Southern Homelessness Services Network

Submission to the development of the

National Housing and Homelessness Plan 2023

Department of Social Services

SHSN

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan (NHHP). The SHSN has long been advocating for the development of a National Housing and Homelessness Plan and our members are excited to contribute our views to the development of the Plan as the Southern region of Melbourne has some of the highest numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria, particularly in the outer South growth corridors.

The SHSN conducted a member survey and a member focus group to gather input into this submission. Our members strongly support these recommendations and are looking for leadership from the Federal Government, working together with State/Territory, local governments and the community sector to end homelessness in Australia.

The recommendations in this submission come from experts in homelessness in Melbourne' Southern region and can be applied nationally. The SHSN has made these recommendations to provide guidance to the Plan in how to end homelessness across Australia.

The SHSN and our member agencies are keen to have further input into the development of the plan and would be happy to participate in further consultations, and would also advocate for authentic consultation with people with lived experience of homelessness in the development, implementation and evaluation of the NHHP.

Effective solutions require the time, the investment and the political will to really make a difference, particularly for people experiencing and/or at risk of homelessness. We trust that the Federal Government, together with State and local governments and the homelessness and housing sectors, will develop a Plan that is comprehensive and ambitious in its goal to end homelessness.

> **The Southern Homelessness Services Network makes the following recommendations to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan:**
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> **Recommendation 1.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should be a bold, comprehensive strategy that sets out a clear, committed and planned approach to ending homelessness in Australia.
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> **Recommendation 2.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should commit to clear targets, for example, to halve homelessness in five years and to end homelessness in ten years.
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> **Recommendation 3.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should focus on reducing poverty as a critical broad-ranging strategy to preventing and ending homelessness in Australia.
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> **Recommendation 4.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should focus on ensuring the supply of safe and appropriate public and community housing at the scale required to meet demand for people on the lowest incomes, including people experiencing, and at risk of, homelessness.
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> **Recommendation 5.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should ensure that the homelessness service system and workforce is well-resourced to provide flexible and responsive support to meet the actual demand for homelessness assistance.
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> **Recommendation 6.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should be responsive to the needs of different cohorts experiencing homelessness, whilst recognising and responding to intersectionality.
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> **Recommendation 7.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should include the provision of effective evidence-based models at the scale required, to prevent, intervene early and end homelessness, including authentic Housing First models.
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> **Recommendation 8.** The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should include strategies for all human services to take responsibility for supporting their service users at risk of/experiencing homelessness.

2. About the SHSN and this Submission

The **Vision** of the Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) is an end to homelessness in Southern Region of Melbourne.

The **Mission** of the "Victorian Homelessness Networks is to facilitate, inform and support regional homelessness services and stakeholders to work together to co-ordinate services to people who are experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness."

The Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) comprises all funded Specialist Homelessness Services in the Southern Region of Melbourne including services providing crisis, transitional, long term, family violence and youth support and accommodation. Our members include Launch Housing, the Salvation Army, NEAMI, Wayss and Sacred Heart Mission. The SHSN also supports allied service sectors working in homelessness. The SHSN is a resource for the homelessness sector in the South. More information about the SHSN can be found on our website https://www.shsnetwork.online/

The key strategic objectives of the SHSN are:

1. Working together to end homelessness.
2. Acting as a conduit between the DFFH (Dept of Families, Fairness and Housing) and the regional services sector on issues and trends to inform policy
3. Strengthening the coordinated homelessness service system in the best interests of clients

The Southern Region comprises ten local government areas in Southern Melbourne - Bayside, Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip and Stonnington (see Figure 1). This is a geographically and socio-economically diverse region.

Figure 1 Map of Melbourne's Southern Region Local Government Areas

Map of Melbourne's Southern Region Local Government Areas

The SHSN conducted a survey of its membership to contribute to the development of this submission. The survey ran from 11-24 September 2023 and 82 people from across the Southern region completed the survey. The majority of survey respondents work in Specialist Homelessness Services. Four respondents had lived experience of homelessness. Survey respondents came from across the Southern region – inner, middle and outer Southern, with stronger participation from people working in the Frankston/Mornington Peninsula areas.

Members were surveyed on their support for the draft SHSN recommendations to the National Plan. The survey responses were strongly in favour of all of the recommendations, showing the strong support of our membership for national action to end homelessness. Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to

make comments in relation to the submission and the recommendations and these quotes from the survey are included in the next section of this submission.

The SHSN Managers Group held a focus group discussion on 2 October to further workshop the recommendations (with eleven participants). The focus group refined the recommendations which are presented in this submission.

The submission also builds on the work of previous submissions by the SHSN to numerous inquiries over recent years[1] , including –

- Senate Inquiry into Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia 2023
- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Rental and Housing Affordability Crisis in Victoria 2023
- Productivity Commission's Review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement 2022
- Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness 2020
- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria 2020 (the SHSN also gave evidence to this Inquiry).

The SHSN is confident that this submission strongly reflects the views of the homelessness sector in the Southern Region of Melbourne. The final recommendations and relevant supporting comments from the survey and focus group are presented in the next section.

Data analysis relating to housing and homelessness in Melbourne's South are included at Attachment A to provide background information supporting the SHSN recommendations and the SHSN Homelessness Fact Sheets are also attached to contribute to the NHHP.

The SHSN recommendations provide clear directions for the Federal Government to develop a comprehensive NHHP working together with other levels of Government and the community sector to end homelessness in Australia. The SHSN is keen to be involved in further developing and implementing a National Plan to end homelessness in Australia.

[1] See our website for these submissions https://www.shsnetwork.online/projects-submissions

3. SHSN Recommendations to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan

The SHSN recommendations to the development of the NHHP are explained in this section. The recommendations are sequenced starting with the broad structural changes required to support ending homelessness down to more specific program and sector responses. Implementing the earlier recommendations will greatly support the effectiveness of the later recommendations. For example, providing sufficient income for an unemployed single person to afford private rental will greatly enhance the support provided by homelessness services. The provision of adequate income and affordable and appropriate housing, together with a well-resourced homelessness service system (SHSN Recommendations 3, 4 and 5) are the most effective solutions to ending homelessness, with the remaining recommendations augmenting these solutions.

The Southern region of Melbourne has some of the highest numbers of people experiencing homelessness as counted in the 2021 Census[2], with three Southern region local government areas in the top ten for homelessness – Greater Dandenong, Casey and Port Phillip. In the 2021 Census, 8,543 people were counted as homeless in the Southern Region of Melbourne alone. 23% of these people were children aged under 18 (1,951 children) – see Attachment A for more detailed homelessness data analysis. 28% of all Victorians counted as homeless on 2021 Census night were counted in the Southern region of Melbourne. Figure 2 provides an overview of homelessness data in the Southern Region. There were nearly 8,000 people counted as homeless or at risk of homelessness due to crowding in the South and nearly 3,000 people counted as homeless in unsafe rooming houses. The full set of fact sheets will be uploaded as an attachment to this submission and can also be found at www.shsnetwork.online/homelessness-data.

Figure 2 Overview of homelessness data for the Southern Region of Melbourne [3]
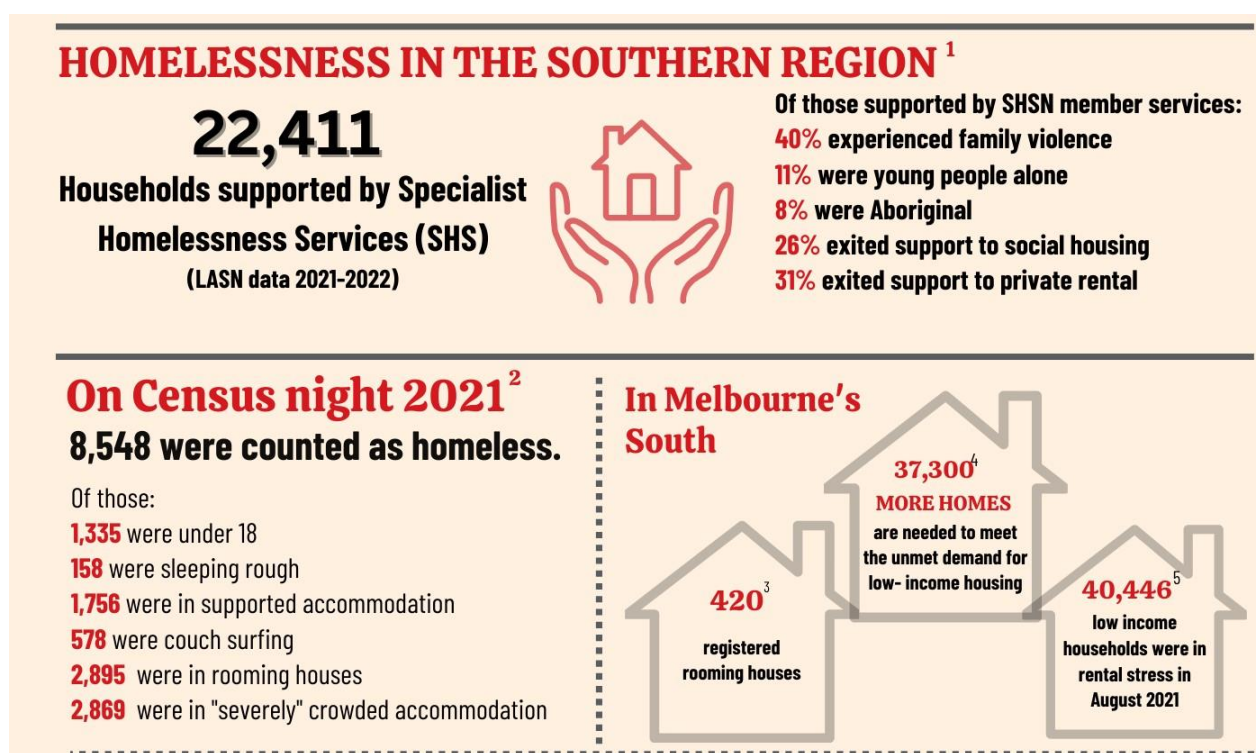
Traditionally housing in Australia has been treated as a commodity and an investment. It is a competitive market good, not a public good or a human right. This perspective on housing contrasts with other more progressive countries where housing is more commonly provided by governments as a fundamental service or social infrastructure essential to a functioning economy and society. The Australian view of housing is

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[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023 *Estimating Homeless Census 2021* https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release#data-downloads
[3] SHSN Facts about Homelessness. Fact sheets available at https://www.shsnetwork.online/homelessness-data

difficult to change given our history. It is a large part of the reason for the current housing emergency at all levels – home ownership, private rental and social housing.

> The reliance on the private rental market continues to fail Australians. The market is geared towards producing profits, not providing homes. We need to redefine how we think about the provision of housing through greater investment in social and affordable housing. Tackling this crisis will take time, and a willingness to put Australians who need a home ahead of all other interests. It will also require a concerted and enduring commitment from the government. However, failing to act is also a political choice[4]

Most "solutions" to the housing crisis put forward do not assist people on the lowest incomes, especially those put forward by the housing and development industries. Solutions that worked in the past are not working well now because of the low availability of rental housing and escalating rents. The SHSN is keen to focus on solutions that benefit the most marginalised Australians – those at the lowest end of the housing market – people at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness. This group should be the priority in the NHHP. Once we have implemented solutions for this most marginalised group, then we can focus on improving the housing market for other groups.

The SHSN believes that people with lived experience of homelessness are the experts on homelessness. The SHSN urges the Federal Government to consult authentically with people with lived experience through running lived experience focus group consultations or interviews. People who have experienced homelessness are not often in a position to make a written submission or even make online comment. As one of our members pointed out in the SHSN Member Survey 2023 –

> The National Housing and Homelessness plan would be best served by inclusion of the voice of lived experience at this stage and into the future

The SHSN advocates for the establishment of a National Advisory Council on Ending Homelessness to contribute to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NHHP. This Advisory Council should include experts from the homelessness sector, academics and lived experience experts. The Council will be a critical body providing expert advice to the Federal Government on the NHHP.

The recommendations in this submission focus on achieving real change. Poverty is a major cause of homelessness, together with the lack of affordable, appropriate and safe housing. Alleviating poverty and improving the supply of housing for people at the lowest end of the housing market are the keys to ending homelessness in Australia.

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[4] Anglicare Australia 2023 *Rental Affordability Snapshot Victoria* https://www.anglicare.asn.au/publications/2023-rental-affordability-snapshot/

Recommendation 1. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should be a bold, comprehensive strategy that sets out a clear, committed and planned approach to ending homelessness in Australia.

In the SHSN member survey, our members asked that the NHHP:

- be bold, comprehensive, consistent and transparent
- aim to end homelessness long term as well as providing short term (crisis) solutions
- include housing solutions and homelessness support solutions
- be evidence-based
- link to other relevant national plans such as the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, Federal Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission, etc
- the NHHP should have a strong role for the inclusion of the people with lived experience of homelessness both in its development, and in monitoring and evaluation
- take a coordinated systems approach to ending homelessness and be holistic and integrated, bringing together all areas of government impacting homelessness to develop strategies to reduce, and then end homelessness.

The SHSN are calling for the Federal Government to make the most of this opportunity to shape our future by leaving a legacy of ending homelessness in Australia and we believe it is possible with a bold comprehensive plan.

The plan needs to cover every type of situation which could occur but needs to be flexible in certain situations which are based on the client's personal circumstances. This should be covered under comprehensive strategy and a committed and planned approach.

There needs to be a comprehensive approach that involves crisis and long-term solutions. Diversifying the locations as well of public housing and having a social approach to housing is essential.

Homelessness is a significant and growing issue that manifests in different ways across cities, suburbs, and regions. We need to better understand the issues and be bold in our devising of solutions. A comprehensive and resourced strategy is essential

The lack of a National Plan has played somewhat to the current situation. The monetisation of housing now means that the great Australian dream of owning your own home has morphed into a monopolization of it being a main source of income for people to own multiple homes and have renters pay off their mortgages for them We need a comprehensive long-term strategy of publicly owned affordable social housing with support services incorporated into the structures to allow for long-term wrap-around support and at a cost that is reasonable and fixed.

Yes we need to take a systems approach to homelessness as there are so many factors that contribute to this issue. Any programs or policy changes need to be given the appropriate amount of time to see the impact, and be done in a coordinated way as no one change or program will fix this issue.

We need to make a coordinated response that ensures changes are being put in place across all sectors including response to family violence, mental health, AOD support and Centrelink supports.

