



Pathways out of Homelessness

Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2018-23



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TOILETS 115

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Message from the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development

I am pleased to present the Northern Territory (NT) Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.

The strategy sets out how we will realign the NT homelessness system over the next five years to improve outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It outlines a range of actions that will be delivered in collaboration with specialist services in urban and regional centres of the NT.

Our goal is to see an end to homelessness in the NT. We want to end homelessness through collaborative partnerships and collective action. We want Territorians who are homeless to be able to access and sustain stable, long-term housing. For people who are experiencing vulnerability, we want to prevent them falling into the homelessness cycle. We want all Territorians to have a high quality of life and good health and to feel socially included.

We are determined to deliver this strategy because we believe every person has the right to live safely and securely.

The strategy forms one part of the government's approach to addressing the high rates of homelessness across the NT. This includes the government's \$1.1 billion Remote Housing Investment Package, Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. and development of an NT Housing Strategy.

We do not underestimate the level of change required to achieve this.

Development of the strategy has been informed by research, experiences of homelessness reform across other jurisdictions and input from a wide range of key NT government and non-government stakeholders.

To implement the strategy and create a more effective system in the NT, the government will work with key stakeholders to support Territorians who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

I look forward to delivering better outcomes for Territorians through this strategy.

Gerry McCarthy MLA
Minister for Local Government,
Housing and Community Development

Message from the Chief Executive Officer, Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development

Access to safe and affordable housing is an important enabler of individual, family and community health and wellbeing. It provides a foundation that enables people to develop their capabilities and maintain a sense of safety, belonging and social connectedness.

The NT Homelessness Strategy 2018–23 provides the platform for collaboration between agencies responsible for the design and delivery of specialist and mainstream services to Territorians. We aim to create a seamless, integrated and responsive system that will contribute to preventing and reducing homelessness across the NT.

This strategy represents a major step forward in changing the way housing and support are provided to Territorians who experience vulnerability.

Significant effort is already being invested across the Specialist Homelessness Services sector. I commend the people leading this work for their unwavering commitment to supporting the Territory's most vulnerable citizens.

In collaboration with the Specialist Homelessness Services sector, peak organisations and other NT Government agencies, this strategy builds on existing efforts and aims to continue to improve outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk.

In mid 2017, the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development released a discussion paper and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders across the NT.

The consultations revealed that whole-of-system improvements are needed to better assist people experiencing homelessness through focusing on prevention and early intervention.

The consultations confirmed that the strategy should focus on implementing reforms across five Priority Actions, outlined in this strategy.

We look forward to leading this work in close collaboration with key stakeholders.

Jamie Chalker APM
Chief Executive Officer,
Department of Local Government,
Housing and Community Development

Introduction

Purpose of the strategy

The Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2018–23 is the first system-wide strategy aimed at addressing homelessness in the NT. The Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD), in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, developed the strategy to improve housing and support outcomes for Territorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The strategy also aims to contribute to increased wellbeing and social inclusion for Territorians experiencing vulnerability. We aim to do this by building on the strengths of existing services and programs through working closely with service providers and other agencies. The strategy will focus on urban and regional centres across the NT including Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

This strategy focuses on addressing homelessness through prevention and early intervention. It also concentrates on improving system and service integration through partnerships and collaboration. To deliver this change, DLGHCD will partner with key NT Government departments¹ and their funded services. The strategy will contribute to achieving client outcomes as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1:

Homelessness in the NT

The NT has the highest rate of homelessness in Australia, at almost 12 times the national rate². The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as being where a person:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate (unfit for human habitation or lacks basic facilities such as kitchen or bathroom)
- has no tenure, or their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or
- is in a dwelling that does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations (including personal or household living space, ability to maintain privacy and exclusive access to kitchen and bathroom facilities)³.

Importantly, the ABS definition of homelessness extends beyond the notion of 'rooflessness' and emphasises the core elements of home as a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety and the ability to control living space. The definition includes people who are living in overcrowded and severely overcrowded dwellings.

On Census night in 2016, there were 599 homeless people per 10 000 in the NT, significantly more than the national rate of 50 people per 10 000⁴. Aboriginal people are considerably overrepresented in the homeless population, making up 88 per cent of all people who are homeless in the NT⁵. Children under the age of 19 years are also overrepresented in the NT homeless population, making up 37 per cent of all homeless Territorians⁶.

