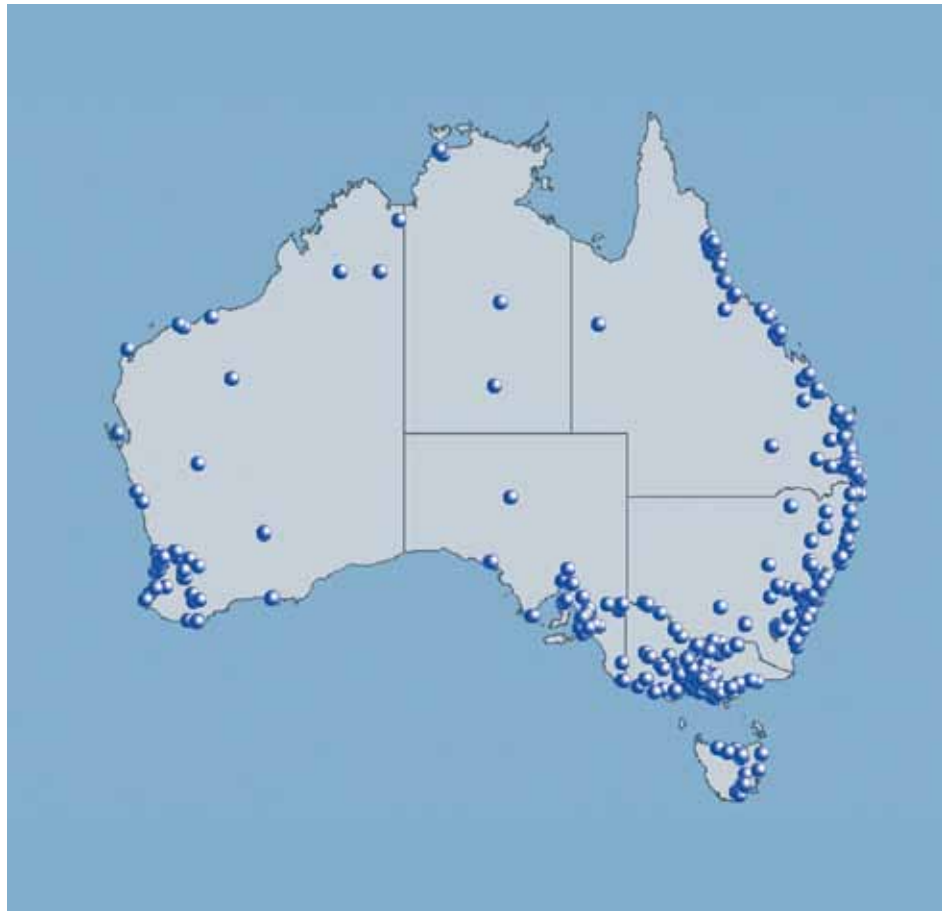


Notes:

1. Some Social Housing Initiative Dwellings are multi targeted and may be counted against more than one target group.
2. Additionally, as many Social Housing Initiative dwellings will be multi-targeted, the number of dwellings targeting Homeless Persons, for example, may increase.



Locations of new social housing homes being built nationally as at September 2009



All states and Territories are actively using the various housing programs to increase and improve their social housing stock. The following case studies demonstrate the range of innovative housing programs underway across Australia.



CASE STUDY

A Place to Call Home an example from Queensland

Eva* is a single mother with four children who was previously living in a caravan on a rural property without access to basic facilities, including bathing amenities.

Twelve months ago, Eva and her kids moved into a new home built under the *A Place To Call Home* initiative. Since moving in, Eva has had a very successful tenancy and has started her own business. Eva's children are also doing well - her 17 year old son works with her in the business and her 15 year old daughter has obtained a school-based traineeship. For Eva's family, A Place to Call Home means long-term permanent housing and a safe environment for the children.

Eva says, *"the support I have received has been unreal by everyone involved. It is not just the house; it's also the emotional support I have received which has been amazing."*

*not her real name

CASE STUDY

Tasmania's Orana Hostel

In June 2009 work started on the Orana Hostel, which will provide medium-term accommodation (six to 12 months) for single males and females over 20 years of age who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

Construction is scheduled for completion in March 2010. Orana Hostel will have 12 bedrooms for clients, support worker bedroom accommodation, an activities room, and dining, kitchen and laundry facilities in the main residence together with a further four one-bedroom independent living units. There will also be a separate caretaker's residence on site.

This model is aimed at providing a solution to prevent vulnerable people from slipping into homelessness due to breakdown in their current accommodation arrangements.

CASE STUDY

National Rental Affordability Scheme, Adelaide Benevolent Society

Adelaide Benevolent Society (ABS) was allocated 33 National Rental Incentives under Round One of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS). It currently has 18 dwellings available for rent or tenanted, with an additional 5 dwellings due to be completed in January 2010.