A comprehensive and long term plan is the only way to make a permanent change. As a crisis centre, it is disheartening to know that we are often providing a bandaid solution fully aware that permanent housing is the most important need for the person standing in front of us.

It needs to end homelessness, not just provide token assistance.

We also need evidence-based impactful programs to address issues associated with homelessness.

We do not need to re-invent the wheel. This has been achieved my many countries around the world with a social responsibility to its citizens. And guess what, it's cheaper overall, for everyone!! It also increases people's abilities to have a more positive impact on their communities and quality of life. Sometimes I feel that current strategies don't really want to fix anything. They want to look like they do. Housing is a fundamental human right, and should be treated as such, irrespective of individual situations. I like to ask myself, what would you want for your _____ (insert relative)

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

Recommendation 2. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should commit to clear targets, for example, to halve homelessness in five years and to end homelessness in ten years.

In the SHSN member survey, our members asked that the National Plan have clear targets:

- to be accountable, with responsibilities across government monitored and held to account
- to show our commitment to ending homelessness in Australia is serious
- to be based on SMART goals - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
- for monitoring and evaluation purposes to show our progress, including measuring incremental steps towards the goal of ending homelessness
- to allow for flexibility and adjustments to the Plan
- to be supported by robust data collection process to demonstrate achievement of the targets
- to be a long term Plan with long term commitment to ending homelessness in Australia.

The SHSN is calling for the Federal Government to set clear achievable targets, backed by a well-resourced plan using evidence-based strategies to end homelessness. Targets foster accountability and assist in monitoring year by year deliverables and evaluating our efforts towards our goal of ending homelessness.

Targets can assist in setting and reaching incremental steps such as ending homelessness for women and children escaping family violence or for people over 55. Particular cohorts that may require specific targets are young people and children, older people, First Nations people and women and children escaping family violence.

Effective data collection is required to measure progress and to reflect the level of work involved in supporting clients. Data helps us measure our targets. Staff are often under so much pressure, particularly at entry points, that they lack capacity to record data effectively.

This is also a good opportunity to move the sector towards outcomes measurement rather than output measurement and to work with the homelessness sector and peaks to develop a system for this. The SHSN would like to see the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) conduct economic modelling of investment in ending homelessness compared to the status quo to demonstrate the cost savings to the economy and a range of service including health, mental health and justice systems.

To remain accountable and on task, set targets should be made, and actions to achieve these outcomes should also be planned and implemented, along with checking in on changes being made every 12 months to review what is working and what needs to be improved to stay on track.

Clear targets ensure accountability, review and reflection. Targets are essential to evaluating our efforts

This provides accountability to those setting out the plan.

Targets are essential on both the side of government who is committing to building properties/funding support, but also on the end of the support providers. This ensures we are all using resources in a way that works toward the end result.

Effectively setting SMART goals to achieve the required outcome of ending homelessness.

Being accountable is vital as the country moves towards zero homelessness.

There needs to be a clear plan and commitment from state and federal governments. We can't just say we want to halve homelessness in five years but not outline how we're going to achieve this or get buy-in from policy makers.

Setting targets has to be met with planning and resourcing.

Without measurable targets then accountability gets lost or passed around amongst departments.

Homelessness affects all other areas of a person's life particularly their health. When an individual is not able to be discharged from a Mental Health ward the cost on the service could be around $1500 per night. If the housing services were sufficiently funded to house this person then the cost would be around $200.00 per night.

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

Recommendation 3. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should focus on reducing poverty as a critical broad-ranging strategy to preventing and ending homelessness in Australia.

By far, the most important change that the Federal Government could make to prevent and end homelessness for people on income support is to raise the rate of Centrelink payments above the poverty line. This is the most effective way to help hundreds of thousands of Australians families and children on Centrelink payments escape poverty and find a secure and safe place to live [5]. The Coronavirus Supplement during 2020 enabled many income support recipients to rise out of poverty and to avoid homelessness. Unfortunately this was not sustained after the withdrawal of the Supplement. An ACOSS report found

> The legacy of the two pandemic experiences [response in 2020 compared to response in 2021] is likely to be higher inequality and poverty than beforehand, despite remarkable progress in reducing both in 2020[6]

The current rate for Jobseeker and Youth Allowance is not sufficient to cover housing costs (even with Commonwealth Rent Assistance), utilities and food, particularly in the private rental market. Centrelink recipients are constantly forced to make choices that no Australian should have to make for themselves or their children – whether to pay rent or eat? The Coronavirus Supplement allowed them to do both for a while. Boosting the lowest incomes and reducing poverty is a critical tool for preventing homelessness for a large cohort relatively quickly and would provide cost savings to other areas of government including health, mental health and corrections.

The Federal Government should consider adopting a Universal Basic Income[7] to provide all Australians with an adequate safety net. Introducing a Universal Basic Income would reduce the costs of income support payments such as JobSeeker as there would be far less administration for both recipients and Centrelink staff with the removal of work and activity requirements. A Universal Basic Income would also reduce stigma for people on low incomes as provision of a basic income would be seen as a right for all Australians rather than a "handout" to some. A 2020 survey showed majority support for a Universal Basic Income from Australians[8] and this concept should be seriously considered as part of the NHHP.

In the SHSN member survey, our members made the following points:

- support increases to Centrelink income support in line with cost of living (inflation) increases
- people can't afford private rental and the life essentials on Centrelink therefore income support needs to be boosted if we are looking at private rental solutions to homelessness
- if the main low-income housing policy is for the majority of low-income people to live in private rental, then Centrelink and minimum wages need to be sufficient to cover rents
- some support for the introduction of a Universal Basic Income
- prevention is critical in any plan to end homelessness
- reducing poverty has broader benefits over and above the effect on homelessness, including a more equitable society and reducing intergenerational disadvantage and social exclusion

Young people are the most disadvantaged in terms of income both in the employment market and in income support. Living expenses such as rent and food still cost the same, yet they are discriminated against in terms of income support and cannot compete in housing markets. Income policy for young people is based on the assumption that young people are living at home, supported by their family and this is not the case with the majority of young people coming to homelessness services.

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[5] Ibid.
[6] ACOSS/UNSW 2022 Covid, Inequality And Poverty In 2020 & 2021: How Poverty & Inequality Were Reduced In The Covid Recession And Increased During The Recovery Poverty and Inequality Partnership, Build Back Fairer Series, Report No. 3, https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/covid-inequality-and-poverty-in-2020-and-2021/
[7] Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, D Arthur 2016 *Basic Income: A Radical Idea Enters the Mainstream*
[8] ABC News *A majority of Australians would welcome a universal basic income, survey finds*, Gareth Hutchens, 11 December 2020 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-11/survey-says-most-australians-welcome-universal-basic-income/12970924

The Report of the Interim Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee[9] prior to the 2023-24 Federal Budget made the following relevant recommendations relevant to this submission:

> *Recommendation 1 The Government commit to a substantial increase in the base rates of JobSeeker Payment and related working age payments as a first priority.*
>
> *Recommendation 2 The Government commit to increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance and reform its indexation to better reflect rent paid.*
>
> *Recommendation 3 The Government commit to a timeframe for the full increases to be implemented, if increases are to be staged.*

Reducing poverty is a clear first step as a strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

Poverty is a leading cause of housing insecurity and homelessness; intergenerational poverty is a growing problem in Australia, and it requires a new approach that recognises the multifaceted impacts and causes of growing up poor, with limited opportunities for change.

The rental market is very tight and rents are out of reach of many people with mental health issues, because Centrelink payments are by far too low to be able to enter the rental market.

With the cost of living increasing, it is completely outrageous to expect people on Centrelink payments to be able to keep up with rental payments as well as other daily expenses. It's time to raise the payments so people don't have to continue living below the poverty line.

Poverty in a developed county such as ours is a political choice, not a situation we just "find" ourselves in.

A Universal Basic Income would guarantee clients the ability to maintain their accommodation while addressing other issues such as unemployment, health / mental health, and family violence issues.

For people to be able to afford their own private rental accommodation would take a massive strain off the homelessness system. Especially with the raised cost of living costs of the current time, its putting people into financial crisis.

Centrelink payments need to increase to help with the increases in the costs of living along with giving some housing security for individuals and families.

If the expectation is for people to attain and sustain private rental then government benefits need to increase in line with the increase in rent otherwise people simply can't afford the basics in life and they will need to rely more on NFP's and government organisations for food, vouchers etc.

Poverty excludes people from being able to participate in society. Equity is required to enable people to reach goals of affording housing, food and the other needs to participate fully. The effect of economic exclusion is the least understood cause of homelessness, mental and physical health outcomes. A holistic approach is needed to solve homelessness.

People on Centrelink payments are not able to afford renting in the private rental market. It is not an option! Centrelink payments should be in line with the cost of living. That inequality has created the rental crisis! Expecting that a family could pay 55% of their income on rent and live on the remaining 45% is totally unacceptable!

Poverty has always been a strong contributing factor for homelessness for years. Reduction in poverty will result in reduction in reliance on the welfare sector and better outcomes for the community in general.

Addressing poverty (or inequalities) will have a broader impact than just homelessness. i.e. health, education, etc.

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

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[9] Commonwealth of Australia 2023 *Interim Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee 2023–24 Report to Government*

Recommendation 4. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should focus on ensuring the supply of safe and appropriate public and community housing at the scale required to meet demand for people on the lowest incomes, including people experiencing, and at risk of, homelessness.

The SHSN commends the Federal Government for their recent strong investment in housing. This is after years of Federal neglect of housing policy and investment. However, this investment is nowhere near the number of houses needed to actually meet demand from people experiencing, and at risk of, homelessness. Our members are concerned that our clients will not have sufficient access to these new homes and will continue to languish in homelessness and marginalised housing. Allocating 50% of the Government's 1,000,000 homes target to lowest income housing (through mainly public housing) would greatly assist this priority cohort. The community housing and homelessness sector are calling for an increase of 6,000 new public and community housing properties per annum for the next ten years at minimum[10]. The supply of social housing needs to be more closely aligned with the demand, particularly in the outer South of Melbourne where more social housing for single people and larger families is required. The development of an ongoing well-funded program to construct more very low-income housing is required to meet the need. Such a program must include guaranteed structured pathways from homelessness programs, including transitional housing, directly into new social housing. Attachment A.2 provides a range of housing related data relevant to the Southern region of Melbourne, demonstrating many of the issues raised in this section.

In the SHSN member survey, our members made the following points:

- social, and, in particular, public housing, needs to be vastly increased to meet demand
- there are a range of strategies within Federal and State Government remit that can be implemented to create a pipeline of social housing.
- members do not want to see a focus on just increasing "affordable" housing as people on the lowest income miss out on "affordable housing"
- incentives for the provision of private housing for low-income people are required
- supply of social housing at scale and in locations where it is needed (evidence-based)
- housing should be long term and of a comfortable standard
- focussing on the provision of housing for people on the lowest incomes should be the priority for government assistance
- lack of suitable affordable housing options limits the effectiveness of other interventions and supports including mental health, drug and alcohol, health and family violence services as well as homelessness supports.
- mandatory inclusionary zoning is a key planning control to deliver housing outcomes at scale, among other strategies to increase the supply of social housing.

The housing part of the NHHP should focus on increasing supply and building a pipeline of housing for the lowest income households <u>first</u> as those most on need of housing and most at risk of homelessness. The NHHP can then broaden out to expand housing supply for the affordable market and other cohorts.

State and Federal Governments should work together to ensure there is sufficient housing for low-income people and increase flexible, responsive support programs that can work with people for longer terms as required. The Federal Government should work with the States to introduce a mandatory inclusionary zoning scheme or social and affordable housing contributions to add to the pipeline of social and affordable housing, particularly in outer metropolitan growth areas[11]. This system would mandate a proportion of new housing development be allocated for social or affordable housing. The proportion should be set at a relatively high rate to make a real difference, possibly up to 20-25% depending on the size of the development. The current voluntary system is ineffective and needs to be across Victoria, if not in all major cities across Australia, to be an effective planning mechanism for provision of some affordable and social

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[10] Council to Homeless Persons 2023 Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria, p.3

[11] See CHIA Vic's *Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into the Rental and Housing Affordability Crisis in Victoria* 2023

housing. This mechanism alone will not provide sufficient housing to meet the unmet housing need but will support other strategies to increase supply at the lower end of the housing market.

Vastly increasing the availability of housing stock for people on the lowest incomes will enable the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) to work with clients for long term sustainability rather than focussing on crisis needs, allowing our members to achieve improved client outcomes. This will enable the homelessness service system to focus on making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring rather than chronic and entrenched. Appropriate, affordable, stable housing prevents homelessness as well as providing the most effective pathway out of homelessness, particularly for people who are relatively new to homelessness with fewer complexities.

The lack of housing options is the most common and severe block to funded homelessness agencies achieving National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) outcomes/outputs. There is a lack of affordability; lack of availability; and lack of access to housing for people at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness. Short, medium and long term housing options (preferably social housing) are required to support the sector to efficiently achieve NHHA outcomes with a focus on increasing sustainable long term housing options as the most effective solution to homelessness. Housing continues to be the most difficult blockage to meeting client needs. It is unreasonable to continue to hold the homelessness sector accountable for ending homelessness without a substantial increase in safe, appropriate and affordable housing options at the lowest income levels.

Stable housing is paramount in addressing the multiplicity of other presenting needs including, health, mental health, substance use, education/training and family violence interventions. Government investment in these areas will continually be undermined by a lack of stable housing. Provision of stable housing is key for health and wellbeing, recovery from trauma and social and economic participation.

Diverse housing is required to meet the needs of different groups. Shortages of single person housing (both social and private), particularly in outer Southern Melbourne has a corresponding impact on the high number of single people experiencing homelessness. Housing is also required for larger families, particularly in the local government growth areas of Greater Dandenong and Casey where there are higher numbers of migrants and refugees. Young people need housing suited to their particular needs and affordable on their lower incomes.

Leaving the provision of housing for people on the lowest incomes up to the private market does not work and does not provide housing that is safe, accessible, affordable, available, appropriate and sustainable. Housing must be provided as essential social infrastructure. The most cost-effective way to achieve this solution is for Governments to provide housing that is safe, accessible, affordable, available, appropriate and sustainable. And where Governments subsidise the private market, this should be targeted to the provision of low-income housing as a priority cohort to prevent and end homelessness. Targeting subsidies to the provision of low-income housing, not for all private rentals, helps create a more level playing field for low-income people. The funds saved by reducing subsidies and tax breaks for non-targeted rental housing can contribute to the funding pipeline for social housing and increasing the range of longer-term support programs.   These solutions will assist the Federal and State Governments to jointly end homelessness.