Overcrowding is the major driver of homelessness in the NT, with 81 per cent of all homelessness being caused by overcrowding⁷. Overcrowding in remote NT communities⁸, in particular, is a major challenge and has a severe impact on community health, wellbeing and social cohesion. To address overcrowding and improve living conditions in remote communities, DLGHCD is delivering the 10 year Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program.

This investment by the NT Government includes the construction of new housing stock, additional bedrooms and living areas and the repair and upgrade of existing dwellings. The Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. program is a separate initiative to this strategy, aimed specifically at addressing the severe rates of overcrowding in remote communities.

Specialist Homelessness Services in the NT

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) play a central role in delivering housing and support to Territorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. SHS are a key part of the range of service responses and housing options across the housing continuum. Different responses and forms of assistance along the continuum⁹ recognise that households have diverse needs depending on their life circumstances at that time¹⁰.

The role of SHS in the continuum is to provide a safety net for people experiencing homelessness and to support their re-entry to longer term options (such as public, social or affordable housing) that aligns to their needs.

In 2017–18, over \$24 million in grant funding¹¹ was allocated to deliver homelessness programs and services across the NT. The majority of SHS are delivered in urban and regional centres. SHS include:

- accommodation management services, including crisis or short term, managed, supported or transitional housing
- support services, including outreach, case management and tenancy support services
- peak body and advocacy services.

Homelessness services in the NT are accessed at considerably higher rates than the rest of the country. In 2016–17, 9187 clients accessed SHS. Of these:

- one in 27 Territorians accessed a homelessness service compared to the national rate of one in 84¹²
- an average of 15.2 requests for services went unassisted per day. This equates to 5535 unmet requests for assistance for homelessness services for the year. A total of 75 per cent of these requests were from females of all ages¹³
- around one-third of all unassisted requests were made by children aged zero to 17 (either as part of a presenting family unit or alone)¹⁴
- a total of 47 per cent of all people (4320 individuals) reported domestic and family violence as a reason for seeking assistance through SHS¹⁵
- about half of all people (4581 individuals) who sought assistance from SHS were under the age of 25, with almost one-quarter (2083 individuals) under the age of 10¹⁶.

In addition, the number of people assisted by homelessness services in urban and regional centres across the NT increased by 40 per cent, from 6584 in 2011–12 to 9187 in 2016–17¹⁷. The increasing demand further highlights the need to strengthen services.

Priority groups at greater risk of homelessness in the NT

In the NT, some groups are overrepresented in the homelessness system, compared with the general population, and form the priority client groups under this strategy. They are:

- Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness
- children and young people
- people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence
- people who are sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness
- people exiting custodial, care or rehabilitation settings (including correctional, out-of-home care and health systems)
- people who are living in insecure housing or whose tenancy is at risk.

The case for change

Understanding homelessness and its impacts

Homelessness and the risk of homelessness are not just housing problems; they have many drivers and causes¹⁸. These drivers can be economic, systemic or relational. Homelessness is often triggered by a combination of these drivers rather than a single cause¹⁹. Figure 2 illustrates how these drivers interact to increase the risk of a person becoming homeless.

The longer a person is homeless, the more challenging it becomes to reverse the negative impacts. The impact of homelessness on children is particularly detrimental and can have lasting negative effects into adulthood²⁰. In addition, the effects of homelessness are not just felt within the housing system. Homelessness significantly increases costs to the human services system²¹, as people experiencing homelessness use services such as health and corrections at higher rates than the rest of the population^{22, 23}.

Safe and affordable housing directly contributes to people's ability to access services, engage in education, maintain employment and participate in community life. Housing is widely recognised as an important social determinant of health and wellbeing²⁴. Improving homelessness outcomes for Territorians will therefore reduce these costs and will also bring health, social and economic benefits to individuals, families, and communities.