This year ABS has assisted a number of homeless people into accommodation supported by the NRAS, including:

- » A young man who was 'couch hopping' with friends and had no stable accommodation. Now that he has a regular home he has completed work experience and is preparing to enter the workforce.
- » A man in his thirties with a long history of mental illness who had been living without housing security. This included residing in boarding houses with high concentrations of other mental health patients. He finds the space and peace and quiet of his new accommodation has made his life much more stable.
- » A single parent migrant family with four children, where the parent has a severe illness. Temporary public housing was coming to an end until they were accommodated in the NRAS supported home which is closer to school and the hospital, making life easier for this struggling family.

Tony Keenan
Chief Executive Officer,
Hanover Welfare Services

"We just reopened our refurbished rooming house...self contained accommodation for 12 singles and couples... because of funds made available through Nation Building."



CASE STUDY

Common Ground, The Camperdown Project

The Camperdown Project is an integrated social housing project. As a Common Ground development it will provide permanent housing for people who were homeless, as well as delivering on-site support services that will help them get back on their feet. The Camperdown project also includes housing for low-income workers.

The development will include 104 self-contained studios, one and two bedroom apartments, plus space for on-site support services on the ground floor. Tenants will be a mix of previously homeless people and other workers on low incomes. The specially designed building will be located on a site flanked by Pymont Bridge Road, Lyons Road, Lambert Street and Layton Street, Camperdown.

It is expected to be built by 2011.

Innovative housing models

Providing stable accommodation is just one step in addressing homelessness. This vulnerable population needs ongoing support to help address the factors that led them to homelessness.

Some people, such as young homeless people and rough sleepers, may need a greater level of support than other groups. Innovative specialist housing models offer a secure home as well as onsite, wrap around support.

Over the last 12 months across a range of housing programs, the Australian Government has funded 41 new innovative housing projects providing 1,720 dwellings or places for people who are homeless including:

- » Eight Common ground developments;
- » Three innovative housing projects for young people while they work or study based on Foyers;
- » Two Aged Care facilities for ageing homeless people in Melbourne and Sydney
 - » (see *Wintringham case study*);
 - » (see *Mission Australia case study*);
- » Specialist accommodation for young people aged from 11 years who are unable to live at home such as the new purpose built 'Reunification House' in South Australia for 15 young people and the Youth Housing and Reintegration Services in Queensland to provide 30 bungalows for young people at risk in Townsville, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Inala, Mt Isa and Hervey Bay.

Common Ground

The Common Ground model was pioneered in New York. People who have been chronically homeless are provided with quality accommodation and on-site support such as case management, clinical services, rehabilitation and training/employment support in a community setting.

As part of the White Paper eight new Common Ground facilities have been funded across Australia, including:

- » The South Australian Government Common Ground model in Port Augusta, which will provide intensive support for 40 Indigenous families;
- » Home Ground's Supportive Housing Model in Elizabeth Street Melbourne will target a group of 50 homeless single people with high support needs in a 120 bed facility; and
- » A new Street to Home 148 unit facility for homeless men to be constructed in East Perth. The complex will include 54 long-term units, 12 crisis units, 42 transitional lodging-house units and a 40-bed aged care facility, managed by St Bartholomew's House. It will open in 2012.

Stephen Nash
*CEO, HomeGround Services and Chairperson,
Australian Common Ground Alliance*

"For HomeGround, the White Paper offers real hope and national leadership through its ambitious yet achievable vision to halve homelessness by 2020."



Models to support young people

These models provide young people who cannot live with their families with safe and secure accommodation while they study or work. For example, the Ladder project in St Vincent Street, Port Adelaide will provide 23 self-contained apartments for young people to live in and will provide on site support. This project will receive \$9.5 million for capital through *A Place to Call Home*. This is a joint initiative of the Australian Football League, South Australian and Australian Governments.



Specialist care for ageing homeless people

The Aged Care Act 1997 was amended with effect from 1 July 2009, to recognise older people who are homeless as a 'special needs' group. This will better allow the needs of older people who are homeless to be taken into account during the annual allocation of new residential places and community care packages. It will also allow aged care providers who care for older people who are homeless easier access to targeted capital assistance grants.

CASE STUDY

Wintringham Aged Care facility in Melbourne

Since its establishment in 1989, Wintringham has championed the right of elderly homeless people to receive appropriate services. Wintringham has been given \$3 million to establish a new 60 bed aged care facility in the Dandenongs.

Wintringham's CEO, Bryan Lipmann: "Given the general reluctance of the aged care industry to provide for this vulnerable group, we proposed over many years and to a succession of Commonwealth Aged Care Ministers that the solution was to amend the Aged Care Act to include the elderly homeless as a Special Needs Group. It took the Rudd Government to take up this challenge".

"As a direct result of the White Paper, the elderly homeless in Australia now have a right to aged care services. This does not exist in many other countries. Time will tell whether this amendment will translate into significant aged care resources being made available to the elderly homeless, but at Wintringham we are optimistic that we now have a platform that signals to all involved in the industry, that the elderly homeless are entitled to access quality aged care services."