Supporting the private rental market to provide safe, accessible, affordable, available, appropriate and sustainable housing should be a secondary response to the direct Government provision of social housing as research shows that it is less effective. Subsidies, tax breaks and negative gearing all need to be adjusted to target those struggling the most in the private rental market to truly make a difference. The Federal Government subsidised private landlords $24.4 billion in 2022-23 in tax reductions[12]. Limiting negative gearing to low-income rentals would provide a strong boost to the supply of housing at the lower cost end of the market. The savings from this major adjustment could be used to increase the subsidies for the provisions of low-income housing to make it more financially viable for investors.

Affordability of private rental across the Southern Region of Melbourne has decreased significantly over the past 20 years (see Attachment A.2). This has increased competition and demand for lower priced rental properties reducing the availability of these properties with fewer lower priced rentals available to rent.

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[12] The Australian Government the Treasury 2023 Tax Expenditures and Insights Statement February 2023

When these properties are available, people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage are often discriminated against in preference to other tenants. The lack of sufficient social housing means there is nowhere to go for people who have been forced out of the private rental market. It also means that people in the most severe rental stress are competing for the cheapest rentals.

The Productivity Commission's review of the NHHA examined the link between the private rental market and demand for homelessness services and social housing. The report emphasised the importance of the private rental market on the effective delivery of housing assistance services –

> The private rental market affects all segments of the housing spectrum, including demand for NHHA-funded services such as homelessness services and social housing… Low vacancy rates and rising rents are catalysts for demand for homelessness services (Productivity Commission, 2022:298)[13].

The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2023 concluded that

> many people have no choice but to pay more than they can afford to keep a roof over their heads. They are forced to make choices about skipping meals, forgoing medications or turning off the heater in order to make ends meet… An inability to secure a rental can leave people with no choice but to stay in an inappropriate or unsafe situation, or face homelessness (2023:12-3)[14]

The Southern region is likely to see an increase in rough sleeping as a result of the current housing emergency, despite the best efforts of our member agencies. Anecdotally, our members have advised that women experiencing family violence are staying in violent households as there are so few housing options if they leave. Our entry point agencies are struggling to keep up with the demand for homelessness assistance with funding for emergency accommodation reverting back to pre-COVID levels. As accommodation costs have risen, lower budgets are even more stretched than prior to COVID and this, together with increasing demand, has put substantial pressure on our workforce.   All of the private housing options that were previously accessible to our client group are drying up – subsidised private rental and private emergency accommodation such as hotels, motels and caravan parks and rooming houses.

Subsidy programs that focus on the private rental market such as the Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP), Commonwealth Rent Assistance and programs that lease properties from the private rental market are struggling to achieve program outcomes in the rental crisis.   Demand for the PRAP program has been increasing whilst the strangled rental market significantly limits the capacity of the program to make sustainable differences. The PRAP program was established in 2017 to support people in the private rental market and prevent them from becoming homeless. However as the availability of lower priced properties decreases and demand for these properties and pricing increase, these programs are increasingly challenged in providing longer term sustainable private rental housing. These programs require review so they reflect the current housing context and consideration needs to be made to adjusting subsidies and timeframes for supporting clients in private rental more effectively.

Programs that lease or head-lease properties from the private rental market to supply to clients are finding it difficult to lease properties as there are few that are available that can be afforded by clients after any subsidy is withdrawn. Competition is so tight for rental properties that some new programs area unable to lease any properties in the private market for these head-leasing programs. These programs are increasingly limited in their effectiveness because the rental market is so unaffordable and unavailable for the lowest income groups.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) adds some capacity to those on Centrelink incomes to pay for private rental, however it can serve to inflate rents and can be ineffective without other private rental price mechanisms in place, particularly in a rental crisis. CRA is provided to about 1.35 million households in Australia and as the Productivity Commission points out, "at $5.3 billion a year, CRA is the single largest

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[13] Productivity Commission 2022 In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, Study Report
[14] Anglicare Australia 2023 *Rental Affordability Snapshot Victoria* https://www.anglicare.asn.au/publications/2023-rental-affordability-snapshot/

housing assistance program" in Australia. It is doubtful that CRA is an effective use of Government funds given the substantial investment and the limited effectiveness of this intervention. A 2020 AHURI study[15] showed that "CRA simply does not go far enough in reducing housing stress for significant shares of low-income private renters"

> *Over one-third of low-income CRA recipients still carry a net housing cost burden of more than 30 per cent after CRA is deducted from rents. (Executive Summary)*

The report proposes a number of reforms to CRA to improve its effectiveness and appropriateness which should be considered by this Inquiry. The SHSN would like to see a review of CRA to ensure the huge Government expenditure is meeting its objectives.

SGS Economics and Planning[16] examined different housing assistance approaches and found that

> *strategies that rely heavily on income support for lower-income tenants confront the problem of price in elasticity in the supply of rental housing. Without supplementary programs to induce supply, providing income support can simply boost rents, presenting governments with a ballooning expenditure scenario and/or continuing housing stress, notwithstanding significant outlays on rental assistance[12]*

In this paper, SGS Economics reminds us that the Industry Commission (predecessor to the current Productivity Commission), conducted the most comprehensive investigation into these issues back in 1993 which found that

> *provision of public housing is a cost-effective way to meet government housing objectives…Public housing and head leasing are assessed to be more cost-effective than cash payments and housing allowances…In addition to financial savings, public housing offers secure tenure, non-discriminatory access and other benefits which are denied to many low-income and disadvantaged people in the private rental market.[17].*

Increasing the supply of private rental housing is only likely to have a marginal effect on the lowest income groups. Most new housing built is not intended for the lower cost end of the market so increasing housing supply works to alleviate that downward pressure somewhat but does not create supply intended for low-income households. It is better to build housing targeted at low-income households to alleviate housing stress and risk of homelessness than rely on the market shifting slowly over time to free up a small proportion of lower cost housing that is usually too expensive for people on the lowest incomes.

Fewer affordable private rental properties mean that often the only accessible option for people seeking homelessness assistance is inappropriate emergency motel accommodation or private rooming houses. Neither of these options are affordable nor sustainable in the long term for most people.

Housing ends homelessness but that housing needs to be accessible, safe, affordable, available, suitable and sustainable to actually end homelessness and avoid a return to homelessness. Governments are best placed to ensure a sufficient supply of quality housing for people on the lowest incomes to prevent and end homelessness.

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[15] Ong, R., Pawson, H., Singh, R. and Martin, C. (2020) *Demand side assistance in Australia's rental housing market: exploring reform option*, AHURI Final Report No. 342, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/finalreports/342

[16] SGS Economics & Planning, 2023 *National Housing Assistance Policy: Trends and Prospects* https://sgsep.com.au/publications/insights/national-housing-policy

[17] Industry Commission, 1993 *Public Housing Volume 1: Report No 32* https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/public-housing

Recommendation 5. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should ensure that the homelessness service system and workforce is well-resourced to provide flexible and responsive support to meet the actual demand for homelessness assistance.

SHSN members know the solutions to homelessness - we know what works. We have many examples of programs, interventions and supports that are effective in ending homelessness and providing housing for people on the lowest incomes in the Southern region. These are highlighted in green text boxes throughout this submission. Governments need to scale up these evidence-based interventions to meet the demand and provide services in all areas where they are needed, not just as pilot programs or in particular areas.

Some call for better service coordination and reducing service duplication as a strategy to end homelessness. However, our member agencies already collaborate extensively through the SHSN specifically and through local projects such as the four Functional Zero collective impact projects (see Good Practice Case Study). The Victorian Opening Doors framework[18] ensures that each sub-region has a coordinated intake to local homelessness services, eliminating duplication in services and prioritising resources to those most in need. Resources are stretched, prioritised and coordinated as much as they can be. There are just not enough resources to meet the current demand in homelessness services. Programs need to be well-resourced and well-staffed with the capacity to respond flexibly to the diverse range of client needs to be effective in ending homelessness.

In the SHSN member survey, our members made the following points:

- flexibility and capacity to offer tailored support responses is needed, rather than one-size-fits-none approach. Supports need to be client centred, intersectional, trauma informed and health integrated. The outdated homelessness funding models and low levels of funding for SHS means that these services are inhibited from being the best-practice responses that clients need and that staff want to deliver
- flexibility includes short-, medium- and long-term interventions, with some people experiencing chronic homelessness potentially requiring lifetime support. Flexibility also includes the capacity for people to dip in and out of support as needed. Program timeframes need to be realistic about what can be achieved especially when clients have experienced significant trauma impacting on their ability to achieve goals in short timeframes. Unrealistic timeframes set people up to fail affecting both staff and client morale
- commitment to longer term funding rounds – all homelessness funding should be for a minimum of 3-5 years to allow for staff and client recruitment, program implementation and evaluation. There have been problems with programs coming up to the end of funding losing staff due to uncertain funding and then being re-funded just before the end of financial year and having to recruit staff again. This is costly to agencies and to clients and can be avoided with effective planning and will also assist in staff retention
- the NHHP should include sustainable funding to cover the Equal Remuneration Offer (ERO) for all homelessness services, indexation, superannuation increases and pay rises and any other items required for homelessness agencies to deliver programs within financial security. Over recent years, the homelessness service system has been on shaky ground, spending our energy advocating for adequate funding which has been a distraction from the real issues of working with clients to end homelessness
- the lack of funding and options for clients leads to further stress and traumatisation. People expect that there is adequate support for people experiencing homelessness. This is also an issue for staff who are trying to create sustainable options for clients
- this in turn leads to further complexity as people stay homeless for longer, then requiring more resources and interventions
- it is difficult to measure unmet demand for homelessness assistance – eg if clients aren't receiving the assistance they need, they will not return; if the wait on hold for support is too long, people

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[18] https://chp.org.au/about-homelessness/victorias-homelessness-and-housing-system/#waypoint=opening-doors-framework

give up; if people don't know where to go to find help; and if staff are too overwhelmed by demand to find time to record data, etc

- purchased emergency accommodation is problematic, though necessary when there are no other options. Private motels and hotels are expensive, unsustainable and often unsuitable for people experiencing homelessness, particularly families. The amount of funds used for emergency accommodation does not equate to the inadequate client outcomes of this approach
- until vastly more social housing comes online, more funded, staffed crisis accommodation facilities are required to meet this need
- there has been high growth in homelessness in outer Southern metropolitan areas. Greater Dandenong and Casey were the local government areas with the highest numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria in the 2021 Census. Together with areas such as Frankston and Mornington Peninsula, homelessness funding has not increased to meet demand in these areas. People want to stay in their local communities but they are forced into other areas ot access available housing options
- the sector continues to prioritise services to those most in need, but that group is growing without increased commensurate capacity for effective responses
- there is a strong impact on the homelessness workforce of the low levels of funding, extremely limited housing options and the difficulty to make sustainable long-term client outcomes. Workforce issues include low morale and burnout, exodus from specialist homelessness services, difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, understaffing and underfunding services perpetuates these issues. There needs to be investment in a highly skilled and trauma-informed workforce working in properly funded programs within an evidence-based practice framework
- focus on sustaining tenancies is also needed. Longer term supports may be necessary for some people to maintain housing. The Homelessness Service System is very limited in the provision of long term supports to people who have experienced homelessness and the associated trauma.

Funding for support should provide a flexible spectrum of support, rather than a time limited support period that does not equate to the actual needs of people experiencing homelessness. Flexible supports would be better suited to achieving sustainable client outcomes than the current fixed term output focussed support models.

Funding allocations do not reflect the demand for assistance particularly in outer metro growth areas where homelessness and risk of homelessness has substantially increased in recent years and there are more complex support needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness. The changing demographics and geography of homeless populations should be reflected in future program funding. The outer South of Melbourne includes some of the fastest growing residential areas in Australia – Casey and Cardinia local government areas. This has seen increases in homelessness in these areas which are not traditionally viewed as having a homeless population. Other outer South areas such as Greater Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula and Frankston have seen growth rates ranging from 22-53% between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses (see Attachment A.1). Funding for homelessness services has traditionally been higher in inner city areas but as the geography of homelessness has changed, there have been very little increase in funding for homelessness services in outer areas. Member agencies are struggling to keep up with this growth in demand. There has also been very little growth in social housing in these areas and lack of diverse housing options means there are very limited exits from homelessness.

Workforce issues continue to be critical in homelessness services across the South. Staff are constantly being asked to do more with less, facing unprecedented demand for assistance from groups who have not experienced homelessness before, and have fewer housing options due to the housing crisis. Low morale, burnout, turnover and difficulty recruiting and retaining staff is an increasing issue, costing our member agencies. Workforce issues will be ameliorated by better resourcing and increased housing options; however, a specific workforce response is required in the NHHP.

A recent AHURI study into the homelessness workforce[19] supported what we are seeing among our member services in the Southern Region of Melbourne, with the following key points:

- *The work undertaken within the SHS sector is increasingly complex and places high demands on staff, presents challenges with respect to meeting the physical and psychological needs of staff, and has weak employer brand awareness. In combination, these pressures contribute to staffing shortages and worker retention issues. Meanwhile, the demands for these services are continuing to increase.*

- *SHS agencies are aware of the challenges and have implemented a range of strategies to improve financial security, motivation and the recruitment of a skilled workforce. However, given the resource constraints these organisations face, their capacity to continue to meet these challenges is limited.*

- *Changes implemented by individual SHS organisations will have limited impact on the overall sustainability of the workforce in the sector unless significant policy reform is made to the funding model. The sustainability and development of the sector workforce on a meaningful scale also requires the supply of social and affordable housing, improved job security, access to more competitive remuneration and improved investment into workforce training and development. These changes require state- and national-level government commitment.*

The research made a number of key recommendations for the NHHA and a number of broader recommendations consistent with the recommendations in this submission, including around greater investment in social and affordable housing and stronger sector training and development support. The AHURI report provides much useful guidance around supporting, strengthening and retaining a strong SHS workforce and should be used in developing the NHHP.