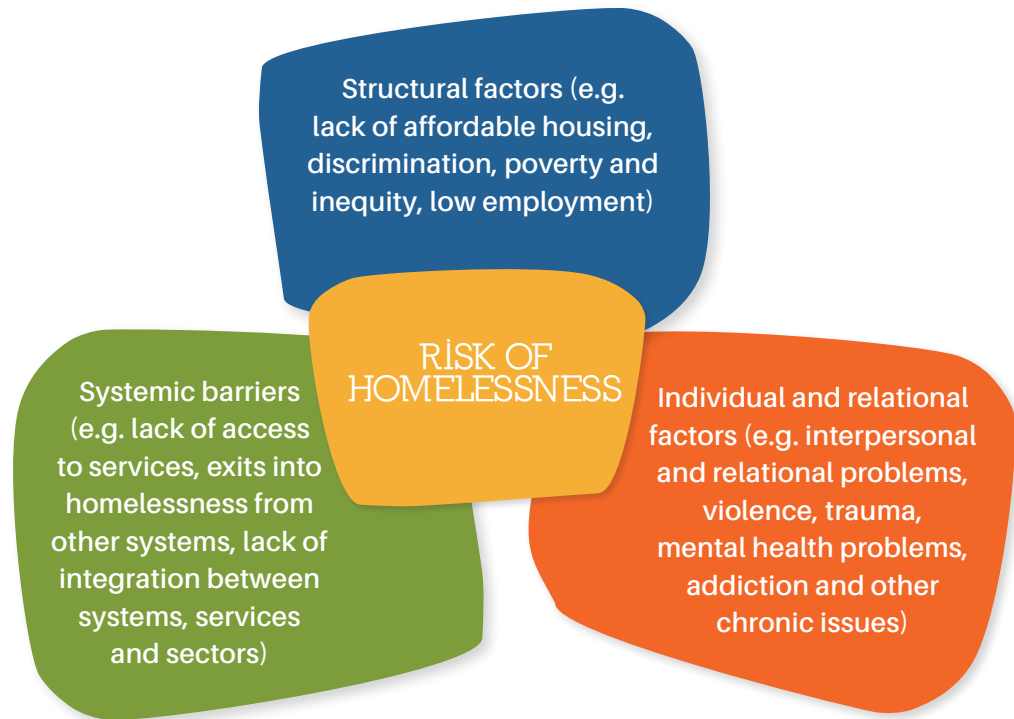


Figure 2: Drivers of homelessness

Responding to homelessness cannot be the sole responsibility of the SHS sector, nor can it be achieved through delivering housing-specific responses alone. Many strategies and interventions that work to reduce the risk of homelessness sit outside the homelessness sector. This strategy takes a holistic approach through improving system integration and coordination of policy, programs and services across homelessness, housing, domestic and family violence, health, justice, corrections, child protection, policing and education. Under the strategy, DLGHCD will work with key NT Government partners, Aboriginal controlled organisations and funded non-government services to deliver more integrated support.

The strategy

Key principles to underpin reform

The following principles will guide implementation of the strategy and underpin the design of policy and program responses:

Person and family centred

Prioritising the needs of people who are homeless or at risk

Culturally responsive

Considering people's diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds

Evidence based

Making decisions based on evidence

Innovative

Being guided by contemporary policy and practice

Integrated

Ensuring systems are connected, coordinated and responsive to homelessness and the risk of homelessness

Consistent standards

Service quality is high and consistent across providers and locations

Collaborative

Working alongside service providers and their clients

Place-based

Ensuring local contexts and location-specific needs and issues are appropriately considered

Human rights informed

Designing and delivering services that adhere to the foundational principles of human rights

Alignment to broader social policy directions and initiatives

This strategy aligns with a number of major reforms currently underway or under development at the NT and national levels. The NT has an ambitious social policy reform agenda; many of the initiatives align to or will depend upon delivering improved housing and support for Territorians. Among others, this strategy will directly contribute to achieving outcomes under:

- reforms to child protection and youth justice in the NT, including the government's Safe, Thriving and Connected Generational Change for Children and Families plan
- the Starting Early for a Better Future plan for early childhood development in the NT 2018-28
- the NT Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2018-2028
- reforms to the partnership between the NT Government and non-government sector in delivering improved social outcomes for Territorians
- Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan 2018-19 in response to the Riley Review
- Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-28
- development of a whole-of-government Justice Reform Framework
- Education NT
- Child Safety Framework
- Northern Territory Independent Town Camps Review.

Alignment to national reforms

The strategy has been developed to reflect reforms nationally in the human services sector that aim to examine service contestability. It will also contribute to and support reforms to housing and homelessness under the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). Under the NHHA, funding to State and Territory governments will be linked to the requirement to have an effective homelessness service system, which responds to and supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain housing, and addresses the incidence and prevalence of homelessness.