CASE STUDY

New South Wales Homelessness Intervention Team

The Homelessness Intervention Team urgently responds to the complex needs of rough sleepers in the inner-city of Sydney. The project is part of a cross agency initiative led by Housing NSW, and includes the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, NSW Health, the Department of Community Services, City of Sydney, and Homelessness NSW. The project has two primary objectives: to urgently house and support chronically homeless people in the inner city of Sydney and to identify and resolve impediments to the effective provision of housing and support services to the broader chronically homeless population in the inner city making recommendations to build the capacity of the existing service system in the longer term.

Modernising boarding hostels

As part of the *Nation Building* and *Jobs Plan*, Yarra Community Housing in Victoria (a registered housing association) is receiving \$17.5 million to deliver improvements for singles accommodation and rooming house modernisation. This funding will be used to transform seven older style rooming houses into modern housing developments. By the completion of the program in June 2010, 120 rooming house rooms will be transformed into 81 fully self contained studio apartments, with individual own kitchen and bathroom facilities for each unit. A further 17 singles accommodation facilities, plus 24 standalone units, are also undergoing a substantial refurbishment to improve the amenity for residents.

Linking homeless people back into the community, education and training

Reclink

Reclink helps homeless Australians and other vulnerable people participate in sport and other activities. Reclink has been operating successfully in Victoria since 1990 and has received \$5.8 million to expand nationally. Sport and recreation improve physical, emotional and mental wellbeing and connect isolated individuals to the services they need.

Thirty Community Street Soccer projects, supported by the Big Issue, are being established across Australia in 2009-10. The project uses physical activity to reconnect the homeless with the community and provides them with a sense of purpose and belonging.

Additional assertive outreach to rough sleepers

All States and Territories are implementing Street to Home initiatives for chronic rough sleepers. States and Territories are implementing assertive outreach programs to work with the chronically homeless on the streets and facilitate their move to long term accommodation with support.

CASE STUDY

Mission Australia

Mission Australia plans to build a brand new residential service for aged homeless people in Sydney after being awarded a \$16 million capital grant by the Australian Government. Residents will have permanent accommodation in the new service.

The initiative will contribute to the Government's commitment to reducing homelessness in line with its White Paper, *The Road Home*.

Mission Australia's NSW State Director, Leonie Green, said when the new service comes on line it will more than double Mission Australia's permanent accommodation places for elderly homeless people in the state.

"Women will benefit particularly because Mission Australia will be the only organisation in the heart of Sydney that has aged care places for elderly homeless women and there will be more places available thanks to this new development," said Ms Green.

"The designs draw on the best practice, research, and evidence in both aged care and in homeless services, including Mission Australia's own multi-award winning aged homeless service, Charles Chambers Court.

"Accommodation will be provided in 'pods' to help create small communities within the larger group and each pod of twelve rooms will have a dining area and lounge. There is also a roof-top garden and social spaces in the design.

"Most elderly homeless people have no contact with their family and limited social networks and so building a sense of community is important to their wellbeing and mental health.

"A registered nurse will be on site seven days a week and through Mission Australia's existing partnerships residents will be able to access doctors, pharmacists, and psycho-geriatricians to name just a few," said Ms Green.



CASE STUDY

South Australia's Integrated Homelessness Initiative

The Integrated Homelessness Initiative has drawn on the recognised benefits of service integration in the provision of coordinated and consistent service delivery. It is a joint initiative between the Department of Health and the Department for Families and Communities (DFC), with a direct target of rough sleepers and chronic homeless, initially within the inner city.

The service model brings together seconded staff from various divisions of SA Health and DFC in order for them to provide direct services and improved access to the mainstream government departments they represent. Implemented in September 2009, staff representing Housing SA, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services, have been located together at the 'Street to Home' service, to create a multi-disciplinary team. They remain employees of their respective departments, but work together as a team each day.

Each worker provides assessment, interventions, services and referrals which reflect their specialised professions and service connections. Services are brought to homeless clients instead of homeless people having to navigate complex systems to get the help they need.

Improved legal services for homeless people

Access to free legal services for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness is essential, especially for those with issues resulting from domestic violence, debt or tenancy disputes. In May 2009 the Government provided \$2.35 million one-off funding to 36 community legal centres to continue to support those most vulnerable in the community.

In June 2009, \$124,000 of this funding was used to establish a trial legal clinic for homeless people in the ACT, and to assist the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic in Victoria.

Education and training

Education is essential to finding a job, and ongoing training and improved skills help individuals and the nation. A range of programs are in place to assist homeless Australians or those at risk of homelessness to stay connected to education, or access training.

- » In 2009-10, the *Australian Apprenticeships Access Programs* will provide 15,000 vulnerable job seekers facing barriers to skilled employment with individualised pre-vocational training, job search and post-placement support to help participants gain and maintain an Australian Apprenticeship, other employment or further education.
- » From 1 January 2010, *Youth Connections* will provide tailored and flexible interventions and outreach services for at risk young people so they can re-engage with education or training. Providers work with severely disengaged young people, which may include homeless youth to overcome the barriers which lead to their disengagement, before re-engaging them with education or training.
- » The *Compact with Young Australians* has been put in place to encourage young people to remain in study or training until they complete at least a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, if they have the capacity to do so. Under the Compact young people are required to stay in school until they complete Year 10, and then participate in full-time education, training or employment (or a combination of these) until they turn 17. The Compact is supported by changes to Youth Allowance (Other) and Family Tax Benefit (Part A), and a range of programs are available to stabilise homeless young people's personal circumstances so that they can access education or training.