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[19] AHURI 2023 *Investigative Panel into building and retaining an effective homelessness sector workforce*, Final Report No. 409, https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/409

Homelessness services should be resourced to respond to all that come to them requiring assistance. If not, the people that get turned away go into crisis, their mental health declines and they comes to mental health services and remain needing assistance long-term, because their basic needs aren't being met including not having safe and stable accommodation.

Additional funding is required but additional staffing is required as well. The pressure of the frontline workers needs to be relieved by adequate staffing and funding.

Seeking support from homelessness services is no choice that someone ever thinks they will need to make. When they are turned away due to lack of funding and resources the experience is traumatizing. Front line workers hold the stories of people who make hard decisions to sleep in cars, in parks, couch surf for months for lack of other options. Preventing entry into the homelessness system has always been the answer. The next step is to have at minimum adequate resources to support people when they do face a housing crisis.

The services to help people who are homeless or at risk is underfunded and understaffed.

With increasing complexity in homelessness cases, more resources are required for the homelessness service system.

The housing services need the staff and the funding for effective and flexible and tailored responses for people requesting the supports for immediate and/or long term assistance.

Pressure is often placed on other support services like crisis and emergency relief centres to assist with applications and support as housing services don't have the resources to respond to clients as they present.

People who have never used a homelessness organisation are turning more and more to them for essential daily items. People are losing their dignity and hope. Homelessness organisations need more funding and a more flexible approach as to how to use the funding.

Meet local needs rather than moving people to areas where they lack family, social connections and services.

Having families in hotels and motels for long periods of times; as there is no other options for them is not acceptable. The homeless services are totally inundated with request for support and demand that they can't meet. Due to no other options available, a lot of the homeless services' funding goes into paying for emergency accommodation that is totally unaffordable.

We literally have to exit women and their children from emergency accommodation because there is insufficient funding. We put them in unsuitable motels because there isn't money for appropriate purpose-built emergency accommodation. Delivering the system can feel shameful and like we are traumatising our clients further.

For too long the 12 week case management model has dominated the housing and homelessness sector. Given what we know about the impact of traumatic and adverse experiences in people's lives, case management for people experiencing homelessness should be flexibly funded to support the client through the often difficult engagement period and be flexibly assessing the amount of support required.

Flexibility is key as people's needs and circumstances differ when presenting to specialist homelessness services.

It is through a flexible and responsive approach that we can be client centered, intersectional and trauma informed when working with clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness. A tick box approach excludes many and leads to compounding trauma on staff and clients.

We know that housing is a critically unmet need but the provision of housing with comprehensive and integrated wraparound support is a key element in ensuring long term maintenance of housing and not leading to re-entering the cycle of homelessness.

We have specialist agencies within the housing and homelessness sector that respond to these differing experiences of homelessness. Ending homelessness does require targeted, well funded responses.

A highly skilled and trauma informed workforce with an evidence-based practice framework.

I am hearing from colleagues who have moved from the housing sector that they have chosen to leave due to the lack of resourcing within the sector.

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

Below are a number of good practice case studies with strong client outcomes from SHSN members in the Southern Region of Melbourne.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Sacred Heart Mission's Greenlight Plus Homelessness to a Home Program

Greenlight Plus is funded through the Victorian state government's 2021 Homelessness to a Home (H2H) funding stream. H2H is specifically funded to transition people with a history of long-term homelessness from COVID 19 emergency hotel accommodation to long term housing. The program integrates support to address individual needs in health and well-being, social inclusion, economic participation, and independence. It uses Housing First principles and a sustaining tenancies approach. The key outcome is stable housing for people and no return to homelessness.

The program is delivered through a partnership of Sacred Heart Mission (SHM), Salvation Army (TSA) Homelessness and Access Health, and Housing Choices Australia (HCA) to provide services to 146 people across the inner Melbourne area in 2021 - 23.

Greenlight Plus worked with regional LASN HEART Allocations Panels to receive referrals to the program- and in turn create a streamlined pathway for clients providing a continuum of support and housing.

The program provides tailored case management and service coordination services through a multi-disciplinary team, including case managers, complex care coordination workers, and peer support settlement workers.

To date, this program has sustained 96% of clients in stable housing 2.5 years into the program.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Moira's Youth Focused Housing Workers

The Victorian *Opening Doors Framework* describes the importance of the first contact made by a consumer while accessing a service. The framework states that if a consumer gets to a service, that service should be able to direct the consumer to the support the consumer needs. The Framework is consumer focused, but what if the service does not have capacity to attend to all the consumers accessing the service on a day?

In the absence of a Youth Focused Housing Worker (YFHW), young people must go through the regular process of Stage 1/First Contact and Stage 2/Initial Assessment & Planning (IAP) before they can be assessed and matched to a support or accommodation resource. It is traumatizing for young people to wait in a waiting room along with other consumers who may also be accessing the service with complex needs.

The employment of the YFHW (through MOIRA) at the inner and middle south regions meant that young people are prioritized at their first contact to receive a response from the YFHW reducing wait times significantly. The YFHW is able to fast track the processes of IAP and offer Interim Response until they are matched to other resources. The YFHW holds the network in the regions together by scheduling monthly meetings with support providers and chairing those meetings. The services come together at these monthly meetings to share thoughts and to provide a joint response where applicable in the best interest of the young people.

Based on the success of this role, MOIRA has placed a new YFHW to work alongside the entry point in Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula where the modus operandi of the inner and middle south regions has been mirrored. The statistics from the region indicate that the number of young people receiving a service has increased significantly. Young people have been successful in accessing crisis accommodation both within the region and outside through referrals to statewide resources. The local network now comes together once a month to share knowledge and resources to upskill each other in the best interest of consumers.

This model could produce similar and better outcomes across the metropolitan regions where there is a high demand for homelessness services from young people.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Launch Housing's Viv's Place

Launch Housing, in collaboration with Uniting, has developed Australia's first supportive housing initiative for families. Viv's Place opened in July 2022 in Dandenong. It has 60 apartments with a trauma informed design with communal kitchen, dining and living spaces, children's play areas and a community sensory garden, plus medical suites, consulting rooms and office space. Viv's Place has a 24-hour concierge for safety and security, plus a range of partnerships with support services for women and children including supported playgroups, job services, cultural groups, and homework club.

The target group for Viv's Place is sole female headed families, single women over 50 and single women aged 16-18, who have experienced homelessness, family violence, child protection intervention, AOD misuse and/or mental ill health and require access to long term, affordable housing.

In the last 15 months Vic's Place has provided safe and affordable housing to 66 women and their children. This has supported the reunification of families through child protection; women have gained employment/training, women report growth in their parenting capacity from attending groups; and have built strong community connections within the building. With the support from Launch Housing's on-site Education Pathway Program, children's school attendance has increased, improving early childhood development and educational outcomes. While living at Viv's Place the women, children and youths report their wellbeing, confidence and feeling of safety has improved overall.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Coordinated Inner Middle South Youth Allocations

The Inner Middle South youth allocations is a monthly network meeting that youth housing and homelessness services located in the inner middle South LGAs attend.

Youth services that regularly attend include Launch Housing Youth Support Services, Salvation Army Upton Rd and Outreach program, Fusion Moorabbin Youth Refuge, Moira Your Journey, Melbourne City Mission and Southport Community Housing Group.

The primary purpose of this meeting is to discuss any young people that have been placed on the Launch Housing Entry points Youth Priority List for an appropriate housing and/or support option within the youth homelessness system.

The meeting allows us to effectively prioritize young people presenting to our services as a sector, rather than on individual program levels. Services in attendance share accommodation and support resources amongst all young people experiencing homelessness across the inner middle south.

With a range of different programs in attendance with differing experience and knowledge, the meeting often provides an opportunity to discuss emerging trends, upcoming vacancies, events such as group work, secondary consult on difficult cases, networking, building relationships with internal and external services/stakeholders and co-case management.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: The Salvation Army Youth Private Rental Access Program

The Youth Private Rental Access Program (YPRAP) supports young people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness to establish independent or shared private rental tenancies. YPRAP in the Inner-Middle South provides brokerage for tapered rent assistance over 12-months as well as tenancy support during this period.

Young people and families are supported by both a case manager and the YPRAP worker during both their journey to secure private rental and in the first year of their tenancy. Prior to securing private rental, the YPRAP worker works alongside case management to build a young person's capacity to secure and sustain private rental and to address any barriers to their housing. Once private rental is secured, this collaborative approach ensures that if any challenges arise during a young person's tenancy, the support is already in place to address these. The tapered rent assistance provides the opportunity for young people and families to develop and integrate important independent living skills, such as budgeting, and acknowledges that adjusting to the costs associated with private rental may take time.

The approach to the utilization of YPRAP in the Inner-Middle South aims to support young people and families not only with the transition period into independence but to build their capacity to sustain this and reduce their need for homelessness services. Since 2018, YPRAP has successfully sourced and obtained over 142 private rental tenancies as well as provided private rental support to 320 young people within the homelessness system. YPRAP has shown to be particularly successful in assisting young people transitioning out of our youth refuges and Education Pathways Program.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Functional Zero projects in the South Region

<u>What is Functional Zero?</u>

Functional Zero (FZ) projects bring local service providers, councils and other partners together to work collaboratively towards ending homelessness, starting with rough sleeping. There are four FZ projects in the Southern region – Port Phillip, Stonnington, Frankston and Dandenong.

The FZ approach has distinct principles and practices:

- FZ projects are led by local government in partnership with SHS and related services – project membership is determined by available local services

- FZ members meet regularly to collaborate on service coordination, manage project operations, advocate for structural change to improve the effectiveness of the FZ model

- FZ uses a data tool to track individuals in real-time called the By-Name List (BNL). The BNL involves consistent outreach connecting workers with people experiencing rough sleeping and listing each person by name. Clients remain on the BNL until they find permanent housing, leave the local area or are unavailable for other reasons.

The BNL is the measure of success of an FZ project. When the number of people experiencing rough sleeping within a specific period is lower than the number of people entering permanent housing, Functional Zero has been achieved. Once Functional Zero has been achieved with the target group, the project can expand or pivot to support different cohorts of homelessness, such as people in rooming houses.

These core practices of FZ are place-based, grounded in collective impact and use quality data to create a coordinated and responsive strategy with strong community connections, structures of communication and accountability and an emphasis on measurement and evaluation. FZ projects encourage a tailored and holistic approach to service coordination, focussing on the collaborative effort of services to reduce duplication and work together to end homelessness for each person on the BNL.

More information is provided below about Port Phillip and Frankston FZ projects. For more info about FZ, including partners and data demonstrating the progress of each local project in the South, visit https://www.melbournezero.org.au/progress

Port Phillip Zero

The City of Port Phillip's FZ project was Victoria's first (2019), led by the Council in collaboration with Launch Housing. Port Phillip's FZ project demonstrates the measurable differences made by the FZ approach. In 2021 Port Phillip became the first community in Australia to achieve a system shift by reducing rough sleeping by 20%.

Project data demonstrates the persistent decline over time in the numbers on the BNL, from 97 people in January 2022 to 51 in August 2023. The below table demonstrates the change in time of monthly inflows and outflows on the Port Phillip BNL.

	Average Inflow to BNL	Average Outflow from BNL
2022	5.5	7.3
2023 (until August)	5.6	9.7

The Port Phillip FZ project targets the key cohorts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people aged over 55 and is close to achieving goals for these priority groups.

As an inner LGA, Port Phillip has a level of services and infrastructure that outer areas may not, which has also contributed to its success. Positive organisational relationships and regular communication between FZ members and Council contributes to the Port Phillip's FZ success.

The City of Port Phillip's Zero project is a milestone example of FZ. Its successes have been achieved due to the community's commitment to make homelessness brief, rare and non-recurring.

Frankston Zero

The City of Frankson FZ project is an initiative of the Frankston City Strategic Housing and Homelessness Alliance. Frankston FZ began in June 2021 with the BNL numbering 65 people. In August 2023 the BNL is at 61. The significant difference is in the housing situations of people on the list. In June 2021, all 65 people on the BNL were sleeping rough. By August 2023, the proportion of rough sleepers in Frankston has been halved with only 31 of the 61 people on the list sleeping rough.

The below table demonstrates the change in time of monthly inflows and outflows on the Frankston BNL.

	Average Inflow to BNL	Average Outflow from BNL
2022	6.5	5.9
2023 (until August)	9.7	9.6

Unfortunately, poor housing availability remains a significant limitation in permanently housing rough sleepers. This is especially true of outer LGAs with a comparatively low supply of social housing.

The Frankston and Port Phillip FZ projects together demonstrate the success of FZ's integrated and tailored approach to service coordination and the value of quality data and measurement. It is integral to the success of FZ and to ending homelessness in local communities that FZ projects are sustained and well-resourced as they continue to advance to zero homelessness.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) and the Victorian Regional Homelessness Networks

The Victorian Regional Homelessness Networks are unique to Victoria. The networks have been operational in some form or other for over 25 years and are a core part of supporting the homelessness service system across Victoria. There are nine Regional Networks operating across Victoria including the SHSN, and the statewide Victorian Indigenous Statewide Homelessness Network (VISHN). The Homelessness Networks are supported by Network Coordinators who coordinate the operation of each network.

The Networks come together as the Victorian Homelessness Network (VHN), providing a mechanism for strategically progressing issues of common concern across Victoria. This includes identifying and responding to shared state-wide priorities and the provision of expert advice to key stakeholders including Victorian peak bodies (Council to Homelessness Persons, Safe and Equal and the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria) and the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

There are many benefits of the Regional Networks, at a systems level, an agency level and at a participant level. The Networks use a place-based regional focus to inform the Victorian Government about regional issues and provide advice on adapting programs and policy to meet regional needs. The Networks provide the capacity for member agencies to work together to on projects and priorities that agencies may not be able to achieve alone.

The Networks provide an equitable approach to collaboration where every agency has an equal say no matter how small or large. There are roles and opportunities for small and medium agencies who often lead the Networks and larger agencies who can also lead and broker partnerships/joint approaches within the Networks. The Networks are a collegiate, collaborative environment providing a safe space to raise common issues that all agencies in a region may be struggling with.

The Networks can provide regional data analysis to governments (as provided in this submission) to provide a better understanding of regional homelessness. They provide an avenue for joint advocacy on region-wide issues and emerging trends as well as state-wide priorities through the VHN.

The Networks have the capacity to develop and implement common approaches such as prioritisation tools and shared allocation to accommodation and support vacancies. The Networks are a resource for each region and effectively build the capacity of the sector through meetings, information sharing, newsletters, training, policy submissions, community engagement and forums.

