



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

MC16-003776

Dr Alice Clark  
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Dear Dr Clark

Thank you for your letter of 6 April 2016 to the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter MP, regarding the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The Minister has asked me to reply to you on his behalf.

Homelessness is a complex issue that affects many Australians. It requires a long-term and systematic effort across agencies, sectors and the community. The Commonwealth recognises the importance of addressing homelessness, and is supporting state and territory governments in their role of service delivery to the homeless, or those at risk of homelessness, by providing significant financial assistance through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).

Under the 2015-17 NPAH, the Commonwealth Government is providing \$230 million over two years, which all state and territory First Ministers have agreed to match, to fund frontline homelessness services. The Government also recognised that domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, and that women, children and young people are particularly vulnerable, by giving funding priority for services in these areas.

Commonwealth funding for homeless services is also delivered through the NAHA. Through this agreement, approximately \$1.3 billion per annum is provided by the Commonwealth to states and territories, including around \$260 million for homelessness services. This funding is indexed annually, and includes provision for capital expenditure.

On 11 December 2015, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) noted the importance of affordable housing for Australians on low incomes. They agreed that reforms to housing and homelessness services would be taken forward by relevant ministers in the context of existing work on housing, with a report due to COAG at the end of 2016.

This existing work includes the Affordable Housing Working Group, which is examining innovative finance mechanisms to increase the supply of social and affordable housing for low income earners. The Working Group, made up of state and Commonwealth treasury officials, is expected to provide its final report; including recommendations for possible trials and next steps, to the Heads of Treasuries by 30 June 2016.

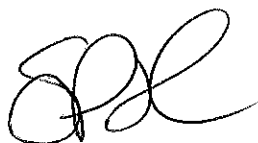
In addition, Housing and Homelessness Ministers met on 31 March 2016 to consider options for further work and national collaboration around housing and homelessness. Ministers discussed the importance of a sustainable and longer-term policy and funding approach to integrated housing and homelessness services, recognising the need for all Australians to have access to safe, appropriate and affordable housing. They also recognised the need for a reliable and flexible service system to meet the current and future needs of vulnerable people.

Ministers also noted the importance of funding certainty for homelessness service providers, requesting that future funding arrangements be agreed at least six months prior to expiry of the 2015-17 NPAH.

In order to progress this, Ministers agreed to commission a report on future policy reforms and funding options for homelessness beyond July 2017 including consideration of longer-term funding with indexation. The report is expected to be completed by 30 September 2016, and will be presented to Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers before they next meet. This work will then directly feed into the report back to COAG.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'STT', written in a cursive style.

**Stewart Thomas**  
Branch Manager  
Housing and Homelessness Branch

22 April 2016