CASE STUDY

How **HOME Advice** makes a difference

In August 2009 Anna* was referred from Housing Tasmania to her local **HOME Advice** service as she was facing possible eviction from her public rental property due to rental arrears. Anna needed assistance to help her with child support issues, rental arrears, debts, emotional and physical issues with cannabis addiction and managing her relationship with her son.

Anna was supported with Centrepay direct debits for her Centrelink debts and rent. The HOME Advice worker, in collaboration with the Centrelink social worker, provided case management support and received referrals to: a Drug and Alcohol service, GP, and access to counselling, gas and electricity providers and the Child Support Agency.

Anna's housing is now stable; she is receiving emotional, practical and physical support for herself and her son. Anna has recently gained casual employment as a housekeeper.

*not her real name

Turning off the Tap

Wherever possible, homelessness should be prevented. While a single event may tip a vulnerable person or family into homelessness, many factors usually combine to cause homelessness. The White Paper called for services to intervene early to help people before they become homeless.

Intervening early to prevent homelessness

In recognition of the impact of the global financial crisis on vulnerable families and individuals, the Government has provided an additional \$80.4 million (from March 2009 to June 2011) for **Emergency Relief** and **Financial Counselling**. Further funding of \$33 million has also been provided to community organisations to expand the delivery of microfinance initiatives such as no and low interest loans and match savings products.

Emergency Relief

Emergency Relief services provide support to help meet immediate needs in time of crisis. Assistance often includes food parcels and clothing, transport, chemist vouchers, help with accommodation, payment of bills, budgeting assistance and sometimes cash. Importantly, **Emergency Relief** agencies provide appropriate referrals to other services that help to address underlying causes of financial crisis.

The additional \$80.4 million has brought total funding for **Emergency Relief** to more than \$120 million over the next two years. Part of this funding has been provided to Foodbank Australia, \$2 million over two years, to provide food and grocery supplies to not-for-profit organisations that support individuals and families in need across Australia. In October the Government committed \$12 million of the additional funding to assist those groups in the community who are most vulnerable and because they were struggling at the start of the economic downturn, will find it harder to get back on their feet. This additional funding will include support for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to provide **Emergency Relief** and additional support.

Financial Counselling

Commonwealth Financial Counselling services help people in financial difficulty to address their financial problems and make informed choices. Services may include direct casework (e.g. provision of advice and information); advocacy and/or negotiation; referral; community education and networking/liason.

In response to the Global Financial Crisis the Government increased funding for financial counselling to \$11.7 million in 2009-10.

In January this year funding was provided for twenty new **Commonwealth Financial Counselling** positions around Australia, including some positions that have a focus on housing, such as the Consumer Credit Legal Centre. In June this year a further 11 financial counselling positions in high need areas were funded, including Northern Area Tenants Service, Mission Australia and the Prisoners Legal Service in Queensland. A further 51 positions are expected to be established in early 2010.

HOME Advice

Another early intervention initiative to assist families at risk of homelessness is the **Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program**. This program aims to assist families who face difficulty in maintaining tenancies or home ownership due to personal or financial circumstances.

This year we have funded eight HOME advice services in each State and Territory at a cost of \$1.4 million. Five hundred families have been helped this year to maintain stable housing.

Personal Helpers and Mentors Program

More support and assistance is being targeted towards people living with severe mental illness through the *Personal Helpers and Mentors Program* (PHaMs). PHaMs helps people to participate in the community and stay living in their own homes where this is best.

This year we funded 183 PHaMs services at a cost of \$69 million. These services have assisted about 6,669 people in the current financial year, with more than 660 of these people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. To enhance the effectiveness of PHaMs services for particularly vulnerable groups, including the homeless, specific training will be provided to all existing and new service providers.

A selection process is currently underway as part of the fourth round of PHaMs to select providers to deliver services in seven new remote locations. Early in 2010, a further selection process will be undertaken to select providers for an additional 10 new sites that will specifically target vulnerable Australians (including the homeless). These new sites are each expected to service around 55 participants at any one time. Some current PHaMs sites will also be expanded to provide additional support to these vulnerable Australians. The funding to expand current sites is expected to provide services to an additional 290 participants.

Preventing young people becoming homeless

The national *Reconnect Program* continues to both reconnect young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with their families, education, employment and community; and to assist newly arrived young migrants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This year, *Reconnect* assisted over 5,500 young people and 3,500 family members at a cost of over \$22 million to gain access to 108 services. Three new providers in rural Western Australia and metropolitan Sydney came on board this year to ensure continued service delivery in areas with high numbers of young people at risk of homelessness.

CASE STUDY

PHaMs in action

Noreen* is a 33 year old single mother of three children aged 13, nine and two. She was depressed and anxious and could not get access to the services she needed. She was homeless, living in her car with her children.