The Networks demonstrate that working as a coordinated service system is better for consumers. Working together through the Networks creates stronger linkages for staff and member agencies, reinforces common values and consistent approaches across the workforce and creates a stronger voice for joint advocacy on regional and (through the VHN) state-wide priorities.

The Networks show that effective systems development needs to be ongoing and continuously reinforced. The Networks demonstrate that coordination and collaboration need to be resourced to be effective.

The Networks are well placed to lead service collaboration and the development of place-based homelessness responses and they form a solid platform for future SHS reform involving all SHS services in each region.

The Networks work to strategic plans developed collaboratively and are always looking to improve service coordination for consumers, expand avenues for consumer voice and work together to end homelessness both in their regions and jointly across Victoria.

The SHSN is the Regional Network covering the Southern metropolitan region of Melbourne and has over 20 member agencies and several associate members. More information about the SHSN can be found at https://www.shsnetwork.online/

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Youth Housing Support Program

South Port Community Housing Group's (SPCHG) Youth Housing Support Program (YHSP) is an accredited SHS funded by the Department for Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). The program's goal is to assist young people to move out of the homelessness system, focusing on improvements in employment, education, overall health including mental health and community connectedness. Ongoing, SPCHG supports around 20 young people who are in housing stress or experiencing crisis. The main presenting needs of clients in the past financial year were housing affordability stress, lack of family and community support, unemployment, and relationship and family breakdown. Over its 35 years, the program has supported hundreds of clients to access a range of specialist services including family and parenting support programs, psychological and mental health services, legal services, and general health and GP services. Through access to a small number of nominated transitional properties, an opportunity is provided to address the root causes of a young person's homelessness and to build their life and living skills with the hope of moving away from the homelessness system.

Recommendation 6. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should be responsive to the needs of different cohorts experiencing homelessness, whilst recognising and responding to intersectionality.

Homelessness is complex with different pathways into and out of homelessness for different cohorts. Different service responses are effective for different cohorts – eg newly homeless/at risk and chronically homeless, young people, women escaping family violence, singles, etc. Different responses may be needed according to geography – eg the inner, middle and outer South require responses tailored to the needs of those communities as what works in the inner city might not work in outer metropolitan areas. Services and supports must be responsive to the varying needs of the different groups rather than trying to fit people into prescribed programs with inflexible guidelines. Homelessness services must be able to offer flexible options for different people – eg young people are not a homogenous group and need a range of responses – eg young people who aren't ready for employment, education and training.

One of the positive attributes of the homelessness service system in Victoria is that the system is a catch-all for all people experiencing homelessness and staff are used to assessing on a range of different needs. However, the strict funding and program requirements often lack the flexibility to respond in the way that is actually needed.

Recommendation 6 links strongly to the Recommendation 5 re provision of tailored, flexible responses to meet the unique needs of different cohorts experiencing homelessness including those with multiple and complex needs. The homelessness service must be resourced to work with clients facing an intersectionality of needs with service models that are responsive and tailored to individual needs.

Intersectionality means that people have multiple identities and experiences that overlap, making them more susceptible to discrimination and exclusion. Family Safety Victoria[20] state that intersectionality increases experience of family violence and makes it harder for people to get the help they need. The SHSN would argue that this also applies to the experience of homelessness as well as family violence. For example a woman escaping family violence from a CALD background with mental health issues needs all of her needs met to access and sustain housing.

Key cohorts requiring specialist responses identified in the SHSN survey were:

- women and children experiencing family violence
- young people, including those in child protection and leaving State care and young people accompanying adults to SHS
- older people, including prematurely aged due to homelessness
- LGBTQI people
- people with mental illness, substance use and dual diagnosis
- rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness (most visible group and most at risk of dying whilst experiencing homelessness)

- aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- children, including those in child protection and children accompanying adults to SHS
- families, including larger families
- CALD, refugees and asylum seekers
- people with disabilities, including people on the NDIS
- single people are one of the largest groups requiring housing and homelessness support.

Many of these groups experience discrimination in a range of settings including the private rental and employment markets further entrenching their disadvantage.

Women and children escaping family violence, young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are some of the groups most at risk of homelessness and high users of SHS. Women and children escaping family violence have additional safety needs adding complexity to accessing safe housing. Young people and children (accompanying adults whilst homeless or on their own) have a range of specific needs. People sleeping rough have specific needs requiring targeted approaches, including the Functional Zero approach.

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[20] https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality

People with a disability experiencing homelessness are extremely vulnerable as shown in the recently released Final Report from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability[21]. The report has several key recommendations relating to housing and homelessness that should be cross-referenced in the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, including the following recommendations:

> *Recommendation 7.33 Prioritise people with disability in key national housing and homelessness approaches*
>
> *Recommendation 7.34 Include homelessness in Australia's Disability Strategy*

Tailored supports for specific groups can include:

- educational youth foyers for young people engaged in education in every region/sub-region and for young people not engaged in education
- mentoring to support people with learning daily living skills and tenancy responsibilities. This could be provided as a peer resettlement program with people with lived experience of homelessness being trained, supported and employed to provide the mentoring service
- specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service responses to meet the specific needs of this population group
- increase NDIS responsiveness to eligible people experiencing homelessness
- supports for people pre- and post- discharge/release from other sectors including custody, hospital, rehabilitation and psychiatric services (see Recommendation 8)
- permanent supportive housing models where housing and support are provided for as long as people need for people experiencing chronic homelessness (see Good Practice Case Study – Viv's Place)
- programs to prevent homelessness for people living in overcrowded dwellings.

> *Children are very vulnerable to the trauma and stress of homelessness but are often an afterthought in the current SHS system. We need to be able to support families and children to break the cycle of homelessness.*
>
> *There is a gap for older people - 50-65 with disabilities who do not fit into the guidelines of the NDIS. Some people prematurely age and hence the NDIS is not the appropriate service provider. This group should be able to access an ACAS assessment and be able to enter an aged care facility to receive the support they require. Clients who fit this category are not given the opportunity to even seek an ACAS assessment; therefore they are not being given the appropriate permanent housing choice to meet their needs.*
>
> *Our program often requires specialised accommodation and often have to make do with less than ideal housing offers and try to make them work. The right housing becomes someone's home and the wrong housing can perpetuate the trauma of homelessness and further entrench issues. We often have high hopes that the NDIS can fill some gaps and are often disappointed.*
>
> *Issues impacting young people differ substantially to issues impacting adults.*
>
> *Each cohort needs are different and should be assessed individually so the person receives the right help to either help with maintaining a tenancy or prevent them becoming homeless.*
>
> *A one size fits all approach does not work. Housing is the first step in providing stability … tailored support for the individual is required. This will go a long way to ensure that clients do not re-enter the homelessness system.*
>
> *People from different cohorts need different interventions to create safety. Whether it be cultural safety, economic safety, and physical or mental safety each community needs a different response. Noting multicultural communities require different responses and visa status need not be the criteria for support.*
>
> *First Nations People need a separate plan to ensure that the intersections of experiences are met.*
>
> *Family violence is a factor that affects homeless people. A number of women stay in toxic, aggressive relationships because they do not have anywhere to go with their children. Usually women's refuges are full and sometimes they do not provide the adequate and appropriate housing they need. So many women make the decision to sleep in their car with their children, facing the risk of losing their children to Child Protection.*
>
> SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

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[21] Commonwealth of Australia 2023 *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Final Report*, Volume 7, Inclusive education employment and housing, p.36

Recommendation 7. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should include the provision of effective evidence-based models at the scale required, to prevent, intervene early and end homelessness, including authentic Housing First models.

In the SHSN member survey, our members made the following points:

- access to appropriate, permanent housing as soon as possible, together with flexible supports, is key to providing and effective Housing First models
- Housing First is evidence-based and has worked overseas in countries such as Finland. These examples show that the investment in Housing First saves money in the long run
- Housing First works for people experiencing chronic homelessness with multiple and complex needs
- dedicated pathways into permanent housing are required, with a range of models from congregate living, apartments and dispersed housing models
- we also need appropriate crisis housing until permanent housing can be found for people in need of Housing First responses
- everyone needs Housing First – not just people experiencing chronic homelessness – ie appropriate, affordable and permanent housing that is available early to prevent entrenchment of issues and trauma
- the aim of the SHS system should be to provide long term housing and support to maintain that housing, rather than temporary fixes that are unstainable and potentially damaging
- investment in homelessness prevention and early intervention services will be more effective than a crisis driven service system.

The SHSN would like to see the establishment and expansion of evidence-based programs that have been evaluated or have evaluation incorporated into their implementation. These programs should range from prevention/early intervention programs to support people who are newly homeless, to effective programs for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. The NHHP should support the building of the evidence base of what it takes to end homelessness, including economic modelling of solutions to homelessness. This could be done through funding program evaluation or larger scale evaluation project through the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

Prevention of homelessness occurring in the first place and early intervention when people are at risk of homelessness are two key areas that could be boosted to reduce the inflow of people into homelessness by diverting them quickly and effectively into sustainable options.

Prevention programs are best situated outside of the homelessness service system as they are designed to deter people from entering homelessness. Prevention includes community education, educating young people, family reconciliation and support, working with people living in overcrowded dwellings and programs to support people staying in their housing which includes Tenancy Plus and PRAP. Early intervention programs assist when someone is at risk of imminent homelessness or newly homeless and include rapid re-housing programs to reduce the amount of time spent homelessness. The private rental programs, PRAP and PRAP Plus also have a strong role to play in early intervention. Developing new prevention and early intervention programs focussing on overcrowding would be useful in the Southern Region, where overcrowding is so high (see Attachment A.1).

Targeted prevention and early intervention are critical for young people to deter them from entering into chronic homelessness. The Melbourne City Mission Detour program working with young people in Frankston is an excellent example from the Southern region (Good Practice Case Study). Youth foyers[22] are another evidence-based model of effective early intervention for young people where accommodation, support and learning are integrated to provide effective pathways away from homelessness. Although there are no youth foyers in Melbourne's South, the SHSN has been supporting the expansion of the youth foyer model into the Melbourne's South, with strong advocacy from members in the

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[22] How Foyers Work, Foyer Foundation https://foyer.org.au/foyers-in-australia/

Frankston/Mornington Peninsula area for a youth foyer. Ideally, youth foyers would be available across the country.

SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Melbourne City Mission's Detour Frankston and Mornington Peninsula

The Detour program aims to permanently divert vulnerable young people away from homelessness and get them back on track ASAP. The programs objectives are:

- to provide easy and early access to early intervention and prevention services
- to implement an approach that helps young people develop the skills and resources they need to achieve their potential
- to involve young people in creating an integrated plan that leads to successful independence
- to connect young people to their families, community and the right support at the right time

Detour has formed a long-standing partnership with Kids Under Cover (KUC) and has access to five studios per year which can be placed on a property. The studios provide the young person a degree of independent living while maintaining appropriate family connections.

Detour also partners with schools and services to facilitate early detection and engagement of young people at risk of homelessness. Youth Coaches are available to provide secondary consultations and receive referrals. Partners include secondary schools, youth employment services, headspace and local youth family services.

Professionally trained Detour Coaches focus on the young person's potential. Detour Coaches receive Certificate IV, accredited training via a tailored 12 month coaching program. This adds comprehensive, strengths focused skill set to traditional youth, case and social work skills and expertise. The coaching approach provides a wider range of options to ensure a young person's needs are met in a positive way, regardless of individual circumstances. Coaching also shifts the perspective of the Detour Team away from 'fixing the problem for them' to enabling the young person to develop resourcefulness, self-direction, enablement and self-belief.

Detour coaches are trained in Family Mediation skills. This supports their ability to work with young person and family members or house mates and to facilitate improved communication to resolve issues.

All Detour youth engagement, service delivery and intervention start with the 'end in mind' based on what each specific client will achieve through Detour support. As a minimum, this includes:

- having a regular income source, including maximisation of government assistance
- health issues are managed
- engaged in school, training or employment
- has relevant life skills
- is in stable accommodation – prevent homelessness
- is connected to family and/or friends and/or the community

Another example is rolling out well-designed "Safe at Home" programs to help women and families stay safely at home after family violence is another proposed early intervention model for this target group to avoid homelessness[23].

It is also important to focus on chronic homelessness which requires a longer term, more intensive approach. People experiencing chronic homelessness often have multiple and complex needs requiring a range of supports to sustain housing and be healthy and well. There are several Victorian programs working successfully with this cohort including Sacred Heart Mission's Journey to Social Inclusion (see Good Practice Case Study), Melbourne Street to Home, Common Ground and Towards Home, as well as the rough sleeper programs. The evaluations of these programs (where available) provide the evidence of what works to support this cohort. These models need to be expanded and introduced to areas where they are not currently available to meet the existing demand from people experiencing chronic homelessness. More investment is needed in authentic Housing First[24] programs that provide both housing and supports to end homelessness.

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[23] https://www.mcauley.org.au/story/the-time-is-right-re-imagining-safe-at-home/
[24] Homelessness Australia, 2020, Housing First Principles for Australia

> **SHSN Good Practice Case Study: Sacred Heart Mission's Journey to Social Inclusion Program**
>
> The Journey to Social Inclusion program (J2SI) is a three-year intervention that has been delivered over the past 10 years using several funding mechanisms. In its current iteration, it is a Payment by Results (PbR) model with the payable outcomes being stable housing and a reduction in hospital bed days. The program uses Housing First principles coupled with three years of intensive support that wraps services around each person accessing the service. With a strengths-based lens, J2SI places people's needs at the centre of service delivery. It works to end homelessness, rather than simply manage it. J2SI aims to house people within the first 6 months of support by partnering with Community Housing Providers, Homes Victoria, and a housing supply strategy that uses head leasing as an option to provide stability to people quickly. This ensures that people can utilise the three years of support effectively.
>
> Partnership is an essential component of this program. Sacred Heart Mission partners with various community providers to ensure that not only can people access housing, but also specialist services for underlying needs that emerge (health, justice, social isolation, etc).
>
> On average, 90% of people who complete the program are sustaining their housing when the program finishes and up to two years post-intervention. Additionally, on average, there is a 60% reduction in hospital bed days which not only means people are managing their health issues but delivers a significant cost savings to government.
>
> There are five elements of the J2SI service model:
> *   assertive case management and service coordination
> *   housing access and sustaining tenancies
> *   trauma-informed practice
> *   building skills for inclusion
> *   fostering independence
>
> J2SI is a fully evaluated evidence-based program which has delivered exceptional outcomes for some of the most marginalised people in our community while reducing the high associated costs to the health, homelessness and justice systems over the last ten years. J2SI is an evidenced-based program in its third phase, which has proven results from randomised control trials. More information can be accessed at https://www.sacredheartmission.org/service/housing-support/j2si-evaluation-and-learning-centre/

Housing First approaches to ending homelessness have demonstrated their effectiveness and cost saving to governments[25] [26]. The move towards a greater adoption of the Housing First approach in Australia requires long term housing first, and then the appropriate supports to be available when a client needs them. The Housing First approach has an evidence base to demonstrate its effectiveness, particularly for people with complex needs, but appropriate housing needs to be available for this model to be successful. The SHSN would like to see an expansion of the Housing First approach with the new NHHA designed to provide the key elements of long term safe affordable housing and wraparound supports.

