

A Way Home: Reducing Homelessness in NSW

NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* sets the direction for statewide reform of the homelessness service system to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*, the NSW Government will re-align existing effort, increasing the focus of the service system on prevention and long-term accommodation and support.

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* will change the way we understand homelessness and its impact on the community, the way we design and deliver services to homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless; and change the way we work across government, the non-government sector and with the broader community to improve our responses to homelessness.

Strategic Directions

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* includes three strategic directions, which are aligned with the Australian Government's priority areas.

Strategic Direction	Our Goal	Priorities
Preventing Homelessness	People never become homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent eviction from all kinds of tenure • Transition and maintain people exiting statutory care/correctional and health facilities into appropriate long-term accommodation • Provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points
Responding effectively to homelessness	People who are homeless receive effective responses so that they do not become entrenched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve identification of and responses to homelessness by mainstream and specialist support services • Deliver integrated service responses • Streamline access to crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services • Transition people who are homeless to appropriate long-term accommodation and support
Breaking the cycle	People who have been homeless don't become homeless again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide models of accommodation with support that are suitable for different target groups • Increase and upgrade supply of affordable and social housing • Promote partnerships between all levels of government, business, consumers and the not-for-profit sector • Improve and better utilise of homelessness data and evidence-based responses to homelessness

Regional homelessness action plans are a key component of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* and will help achieve better coordination and collaboration across the service system and enable services and community organisations to provide input into the implementation of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* on a local level.

2009/10 Actions

The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is a dynamic document. Examples of actions which will take place in 2009/10 are listed below. Further details can be found in a full copy of the Plan. The Plan includes actions funded through the National Partnership on Homelessness NSW Implementation Plan.


<p>Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver tenancy support to people at risk of homelessness, with a focus on Aboriginal people in the Richmond/Tweed and the Mid-North Coast areas • Develop multi-agency service delivery discharge plans for people leaving care, custody or health facilities, including exits into social housing and provision of support 	<p>Chronically homeless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places across NSW to ensure that the rights of homeless people in public spaces are respected by the community and mainstream services • Implement a new Assertive Outreach and Supported Housing program for rough sleepers in inner Sydney and Newcastle that includes generalist and health components and is linked to long-term supported housing
<p>Young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Nepean Youth Homelessness Project which targets young people sleeping rough and transitions them into long-term accommodation with support. The Project also intervenes early to prevent young people at risk of homelessness becoming homeless • Implement an Inner City Supportive Housing and Support Project for Young People in Kings Cross to provide coordinated case management and supportive housing for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness • Provide accommodation and intensive support services linked to education, training and employment for young people 	<p>Women and children who have experienced domestic violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out Staying Home Leaving Violence projects across NSW to assist women who have experienced violence remain safely in their homes without the violent partner • Provide training and support to magistrates about ways of supporting women and children at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence • Assist approximately 213 women escaping domestic and family violence gain access to the private rental market through the <i>Safe Start</i> Rental Subsidy Scheme
<p>Aboriginal people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Aboriginal Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative (HASI) in trial sites and conduct an evaluation • Identify effective responses to Aboriginal homelessness caused by overcrowding by researching the issue in remote locations and across tenure types • Create new positions in an Aboriginal Leaving Care service provider to support Aboriginal young people leaving care to return to independent living 	<p>Service system reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a common assessment tool for services working with homeless people to identify their support and accommodation requirements. Identify the best way to share assessment information between agencies • Build the capacity of the sector to respond in new ways to homelessness by developing and implementing tools that support the shift in focus from helping people on-site to providing assistance in long-term housing

Monitoring and Reporting

For each strategic direction, key performance indicators and measures have been developed. Reviewing these indicators and measures will help determine the impact of actions on homelessness in NSW.

The following targets have been set in the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* and reflect targets in the National Partnership on Homelessness:

- a reduction of 7% in the overall level of homelessness in NSW by 2013
- a reduction of 25% in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW by 2013
- a reduction of one third in the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless in NSW by 2013.



The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* is designed to be a dynamic document and currently contains actions that will commence in 2009/10 only. Progress against the strategies and actions identified in the Plan will be monitored, with annual reports produced on activities undertaken under the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan*. The *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* also has a program of evaluation and research to determine the effectiveness of activities and help make decisions about where future efforts need to be placed.

To see a full copy of the *NSW Homelessness Action Plan* or for more information on what the NSW Government is doing to reduce homelessness visit www.housing.nsw.gov.au.

Homelessness in NSW

Overall the rate of homelessness in NSW remained unchanged between the 2001 and 2006 Census counts. This confirms that the significant commitment by the Australian and NSW governments as well as the non-government sector and community to date in addressing homelessness has been somewhat successful. Nevertheless it also means that reform in the way services are provided is needed if homeless numbers are to reduce.

On the night of the 2006 Census, there were more than 27,000 homeless people in NSW:

- 13% of homeless people in NSW were rough sleepers or living in improvised dwellings
- 40% were living with friends and relatives
- 28% were in boarding houses
- 19% of homeless people in NSW were in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) accommodation
- 59% of homeless people in NSW were male and 41% were female
- 28% were aged 12-24 and 11% were children under 12
- 7.2% of homeless people were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (compared with 2.2% of the general NSW population).

In 2007/08, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) supported 37,700 clients and 19,000 children who accompanied an adult who was homeless. The main reasons for people seeking assistance from a SAAP service included:

- domestic and family violence (20%)
- relationship and family breakdown (12%)
- problematic alcohol and substance use (12%)
- time out from family (9%)
- financial difficulty (10%) and
- emergency/previous accommodation ended (8%).