The PHaMs service linked Noreen to a domestic violence service and crisis accommodation, helping her to get short-term accommodation and on to the priority housing wait list. Applications to the Department of Housing, community mental health services, and education and employment, were put together by Noreen and her PHaMs worker. She is now living in public housing, is linked with a psychiatrist to help manage her depression, is enrolled in university to study social work and has gained a position as a Peer Support worker.

*not her real name

CASE STUDY

Reconnect

The local High School referred Brett*, a 16 year young person to Reconnect. Brett had recently left home and his parents' attempts to get him to return had not been successful. He refused to engage with his parents and his whereabouts were unknown, causing the family much distress. Brett's family and school raised concerns about his risk taking behaviours such as alcohol and other drug use, bad behaviour towards younger siblings and school attendance.

Reconnect worked with Brett to return home, modify his behaviour and improve his school attendance. Reconnect also engaged both parents who were still concerned with Brett's behaviour; this included a family mediation session to resolve outstanding issues and a week later Brett returned home.

Brett has also found himself a part time job and his attendance at school has improved. All parties were happy with the agreement from the mediation session and Reconnect will continue to work with the family as they get used to living together again.

*not his real name



CASE STUDY

**Western Australia's
Hardship Utilities
Grants Scheme
(HUGS)**

The Western Australian Government has implemented a grants scheme which provides financial assistance to help people experiencing financial hardship to avoid disconnection from essential services. The HUGS service has provided over 4,005 grants over the last year.

By supporting people to stay connected to gas, electricity and water, HUGS helps people to maintain their tenancies and avoid homelessness.

Essential service providers such as electricity, gas and water have joined the scheme in which they are able to refer customers at risk of disconnection to a HUGS-registered financial counsellor.

Tenancy Support

It is easier and better for all concerned to prevent evictions than to find a home for someone who has been evicted.

Tenancy support programs prevent homelessness and evictions from private and social housing and help people access the private rental market. Clients are referred to these services as soon as it becomes obvious their tenancy is at risk. Services help with all the issues impacting on the client's tenancy.

All States and Territories have established or expanded tenancy support services as part of the White Paper reforms. The case studies below demonstrate the range of innovative tenancy programs throughout Australia.

CASE STUDY

Queensland's RentConnect

Following successful trials in Caboolture and Rockhampton, the Queensland Government announced the roll out of new RentConnect services in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Townsville and Cairns in December 2009. RentConnect helps people access the private rental market by providing advice on how to find a rental property and helping with the application process. Practical help in the form of a no-interest bond loan and a one-off grant of two weeks rent can also be provided. Over 2,000 people are expected to be helped each year.

CASE STUDY

The Northern Territory's Tenancy Sustainability Program

The Northern Territory Tenancy Sustainability Program (TSP) was established to provide targeted support and early intervention for individuals or families at risk of eviction from public housing. This program will also provide support and skill development for people to sustain their tenancy. TSP is available in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs and 130 people have already been assisted by this program. An additional \$1 million has been allocated to expand these services including delivery of TSP in Tennant Creek.

CASE STUDY

Tasmania's Specialist Intervention Tenancy Support Service

Tasmania is in the process of rolling out new services to complement existing tenancy support programs. This initiative targets young people leaving the care and protection system, youth justice facilities, adults leaving gaol and people who have experienced chronic homelessness.

The new Specialist Intervention Tenancy Support Services (SITS) will comprise four multi-disciplinary teams who respond to the individual needs of clients through active outreach, case coordination and management, ongoing tenancy support, advocacy, and appropriate referral, specialist treatment liaison and brokered support. SITS clients will receive support for up to 24 months to ensure the tenancy is sustained.

CASE STUDY

Victoria's Social Housing and Advocacy Support Program (SHASP)

This project was established with the aim of contributing to more sustainable tenancy outcomes for those Victorians identified to be at high-risk of eviction from social housing. SHASP provides advocacy and support to existing social housing tenants and prospective public housing tenants in order to assist them to access housing and sustain it. This program will be further expanded in early 2010 to assist more tenants in high need and to provide longer periods of support to high need clients.



Improving Services

The White Paper identified that many homeless people cycle through services and have to tell their story again and again. Mainstream and specialist homeless services need to work better together to end homelessness for their clients. This means that, for example, hospitals, schools and employment services need to work more closely with refuges and shelters to improve outcomes for people who are homeless.

Improving mainstream service delivery to homeless people

Centrelink

Centrelink is a key point of contact for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In 2009 Centrelink established an expanded network of 90 Centrelink Community Engagement Officers (CEOs) who will deliver outreach services to more people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who find it difficult to access mainstream Centrelink services. The CEOs are expected to have about 216,000 customer contacts a year (50 contacts a week per CEO). These officers will also work with local service providers to help prevent homelessness.

This year Centrelink has also developed and trialled a way of better identifying customers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This new 'flag' will be implemented more widely in January 2010 and will help identify people who need additional assistance including referral to appropriate agencies and access to Centrelink social workers.