Working to end chronic homelessness requires the following approaches:

*   Housing First – providing housing before (or at the same time as) support. Housing is not conditional on accepting support or being "housing ready". Supports are provided to help people sustain their housing and address their issues after accessing housing rather than the other way around. For this model to work, appropriate affordable housing needs to be available, preferably for the long term, as well as individually tailored wraparound supports
*   persistent assertive outreach programs such as the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Community Connections Programs work well for this cohort by establishing ongoing relationships focussing on rapport and social engagement before tackling the bigger issues (employment, substance misuse issues, health, mental health issues, etc.) Outreach support goes to the person experiencing homelessness and works with them where they are at physically and emotionally

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[25] https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/brief/what-housing-first-model-and-how-does-it-help-those-experiencing-homelessness

[26] "Cost-Effectiveness of Housing First With Assertive Community Treatment: Results From the Canadian At Home/Chez Soi Trial" https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.202000029

- providing ongoing supports for people with the most complex issues who may need lifelong support to sustain their housing. This could be similar to an NDIS support model with tailored individual packages of care to support this cohort

Everyone deserves to have access to safe housing. Once housed, other aspects could be addressed. However, the lack of housing has been the barrier to the implementation of the plan.

The Housing First Model works. For those that have multiple and complex needs, long term intensive and flexible support is absolutely necessary. It has parallels with other recovery models and is often best understood as someone being on a journey out of homelessness.

Addressing Housing First is the main solution for all! wraparound support, safety and stability to then have the ability to commence the journey of addressing trauma and barriers.

The Housing First Model is the only way to effectively end homelessness in Australia

Chronically homeless people are unlikely to thrive if given a home without appropriate supports. They are often unable to navigate local services or even basic household tasks.

Permanent housing is the key here.

I would argue Housing First applies to everyone.

We need both! Housing stabilises people, but they will likely need ongoing support to address the trauma of homelessness and potentially other issues that may have led to homelessness. Let's stop the churn through SHS by actually supporting people when they get long-term housing and enabling them to succeed in their tenancy.

It is very difficult to see any approach ending homelessness in this current crisis. There is a rolling churn of people falling out of their current housing whether it is private rental or social housing. Housing First approach is a positive step but it probably won't hold people in their housing. There needs to be long term resources to assist people to stay in their housing, and there needs to be an assurance of finding people appropriate housing in the first place.

Housing First models are inclusive and can be specified to the needs of First Nations people

Housing First models have proven to be very successful overseas in reducing homelessness.

Drawing on evidence-based models that have achieved outcomes should be a critical component in any Plan.

Sacred Heart Mission recently had their funding stopped for their amazing J2SI (Journey to Social Inclusion). This was a long-term program that engendered some amazing results and I implore the funding not only be re-instated but see it expanded to other municipalities, and additional funding added. Shameful.

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

Recommendation 8. The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should include strategies for all human services to take responsibility for supporting their service users at risk of/experiencing homelessness.

The SHSN recommends that Australia introduce a requirement to prevent homelessness for all human services, preventing people from other service systems entering into homelessness. This would ensure that responsibility for responding to homelessness is shared. It could prevent evictions for public housing into homelessness; prevent people being discharged from hospitals into homelessness and avoid people getting passed between different sectors, particularly those with complex needs.

In the SHSN member survey, our members made the following points:

- ending homelessness is everybody's business
- collaboration, integration and coordination are needed for more sustainable client outcomes and a systems approach to ending homelessness
- when clients are in residential settings, they should receive support to find housing, rather than waiting until they are exited – eg justice, hospital, rehab, out-of-home care/foster care, etc
- other services rely on homelessness services to reduce the impact of housing on their clients
- not all clients will come to homelessness services so other services need to be able to respond
- effective models include in reach of homelessness staff, partnering with homelessness services and funding of homelessness roles within other service systems - hospitals, mental health services and local councils, and step-down facilities from prison, hospital and out of home care

The SHSN would like to see better systems integration and accountability. Given the amount of Government investment in these sectors and the amount of time some sectors work with clients/patients (eg out of home care, prison, etc), they should be held accountable for negative outcomes such as leaving care/prison into homelessness. Funding for these sectors needs to align with any changes to expectations. Staff will need training to provide skills and confidence to meet these needs. This should be funded out of those sectors (eg health or corrections or child protection), rather than homelessness funding although training, secondary consultation and support can be provided by homelessness services.

Young people are being pushed from child protection to [homelessness] access points like hot potatoes. Nobody wants to take responsibility for this cohort leading to further decline in young people's health and wellbeing.

The plan must also include support for collaboration/co-location of allied services to provide holistic support.

The members who attend [Functional Zero] are working together to have a positive permanent housing outcome for the clients on the BNL [By Name List].

This should not be one problem fixed by one provider. There is a responsibility for resource sharing and closer collaboration and work. This is a multi-factored problem, with a variety of supports needed.

Mental health system needs to be able to support both those who suffer with or without drugs. Many who are affected by drug use are often turned away from mental health hospital support.

A collaborative approach to working with clients and families is a fundamental to achieving the required outcome of ending homelessness.

More integrated and coordinated human services systems and pathways will lead to better outcomes.

Absolutely. Homelessness is a systemic issue and needs to be tackled from all areas of the community. Change will only happen if everyone plays their part and makes change at their end.

This is totally necessary. Many of the young people we see in our program have significant Out of Home Care and Justice backgrounds… Many people exit the Justice system into homelessness due to lifetime IVO, breakdown of relationships during incarceration and loss of work opportunities. It is time to stop working in silos and start working in a collaborative model.

Other sectors that interface with homelessness do not get funding or the training to respond to housing crisis. This knowledge stays within the homelessness sector. Rather than getting other sectors to resolve housing issues, with their limited knowledge it is useful to create a homelessness service that can inreach into other sectors and capture homelessness at an early stage… The National Housing and Homelessness Plan should include other commonly used services in their planning and initiate partnering with those other sectors.

Not all clients/families experiencing or at risk of homelessness engage with housing support services therefore all services should be equipped and resourced.

SHSN Quotes from SHSN Member Survey, 2023

Below are two complex case studies demonstrating the breakdown of different human service systems and their interaction with homelessness services. In both cases, other service systems are failing to prevent their clients from experiencing homelessness in various ways. These are everyday examples from the homelessness sector, not extraordinary cases. Implementing Recommendation 8 would improve the response of other service systems to these complex clients, by making ending homelessness every sector's business.

SHSN Complex Client Case Study - Billy

Billy has a long history of Out of Home Care in both Victoria and New South Wales. Each time Billy was returned home, his family moved again thereby disrupting his education and sense of belonging to community.

By the time Billy turned 19 he had experienced his first Christmas in Melbourne Assessment Prison and his mother had committed suicide. Each Christmas he was incarcerated and when he finished the sentence he went back into the community - usually to a rooming house. In the rooming house, he was exposed to alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and people with complex mental health issues.

Billy has complex trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He frequently attends the emergency department of the hospital in the region where he is living. Billy knows a lot about mental health conditions and is able to list all the diagnoses he has been given.

Billy is currently sleeping rough in a Bayside area and is due to go to court for shop lifting food. He is being supported by Whitelion. At the end of the year Billy will turn 25 years old and therefore he will have "aged out" of the youth systems for housing, AOD and mental health with few options for ending homelessness in the future.

Provided by Whitelion

SHSN Complex Client Case Study – Karl and his family

Karl was referred to Wintringham Older Person's Outreach Program (OPOP) in 2022 for assistance with housing as there was a chance that the owner was going to sell the property he was renting. The rental property was a 2-bedroom unit. The property has been modified by adding a ramp to the entrance door to accommodate Karl's wheelchair.

Karl is 58 and married to Suri who is under 50. They have a daughter who is 18. Karl had a severe stroke which has left him totally disabled to the extent that he cannot walk, talk, shower, toilet, feed or dress himself. Karl is totally dependent on Suri and the NDIS support staff who attend every day. Suri has limited English and all communication is done through an interpreter.

Wintringham lodged a priority social housing application in May 2022.

Recently staff received a message from Suri's friend advising that they had received a notice to vacate their private rental in early September 2023.

Due to the urgency of the situation, Wintringham emailed the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to seek urgent assistance. Social housing approval was provided and dated August 2023.

Although Wintringham had stressed the urgency of finding suitable housing for Karl, the response from DFFH concentrated on lodging an updated application. DFFH did not provide any assistance in relation to providing urgent housing. There was no transitional housing available either.

Wintringham liaised with the NDIS Support Coordinator who has had no alternative suggestions for this family as they are wishing to stay as a family unit.

Recently Wintringham applied for housing for this family through a new community housing complex in the region. The community housing provider is examining different options for Karl and his family, hopefully with a good outcome soon.

Provided by Wintringham

Attachment A: What does the data tell us about housing and homelessness in Southern Melbourne? -

The homelessness and housing data presented in this attachment support the SHSN recommendations for the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan with a particular focus on the Southern region of Melbourne.
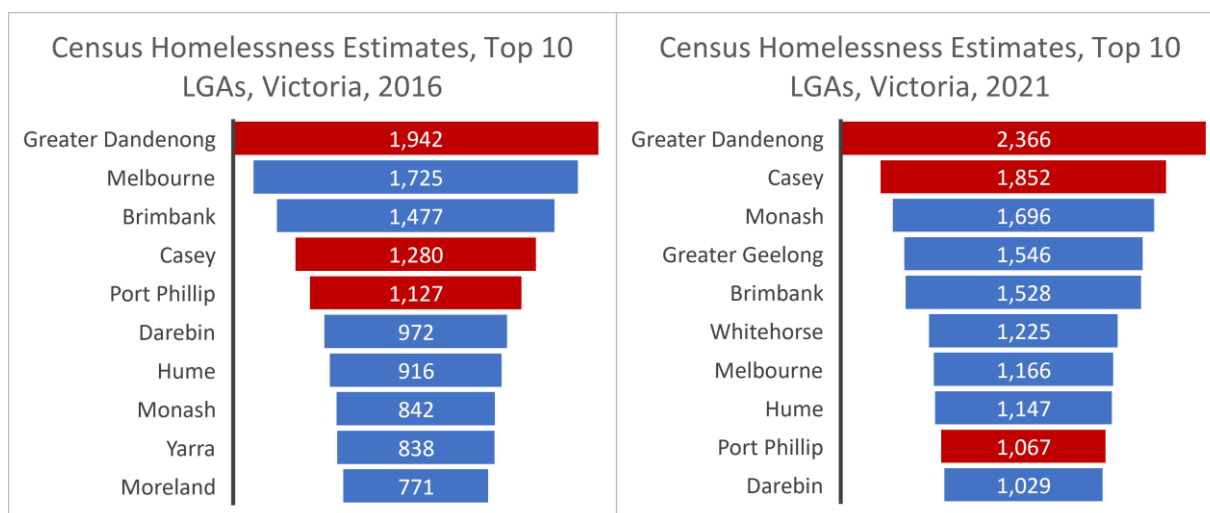
A.1 Homelessness Data in the Southern Region of Melbourne

The ABS Census 2021 provides a valuable insight into homelessness on Census night in 2021[27]. The SHSN has produced a series of Homelessness Fact Sheets, covering each of the LGAs in the Southern Region of Melbourne. The Fact Sheets present the homelessness and housing need data across Melbourne's South. The SHSN Fact Sheets will be submitted as an attachment to this submission (Attachment B).

Figure 3 below show that three out of the top ten Victorian LGAs for homelessness are located in the Southern Region of Melbourne, with the outer LGAs of Greater Dandenong and Casey topping the list in 2021. Homelessness in outer South LGAs has increased since the 2016 Census, with a slight decrease in homelessness in the inner South LGA of Port Phillip.

In the 2021 Census, 8,543 people were counted as homeless in the Southern Region of Melbourne. 23% of these people were children aged under 18 (1,951 children)[28].

Figure 3 Census Homelessness Estimates Top10 LGAs Victoria, 2016 and 2021

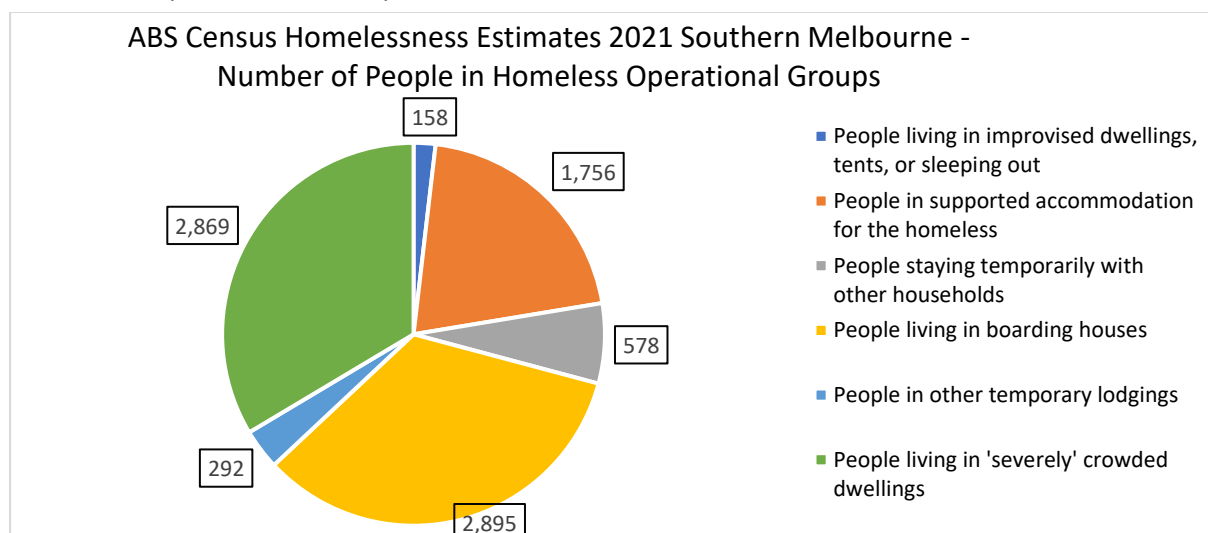| Census Homelessness Estimates, Top 10 LGAs, Victoria, 2016		Census Homelessness Estimates, Top 10 LGAs, Victoria, 2021	
Greater Dandenong	1,942	Greater Dandenong	2,366
Melbourne	1,725	Casey	1,852
Brimbank	1,477	Monash	1,696
Casey	1,280	Greater Geelong	1,546
Port Phillip	1,127	Brimbank	1,528
Darebin	972	Whitehorse	1,225
Hume	916	Melbourne	1,166
Monash	842	Hume	1,147
Yarra	838	Port Phillip	1,067
Moreland	771	Darebin	1,029

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[27] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023 *Estimating Homeless Census 2021*
https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release#data-downloads
[28] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2023 Homelessness Estimates Census 2021*, Census TableBuilder.

