

Media Release – Generic Homelessness Services Network

Homelessness Funding Crisis

All our children and young people deserve a safe place to call home. Did you know that there are over a **quarter of a million Australians who experience homelessness** every year? It's a staggering number of people that would fill up the MCG two and a half times over! Very sadly, 40% are children – that is **one hundred thousand** babies, toddlers, young children and teenagers. The services that children and young people need to assist all of their different needs and situations are diverse. A roof over their heads is important but the specialist homelessness support services, specialist mental health, family and school services are a vital part of getting children and young people back into safe environments where they can develop and reach their potential.

The Generic Homelessness Services Network (GHSN) believes that housing is a human right and that we must ensure every vulnerable adult and child has access to a safe home. Given the recent Federal Budget announcements and the current uncertainty caused by an upcoming election, the future of Commonwealth and State funding for these essential services is uncertain and looks to end in June 2017. National Shelter and Homelessness Australia have launched a national campaign #VoteHome leading up to the election and GHSN support them.

At the South Australian level, GHSN respectfully asks for a response from Premier Jay Weatherill and the South Australian State Government to these three questions:

1. What advocacy does the State Government have planned to ensure the continuation of vital Commonwealth funding that provides homelessness support services through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness?
2. When will the South Australian State Government make a public commitment to their share of the Partnership Agreement funding prior to June 2017, when the current funding is due to expire?
3. What is the South Australian State Government's plan to address the lack of affordable housing and homelessness in South Australia, with or without Federal Government funding?

Join our campaign via social media by following Shelter SA on Twitter and Facebook. GHSN acknowledges the assistance of Shelter SA to share our Position Statement .

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Position Statement

The Generic Homelessness Services Network (GHSN) is a network of senior leaders of the homelessness service sector. The GHSN was established as a regional response to the need for effective communication and coordination between generic homelessness services at a strategic and operational level, in an effort to share information and coordinate service responses to reduce homelessness.

South Australia's Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) work with and address a range of complex issues that vulnerable children, families and individuals are experiencing when homeless or at risk of homelessness. SHS support clients experiencing family violence, housing crisis resulting in loss of tenancy, substance abuse, mental health and issues relating to hoarding and squalor. SHS have a significant impact in addressing the ability of families, children and individuals to access and maintain accommodation. Specialist service providers ensure all marginalised groups receive respectful and timely support; these groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, clients with English as a second language and children under 18 years of age accompanied by a care giver.

SHS sector is made up of forty agencies who provide 75 programs across 97 metropolitan and regional service outlets. The majority of the service providers are not-for-profit organisations who assist people to overcome the complex and multiple barriers they face in accessing and maintaining safe and stable accommodation.

SHS sector is currently funded by both the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). The NPAH brings critical Federal funding into South Australia for homelessness services, with the South Australian Government matching funds dollar for dollar. Removing funding or any reduction in funding from specialist front line services would have a dramatic impact on vulnerable, children, families and individuals which would further compound their ability to access safe and stable housing. Affordable housing is a basic human right.

The GHSN is requesting that funding for these vital services be maintained post June 2017. Removal of the NPAH funding to Specialist Homelessness Services will place an untenable demand on other agencies such as child protection services, education, family support services and financial support services to name a few.

GHSN requests the following of Federal Government and the South Australian Government as a matter of urgency:

- NPAH funding is renewed and ongoing with a minimum of 3 or 5 year contracts;
- Federal Government is encouraged to announce, as early as possible, the renewal of NPAH funding; and
- South Australian Governments commit to their contribution of the NPAH.

It is essential that SHS continue to be funded for the holistic support they provide, ensuring sustainable pathways out of homelessness.

GHSN welcomes all Members of Parliament to meet with us or contact us for more information through our Chairperson Wendy Radbone on 08 8206 7203.