Recognising that much better connections to State and Territory housing services would help deliver better outcomes for people, Centrelink has this year trialled the co-location of State/Territory Housing Authorities in Centrelink Customer Service Centres. This will provide clients with better access to a range of support services in one place and assist them to find crisis accommodation as well as long term housing. An initial trial of an ACT Housing co-location within the Centrelink Tuggeranong Customer Service Centre is continuing until 31 December 2009. An assessment for further trials will be complete in late 2009 early 2010.

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness often have difficulties managing a budget on their fortnightly income support payments. From mid 2010 Centrelink will offer the most vulnerable customers weekly payments of income support.

CASE STUDY

Centrelink, Reaching out to People who are Homeless

Brian* is a 40 year old man who has been living in an inner city park for over a year. Today, with the help of a Centrelink CEO and in conjunction with other key services, Brian has a home.

On her twice weekly visits to the parks, in the early hours of the morning, CEO Chris* was able to build a relationship with Brian. Chris says "Brian was quiet and private, but in his own environment over some months he became more comfortable about confiding in me. He explained his history of addiction to alcohol and drugs, and the fact that he had lost his job, assets, accommodation and all support."

Through the CEOs and their close work with a wide range of community agencies and services, Brian was able to secure boarding house accommodation. He says the help from Centrelink may not seem huge, but it did in fact play a key role in assisting him to 'move forward'.

The success of the initial CEOs has now seen this service expanded to reach more homeless people in a broader range of locations.

*not his/her real name



Employment Services

The Australian Government has introduced a new approach to employment services to ensure better employment outcomes for all including people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Specific services to increase employment for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have been established through:

- » **Jobs Fund** with nine projects that will assist homeless Australians or those at risk of homelessness to maximise their job and training potential in local communities;
- » **Job Services Australia** with five specialist providers across 39 sites delivering tailored services to homeless job seekers; and
- » **Innovation Fund** with four providers in the first round of funding providing innovative, place-based solutions to help homeless job seekers to overcome employment barriers.

CASE STUDY

Jobs Fund

The *Jobs Fund* is a one-off grants program that will support innovative projects which create jobs and employment opportunities in communities affected by the economic downturn. The injection of funds will focus directly on generating jobs for people in communities with high unemployment, a rise in unemployment, or vulnerability, such as homelessness. Through this program, which only started in July this year, a number of projects may benefit people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, so that they are able to maximise their job and training opportunities in local communities. The projects are:

Get Communities Working and Local Jobs stream

- » The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) - \$881,000 for youth and welfare programs;
- » STREAT Ltd (VIC) - \$1.1 million for expansion of the STREAT mobile cart fleet and the development of the Green canteen project;
- » Boystown (NSW) - \$414,000 for Western Sydney Youth Homelessness Social Enterprise project;
- » Marist Youth Care Ltd (NSW) - \$1.7 million for the Affordable Housing for Life project for 'at risk' young people; and
- » Australian Community Support Organisation Inc (VIC) - \$622,000 for the Scanners R Us project.

Temporary Financial Assistance grants

- » Activate Australia (VIC) - \$60,000 to assist in the operation of Leadership Development Programs, which provide support and development training for disadvantaged youth;
- » Whitelion Incorporated (VIC) - \$145,000 to maintain outreach, mentoring and vocational holistic employment programs to highly disadvantaged young people in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia;
- » Typo Station Limited trading as Evolve at Typo Station (VIC) - \$250,000 to continue its program tailored to 14 to 17 year old young men who are at risk of leaving school early, criminal behaviour, juvenile detention, homelessness, mental illness, long-term unemployment and community disengagement in the Goulburn-Ovens-Murray region; and
- » St Vincent De Paul Society (NSW) - \$400,000 to refurbish the Kennedy House Homeless Men's Service shelter and continue education programs through the Clemente Program.

A full description of each project can be found at <http://www.keepaustraliaworking.gov.au/jobsfund>



Job Services Australia

Job Services Australia (JSA) commenced on 1 July 2009.

Importantly JSA providers are required to work cooperatively with other Government and local community services, including those services working with people who are homeless, to get the best outcomes for clients.

CASE STUDY

Home Options and Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Project

The National Employment Services Association (NESA) and Homelessness Australia (HA) work in partnership on the HOPE project. The Project will help employment services and accommodation service work together better at a local level.

The project will complete the Training Package and Service Level Agreement by February 2010 and implementation across employment services and specialist accommodation services will be completed by the end of April 2010.

Innovation Fund

The *Innovation Fund* is designed to fund place-based solutions to address barriers to employment for the most disadvantaged job seekers. These groups include for example, people in areas with entrenched disadvantage; people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness, people with mental illness, Indigenous Australians, and job seekers in jobless families.