Figure 4 below shows the number of people counted as homeless on Census night in 2021 in the Southern region of Melbourne, by the Homeless Operational Groups used by the ABS. The largest groups in the Southern region were people living in "severely" crowded dwelling" (2,895 people) and people living in boarding/rooming houses (2,869). Note that the ABS refers to rooming houses as boarding houses.

Figure 4 ABS Census Homelessness Estimates 2021 Southern Melbourne - Number of People in Homeless Operational Groups

ABS Census Homelessness Estimates 2021 Southern Melbourne - Number of People in Homeless Operational Groups

- People living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out
- People in supported accommodation for the homeless
- People staying temporarily with other households
- People living in boarding houses
- People in other temporary lodgings
- People living in 'severely' crowded dwellings

31% of people counted as homeless in the South in 2021 were living in severely crowded dwellings (2,691 people). And an additional 5,265 people were living in other crowded dwellings, at high risk of homelessness, totally nearly 8,000 people in crowded dwellings on Census night in the South alone. Homelessness and homelessness risk due to overcrowding was most predominant in two outer South local government areas:

- Greater Dandenong – 3,798 people on Census night 2021
- Casey – 2,799 people on Census night 2021

Severe crowding is the most common form of homelessness in Australia and affects people's ability to engage in social and economic life, affecting education, employment, health, mental health and family violence[29]. Families, Indigenous Australians, recent migrants (and refugees and asylum seekers) and students are groups more likely to experience crowding. This data highlights the need for research into crowding to better understand the causes and needs of the huge number of people in this situation in Southern Melbourne. There is likely to be a link with the high number of new arrivals (migrants and refugees) in these areas. Research is also required into the type of supports that can best assist people living in crowded conditions. This should focus on support to prevent them from coming into the homelessness service system and other systems such as health, mental health, family violence, child protection, justice and corrections.

In addition, 26% of people counted as homeless in the South were also counted as employed on Census night, with a total of 2,229 employed people counted as homeless in the Southern region of Melbourne.

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[29] R Gordon, 2018 *Crowding in Southern Melbourne – Homeless and Marginally Housed*, Parity Magazine, September 2018

These homelessness statistics will have worsened since the data was collected on Census night 2021 as the housing crisis has worsened as Victoria has come out of the pandemic. Overall, there was a 28% increase in people counted as homeless in the Southern Region of Melbourne between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses. Figure 5 shows that homelessness increased in eight out of ten of the Southern LGAs between the two Censuses.

Figure 5 ABS Census Homelessness Estimates, 2016 and 2021 – Southern Melbourne, % change
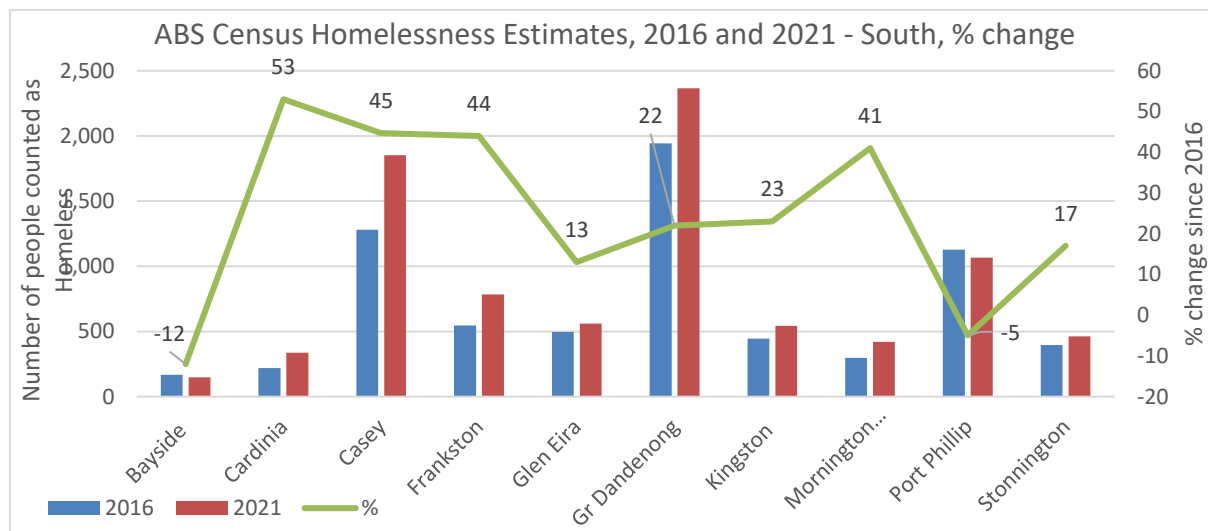
The Census data is supplemented by data for people using Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)[30] collects data from all funded SHS services across Australia which tells us about homelessness service usage. Figure 6 below shows there is great variation in the distribution of clients across the Southern Region, with some council areas experiencing growth in the numbers of people using homelessness services since 2014-15 and some experiencing decline. This figure demonstrates the high number of clients using services in the outer South – Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula, and reducing service usage in other inner areas such as Bayside, Glen Eira and Stonnington.

Figure 6 AIHW SHS Client Count by LGA 2014/15-2021/21
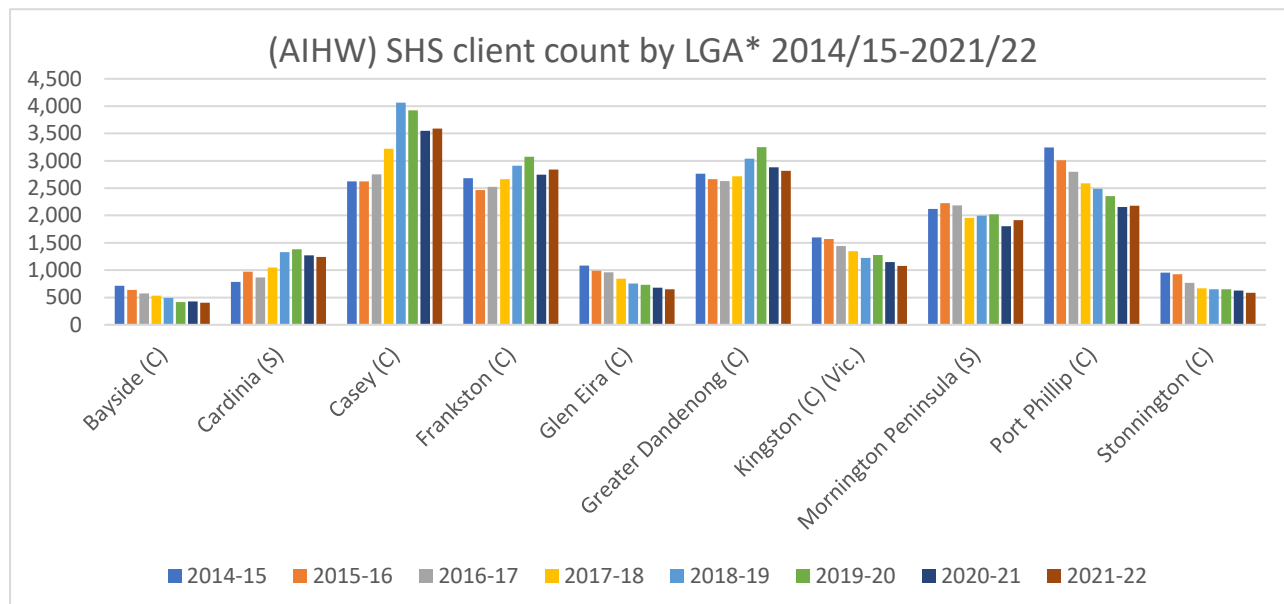
* where the client reported to be residing in the week before their first support period for the relevant financial year.

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[30] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shsc-data-cubes/contents/data-cubes

Homelessness services data is also analysed by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)[31] which drills down into more detail about service outcomes for each region. The DFFH data recorded 17,157 households (and 21,755 clients) using homelessness services in the Southern region in 2020-21. This data shows that for homelessness services in the Southern region of Melbourne:

- 46% of households exited homelessness services still homeless and 44% exit housed or at risk of homelessness
- 25% of households were first time clients
- 61% receive a support period in addition to initial assessment and planning
- Only 8% exit into social housing and 7% exit into improvised/inadequate dwellings
- 30% exit into private rental and 30% exit into temporary accommodation, including crisis and transitional homelessness accommodation
- 38% were experiencing family violence
- 13% were young people presenting alone
- 7% were Aboriginal

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[31] Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) 2022 *Local Area Service Network (LASN) data Quarter 4 2020-21*

A.2 The private rental market – availability and affordability

The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot 2023[32] has some telling insights on the affordability and availability of private rental housing for low-income households, particularly those in receipt of income support. Note that the Anglicare calculations for income support households includes Commonwealth Rent Assistance where eligible. The annual survey shows (see Figure 7) the astounding movement in the number of private rental listings before, during and after the COVID pandemic. For metropolitan LGAs, the difference between March 2020, just at the start of the pandemic, and March 2023 is 6,320 listed properties. The difference between March 2021, at the height of the pandemic, and March 2023 is a whopping 22,436 properties.

Figure 7 Number of private rental property listings in Victoria 2019-2023

TOTAL number of listings	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Victoria	15750	19435	33710	18934	11687
Metro LGAs incl CBD	14026	16172	32288	17511	9852
Regional Victoria	1724	3263	1422	1423	1835
Melbourne CBD	1799	3320	9261	2584	1582

The Anglicare report[33] found that there were almost no affordable rental properties for people on income support across metropolitan Melbourne in March 2023 (see Figure 8). The case was little better for people receiving the minimum wage apart from one group of working families.

Figure 8 Rental Affordability, metropolitan Melbourne, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Jobseeker Payment (both adults)	0	0.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	30	0.3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Jobseeker Payment	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	28	0.3%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
8	Single	Jobseeker Payment	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	2016	20.5%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	13	0.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	39	0.4%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	300	3.0%
	Total No of Properties	9,852		

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[32] Anglicare Australia 2023 *Rental Affordability Snapshot Victoria* https://www.anglicare.asn.au/publications/2023-rental-affordability-snapshot/

[33] Ibid.

The Anglicare report[34] also showed that two of the ten most affordable LGAs for people on income support in Melbourne are in the Southern region – Greater Dandenong and Frankston – with 16 rentals affordable to people on income support in March 2023 (Figure 9). There has been the assumption that outer metropolitan areas of the Southern region are affordable, such as Frankston and Dandenong which have traditionally housed a lower socio-economic cohort. As the Rental report shows these areas are no longer affordable on a Centrelink income and there is no availability at the lower end of the market. With 6,314 people in the Southern region counted as homeless and not employed, the number of rental properties available and affordable is abysmally low. The critical question is where are these people to live?

Figure 9 Ten most affordable LGAs for households on income support in Metropolitan Melbourne

LGA	Percentage of listings affordable and appropriate to at least one household type receiving income support or a pension	Corresponding number of available properties
Greater Dandenong	4.5	10
Banyule	3.8	10
Frankston	2.6	6
Maribyrnong	1.7	4
Brimbank	1.1	8
Darebin	1.1	3
Yarra Ranges	1.0	1
Whitehorse	0.9	2
Boroondara	0.7	4
Knox	0.6	1

The Anglicare report[35] also found that rooms in share houses are also out of reach of single people on JobSeeker and Youth allowance payments. The report highlights the low levels of affordability and availability for households living on the minimum wage as well as those in receipt of income support.

Domain[36] reported that Melbourne's rental vacancy rate was at an all-time low in February 2023 at 0.8%. This is almost three times lower than last year. Domain reported that Melbourne now has a tighter rental market than Sydney, as was the case before the COVID pandemic.

Domain's Rental Report March 2023[37] showed the current rental market favours landlords and is "challenging" for tenants.

Australia's rental market remains firmly locked in favour of landlords as rising demand and low supply create challenging conditions for potential tenants in 2023. This is driven by demand for rentals that have seen no signs of stopping,

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Domain 2023 *Vacancy rates: February 2023* https://www.domain.com.au/research/vacancy-rates-february-2023-1198404/

[37] Domain 2023 *March 2023 Rental Report* https://www.domain.com.au/research/rental-report/march-2023/#melbourne

The report showed that rent increases are continuing to grow in Melbourne, with the March quarter matching the longest rental price growth period previously recorded (see Figure 10). The median rent for units continues to rise and is nearly the same as for houses reflecting the pressure on tenants seeking more affordable housing.

Figure 10 Melbourne Median Rent March 2023 change

Melbourne house and unit rents rose for the sixth consecutive quarter to match the longest rental price growth period achieved in 2007-08. House rental growth has accelerated to the fastest quarterly rise in six years and the steepest annual increase since 2008. Despite house rents hitting a record high, Melbourne remains the most affordable city in which to rent a house, as rents have seen more substantial growth in other capital cities. The strong acceleration of asking rents has boosted house gross rental yields to a three-year high.