Out of the \$41 million *Innovation Fund*, \$3.5 million was provided under round one to four projects that offer innovative, place-based solutions to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to overcome barriers to employment. Under round two, \$6 million has been allocated to 14 job-generating projects which focus on helping up to 3,500 disadvantaged jobseekers. Examples of these projects are:

- » Southern Youth and Family Services Australia will implement a pre-employment project targeting at risk, disadvantaged, homeless Wollongong/Illawarra people aged 15 to 24. Participants will receive early intervention support consisting of training, pre-employment support, and case management;
- » NSW Technical and Further Education Commission – Promising Futures – Partners in Learning and Community Enterprise (PLACE) NSW;
- » The Fifteen Foundation Australia will assist at least 16 disadvantaged jobseekers to undertake a program of welfare support, first year apprentice chef training and assistance to complete their apprenticeship with another employer; and
- » The Desert People's Centre will train and mentor members of remote Eastern Central Desert Australian Indigenous communities in aged and disability care.



Reforming Existing Services

Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and the wider homelessness reform agenda, State and Territory Governments, as well as existing service providers are using the directions of the White Paper to improve service delivery in a variety of ways.

CASE STUDY

South Australia's Preferred Support Provider system

The Preferred Support Provider (PSP) system has been designed to provide quality assurance across the homelessness sector and to achieve a consistency of standards and service delivery that reinforces best approaches across the state. All services have been encouraged to apply for PSP status. The successful applicants will have been assessed as having:

- » a commitment to quality support services;
- » focus on clients and housing first outcomes;
- » the willingness to adopt standardised, streamlined and integrated processes for case management; and
- » regional networks.

It is expected that by February 2010 agencies that are identified as successful in this process will become Preferred Support Providers and will be eligible to tender for future homelessness services in South Australia.

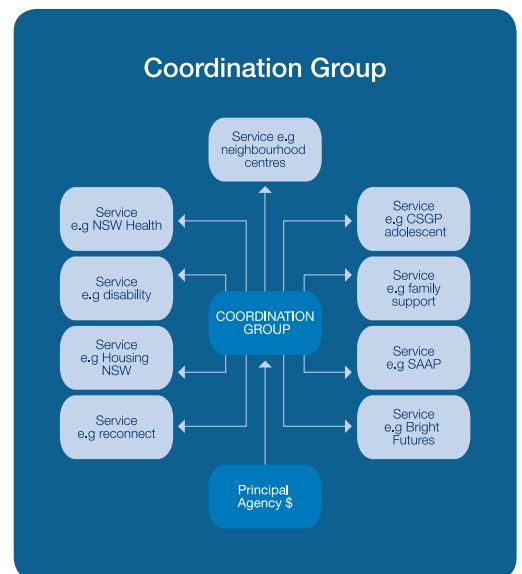
CASE STUDY

New South Wales, Nepean Youth Homelessness Service

The Nepean Youth Homelessness Service (NYHS), led by the Department of Community Services has been expanded and draws together a range of government and non-government agencies to address the complex needs of homeless young people in the Nepean area. Flexible funding and brokerage funds are provided for case management for up to twelve months to young people in Housing NSW properties. These young people are typically rough sleeping and/or repeat users of crisis accommodation services. The service also provides early intervention support to young people at risk of homelessness. This early intervention component focuses on maintaining or reconnecting young people to family, education, training or employment.

The NYHS is based on the 'Housing First' model and involves three key strategies: coordination; brokerage and; joint assertive outreach.

Diagram 1 (below) illustrates the partnership model adopted. Homelessness support services, specialist services and mainstream services not only refer clients, but are directly involved in supporting clients through the multi-disciplinary coordinated case management model.



Stephanie Brennan

Convenor, Nepean Campaign Against Homelessness

“The White Paper has created a radical change in how we approach homelessness in the Nepean... It’s become everyone’s campaign.”

CASE STUDY

Victoria’s Opening Doors

Opening Doors is building and extending across Victoria the previously smaller Homelessness Assessment and Referral Framework. The Framework helps to better integrate services at a regional level. Services work in partnership to provide coordinated access to a streamlined service system.

For example, two families with children accessed the homelessness service system for up to seven years. During the Opening Doors pilot, both families were prioritised for case management and transitional housing. One family has since secured long-term housing and the other family is receiving support and has been approved for long-term public housing.

Tools that support Opening Doors include: 20 new workers, a practice guide to prioritise clients for support and/or housing, training for workers, and an online resource register. In addition the state-wide free-call homelessness 1800 number opened in October 2009, and the state wide after hours response service which prioritises access to those who need it most opened in November 2009.

CASE STUDY

In Western Australia, the Uniting Care West has adopted a ‘no wrong doors’ service

Uniting Care West, in consultation with the Department of Child Protection, recently reviewed their services in response to the directions of the White Paper.

As a result, Uniting Care West has adopted a ‘no wrong door’ service delivery approach to meet the complex needs of individuals and families accessing their homelessness services.

This means that services to these clients will be better integrated and coordinated. Many will be delivered together and on site which will improve outcomes for clients.

CASE STUDY

Regional Assertive Outreach – Ceduna, South Australia

The development of the Ceduna Assertive Regional Engagement (CARE) is an initiative designed to address the needs of Aboriginal people who are sleeping rough, within the Ceduna local area and work in conjunction with outreach responses from South Australian Health staff.

Assertive outreach is a key aspect of CARE service delivery. CARE locates clients and provides ongoing assertive engagement with rough sleepers. CARE staff will work across a Seven day a week roster and targets areas frequented by rough sleepers. The CARE team’s approach to service delivery will be provided wherever the client is located or feels comfortable. Outreach work is provided in the bush, cafés, or at other places, such as the client’s residence once housed.

Narelle Clay
CEO Southern Youth
and Family Services

*“While it is still early days,
on this anniversary...
we can now see some
real steps that will lead
to a reduction in
homelessness.”*

CASE STUDY

Tasmania piloting several new approaches

The Young People's Transitions Program pilot project in northern Tasmania helps young people leaving statutory care to access public housing. This project is a collaboration between Housing Tasmania and Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services.

On the North West Coast there is a pilot project integrating mental health services and public housing for people with significant mental health related problems whose treatment outcomes are jeopardised by lack of sustainable accommodation.

Towards the future

Improving the quality of services for people who are homeless

The Australian Government is working with the States and Territories, the homelessness sector and mainstream services to develop a National Quality Framework, which will encourage services to see the client as the centre of a multi-service response. A National Quality Framework will also promote a culture of continuous quality improvement which will result in better outcomes for people who are homeless.

Initially the public consultations will seek input on broad issues such as what quality service provision is how to encourage continuous improvement, and establishing the principles that will guide the development of the National Quality Framework. There will be opportunities during the development process for the public to contribute.

The Government is examining how a National Quality Framework could be supported by legislation. As a first step the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Families, Communities, Housing and Youth Inquiry into homelessness legislation examined how legislation can set out values, principles and standards that will underpin high quality homelessness services. The Committee's report *Housing the Homeless* was tabled in the Federal Parliament on 26 November 2009. It contained 15 recommendations which are being considered by the Australian Government.



Investing in research

Research helps us determine what works best to end homelessness.

In November 2009, the Australian Government released the *National Homelessness Research Agenda 2009-2013*. The Research Agenda will guide our efforts to learn more about homelessness and preventing homelessness in order to sharpen and better target policy and program responses.

The Australian Government will provide \$11.4 million over four years to fund wide-ranging and innovative research, improve existing data and invest in new data.

The priorities outlined in the Agenda include:

- » Research into the capacity and responsiveness of homeless services at local, state and national levels, using best practice research and models of integrated service delivery to inform service delivery;
- » The impacts of early intervention and maintaining social connections, social reintegration and recreation programs; and
- » Improving the data available for research into homelessness.

Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness

The Prime Minister has appointed a Council on Homelessness, comprising ten members with a broad range of expertise in the homelessness sector. The Council, which is chaired by Mr Tony Nicholson, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, provides an independent overview of the implementation of the White Paper's goals and targets for 2013 and 2020, and advice to the Government on progress, risks and emerging issues.

Progress on the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

In April 2009, the Australian Government formally accepted *Time for Action*, the major report of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, a non-government advisory body.

In direct response to *Time for Action*, the Government immediately invested \$42 million to fund a new package of actions to reduce violence against women including:

- » \$12.5 million for a new national domestic violence and sexual assault telephone and online crisis service which is expected to accept more than 20,000 calls a year;
- » \$17 million for a behaviour-change campaign aimed at preventing young people from ever using or accepting violence in their intimate relationships; and
- » \$9.1 million in respectful relationships education to give young people the communication skills they need to establish good friendships and to learn how to recognise abuse and that action can be taken to stop violence. This is currently being tested and evaluated in 56 school and non-school sites in across all States and Territories in Australia.

As well as providing funding to respond to *Time for Action*, the Government has committed further funding to reduce family violence including, for example:

- » \$19.5 million will continue our commitment to training rural and remote practice nurses and Aboriginal health workers; and
- » \$4 million is provided for the Support for Victims of trafficking program.

In August 2009 the Australian and State and Territory Governments began work on a *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women* that will be finalised through the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in 2010.

CASE STUDY

Programs to address family violence in Indigenous Communities

Around \$64 million has been allocated for funding family violence programs in Indigenous communities across the country. Some focus on early intervention and prevention of violence through work with men like the Spirited Men's Project in Murray Bridge in South Australia. Others target Indigenous men leaving correctional services such as the Cross Border NPY Lands Program. These programs address the underlying causes of violence such as drug and alcohol use and the effects of grief and trauma.

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Young people leaving the child protection system are clearly at increased risk of homelessness. It is vital that child protection and homelessness services are integrated to support these vulnerable young people make successful transitions to independent adult life.

On 11 September 2009 the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference endorsed the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children Implementation Plan 2009-2012*. The Implementation Plan outlines how all governments, the non-government sector and the broader community will take forward the actions identified in the National Framework's first three-year action plan, including those on homelessness, and how the progress of these actions will be measured.

David Eldridge Salvation Army

"In 30 years of being involved with services for homeless people...the White Paper on Homelessness has provided the first opportunity for our sector to work to a coherent national vision focused on real goals to be achieved."