Unit rents are at a record high following the city's steepest quarterly and annual growth. The pace of unit rental growth continues to accelerate and has outpaced the rise in house rents for the fifth successive quarter to narrow the price gap between property types to almost a three-year low. Sharply rising rents have boosted gross rental unit yields to an all-time high.
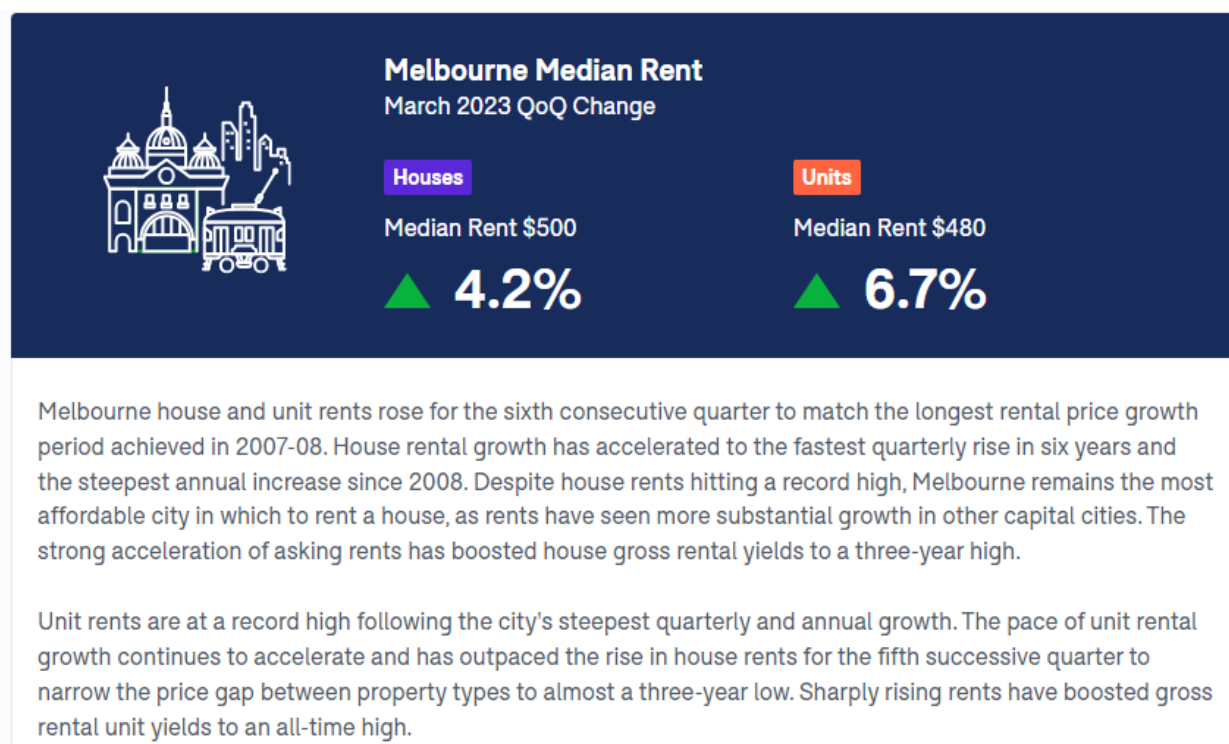
Figure 11 below shows the number of low-income households living in rental stress in the ten LGAs of the Southern region of Melbourne[38]. There are over 40,000 low-income households living in rental stress in the Southern region with 6,720 of these households living in Casey alone. As this is a figure for households, the number of individual people affected would be far higher.

Figure 11 Southern Region low-income households with rental stress, ABS 2021

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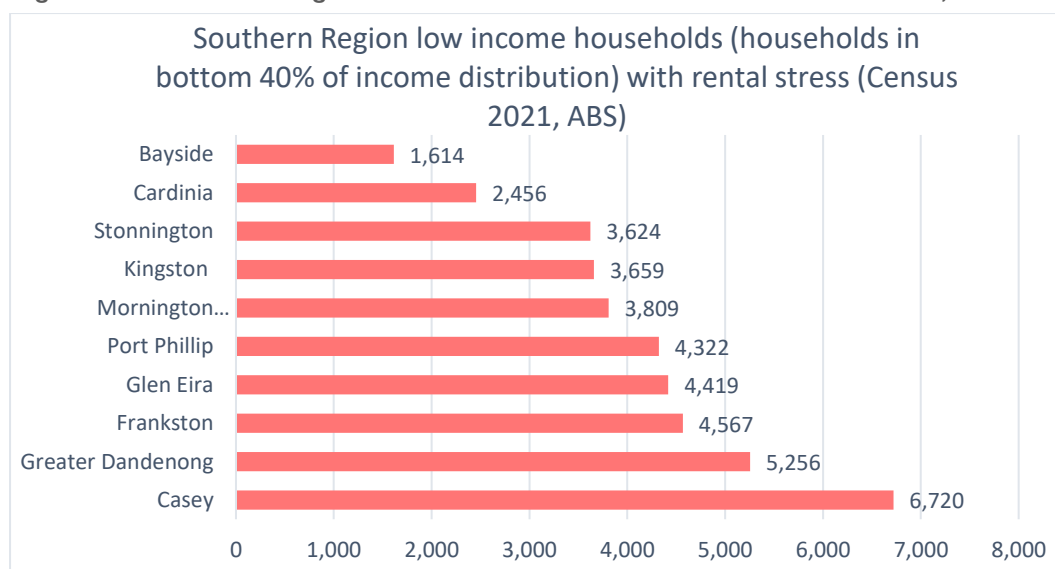
[38] Social Statistics for Victorian Communities 2023 http://www.socialstats.com.au/

In addition to the affordability issues, there is a lack of diverse housing options in Melbourne's outer suburbs with limited housing for single person households with the majority of housing designed for families. Single people who want to live in these areas are more likely to live in larger properties than they need as there are very few smaller properties available. This includes older singles and young people. Data on affordable 1-bedroom lettings showed that in the March quarter there were <u>no</u> affordable 1-bedroom properties in Casey, Cardinia, and Mornington Peninsula and only one affordable 1-bedroom property in both Frankston and Greater Dandenong[39].

There is extreme pressure on private rental with those pushed out of home ownership renting, the return of international students and increased immigration. Those whose rents move to lower cost rentals all resulting in less (or almost no) housing at the lowest end of the market.

A.3 Rooming Houses

The result of this housing pressure is the increased homelessness and increased use of inappropriate and unaffordable rooming houses. Over 8,500 people were counted as homeless living in rooming houses in Victoria in the 2021 Census, nearly twice as many as the 2016 Census[40]. In the South alone, there were 2,895 people counted as homeless in rooming houses on Census night 2021, representing 34% of all Victorians counted in this category of homelessness. The SHSN has written several submissions about the problems with rooming houses[41].

Our members often refer clients to rooming houses as they do not have other housing options, and also report that even these rooming house options are becoming more limited. This is due to the low movement out of rooming houses in the tight market and rooming house proprietors pricing the lowest income cohorts out of even their housing options, with rooming houses often targeting people on higher income supports such as the Aged and Disability pensions and not accommodating people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance.

The situation with private rooming houses is becoming so dire with some exploitative managers taking advantage of people in a myriad of ways. Rooming house residents overwhelmingly report rooming houses to be dangerous and violent, dirty, and harmful to their mental health[42]. Rooming houses are common accommodation for people with psychiatric illnesses who cannot access other housing options[43]. Some rooming house operators take advantage of vulnerable people – using standover and extortion tactics - while providing extremely poor housing. It is not uncommon for residents go to rooming houses straight from mental health facilities.

The private rooming house rents in the South often range from $220-250 per week for a room in a house sharing one bathroom with up to nine other people. Rooming houses are mostly inappropriate and unsafe for vulnerable people; however these inappropriate and expensive housing options will continue to increase as the private rental market tightens further.

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[39] Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing *Affordable lettings by local government area* https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/rental-report.
[40] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023 *Estimating Homeless Census 2021* https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release#data-downloads
[41] See SHSN submissions on rooming houses at https://www.shsnetwork.online/projects-submissions
[42] Goodman, R., Nelson, A., Dalton, T, Cigdem, M., Gabriel, M. and Jacobs, K., 2013, *The experience of marginal rental housing in Australia*, AHURI Final Report No. 210.
[43] Ibid.

A.4 Unmet housing need and demand for public and community housing in Melbourne's South

According to the UNSW City Futures dashboard[44], the unmet need for housing by people experiencing homelessness and spending over 30% of their income on rent was 37,300 in the South. This represents 25% of Victoria's total housing need. Figure 12 shows the current unmet housing need across LGAs in the South. The City of Casey, in the South-East growth corridor, has one of the highest numbers of unmet housing need in Victoria with 6,800 households with unmet housing needs. The City of Greater Dandenong has the highest proportion of households with unmet housing needs in Victoria (8.8% of all households), followed by the Shire of Cardinia (8.4% of all households). Note that this does not take into account projected housing needs, including housing need due to immigration with the South-East growth corridor attracting high numbers of Melbourne's immigrants.

Figure 12 Unmet Housing need in the Southern Region of Melbourne
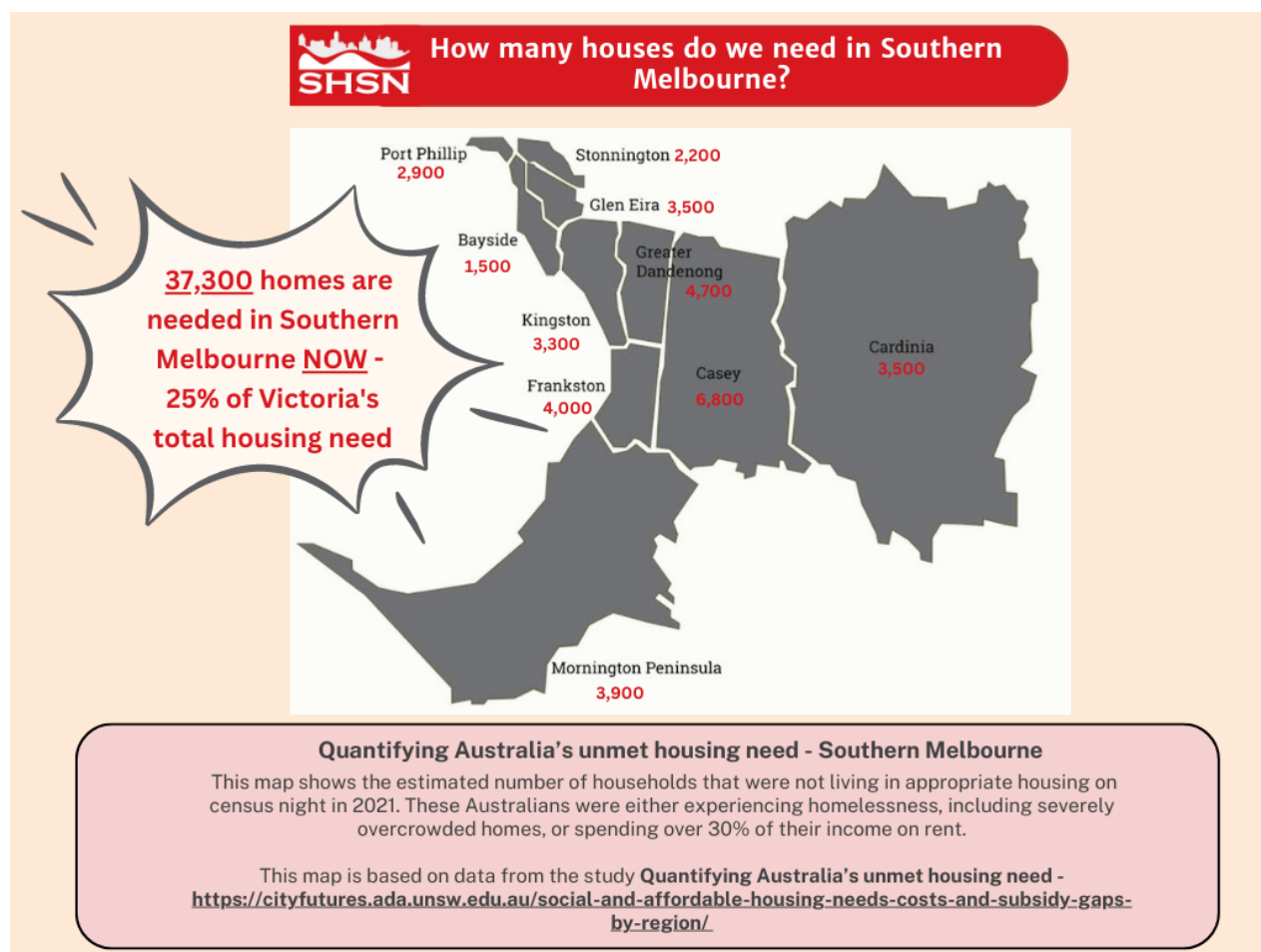
It is important to note that there is a total of 64,428 public housing properties across the whole of Victoria[45]. Figure 13 shows data for applicants on Victorian Housing Register (excluding transfer requests) in the Southern Region by housing office area from March 2022[46]. The Southern Region holds 21% of the applicants on the Victorian Housing Register.   This data is divided between those registered with assessed priority access (highest need) and those with a register of interest (not in highest need). The variation across the South in terms of priority and register of interest reflects the complexity of the need of people experiencing homelessness in the different areas. 71% of those registered at the inner South office of South Melbourne/Prahran were assessed as priority access. This is compared to 40% assessed as priority applicants at the Dandenong office. The total applicant numbers reflect the homelessness services data for the inner, middle and outer areas with lower demand in the middle South (Cheltenham office) and higher demand in the outer and inner areas and a higher proportion of more complex client need in the inner South.

Figure 13 Victorian Housing Register Applicants, Southern Region March 2022

Area (office)	Priority Access	Priority Access % of total	Register of Interest	Total
Bayside-Peninsula (Cheltenham)	942	58	671	1,613
Bayside-Peninsula (Frankston)	1,225	48	1,319	2,544
Bayside-Peninsula (South Melbourne/Prahran)	1,382	71	548	1,930
Southern Melbourne (Dandenong)	2,088	40	3,162	5,250
Total for Southern Region	5,637	48	5,700	11,337

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[45] Homes Victoria 2023 https://www.homes.vic.gov.au/housing-explainer
[46] Homes Vic March 2022 *Victorian Housing Register and transfer list* previously available on http://housing.vic.gov.au/victorian-housing-register