NT Homelessness Strategy and Five Year Action Plan

VISION

A Territory committed to addressing homelessness and achieving greater social inclusion for all Territorians

PURPOSE

To build the foundations for a homelessness system that delivers improved housing and support outcomes for Territorians in urban areas who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. Strengthen interagency responses and support to reduce exits into homelessness from out-of-home care, health services and correctional settings

2. Streamline and strengthen preventative support to people at risk of homelessness

3. Improve Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development policy and practices to better respond to homelessness and the risk of homelessness

Action Plan 2018-23:

Building the foundations to reform the system

Action Plan 2023-28:

Embedding reforms within the system

2018-23 - overview

STRATEGY OUTCOMES

- A responsive and effective Specialist Homelessness Services system
- Housing and support that meets the needs of Territorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Integrated services that focus on early intervention and prevention for individuals, families and communities

4. Increase access to and supply of private rental, affordable and social housing

5. Work with the Specialist Homelessness Services sector to strengthen service responses for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness



Beyond 2028:

System consolidation and continuous improvement

STRATEGIC REFORM PRINCIPLES

- Person and family centred
- Culturally responsive
- Evidence based
- Innovative
- Integrated
- Consistent standards
- Collaborative
- Place-based
- Human-rights informed

PRIORITY CLIENT GROUPS

- Aboriginal
- Children and young people
- People experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence
- People exiting custodial, care or rehabilitation settings (including correctional, out of home care and health settings)
- People who are living in insecure housing or whose tenancy is at risk



PRIORITY ACTION

Strengthen interagency responses and support to reduce exits into homelessness from out-of-home care, health services and correctional settings

Government has a responsibility to assist vulnerable people, particularly people leaving care and custodial settings, to transition into safe and affordable housing. In 2016–17, 23 per cent of people (2098 individuals) supported through SHS in the NT were referred by health, policing, corrections, courts and family or child protection services²⁵. This included 345 people who were referred from a child protection agency or child support agency²⁶ and 579 people referred from hospitals, mental health services and drug and alcohol support services²⁷. People who were referred to SHS from law and justice services, including police, adult and youth correctional centres and courts, totalled 1175²⁸. The number of people exiting correctional settings into homelessness is also increasing; the number of people supported through

SHS who had exited prison or correctional settings rose by an average of 14 per cent each year from 2011–12 to 2016–17²⁹.

Exiting these services into homelessness puts at risk stable long-term outcomes for vulnerable people. For example, people leaving detention into homelessness have an increased risk of recidivism³⁰, and where people exit health services into homelessness this can make it harder to treat chronic disease and manage drug and alcohol misuse³¹.

What we are doing

Improved support to pre and post-release prisoners

In the immediate time after leaving the corrections system, people who have spent time in prison need support to integrate back into the community. The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice is working to strengthen custodial and non-custodial rehabilitation, training, employment and accommodation programs to help reduce the risk of re-offending and better support ex-offenders after they leave prison.

Assistance for health patients travelling to access health services

Health patients who travel from remote parts of the NT often require accommodation assistance for their stay in town. Support for health patients is provided under the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS). In Darwin and Alice Springs, several SHS providers allocate beds to accommodate PATS patients while they are in town receiving health services.

Strengthened support for children, families and victims of domestic, family and sexual violence

In response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT, the NT Government is investing a total of \$229.6 million over five years to deliver a suite of reforms to child protection and youth justice, and improve services to children, young people and families. These reforms include a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention to improve social outcomes for families, children and young people.

In 2016-17



23% of people (2098 individuals) **supported** through SHS in the **NT** were referred by **health, policing, corrections, courts and family or child protection services**

What we will do in the five years to 2023

1.1 Develop a post-release transitional accommodation program for people exiting the corrections system

To more effectively support offenders to access and sustain stable housing once they are released from prison, a transitional accommodation program will be developed. The program will engage detainees in training and employment and provide them with practical skills that boost future employment prospects. This program will also help to prevent people reoffending by providing transitional accommodation for ex-offenders once they leave prison, supporting them to reintegrate back into their community and providing pathways into further training or employment.

1.2 Undertake research into housing and support responses for people exiting the corrections system

Housing instability and inability to access appropriate accommodation can contribute to reoffending. It can often be difficult for people leaving the corrections system, after they have completed their sentence, to find suitable housing. Under this strategy, research and analysis will be undertaken to better understand the housing needs and challenges experienced by people exiting the corrections system, including youth. Appropriate housing and support options will be developed based on the findings.

1.3 Explore options to strengthen the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) to address the risk of homelessness among PATS patients and their families

It can be a challenge to provide appropriate accommodation for people who need to come into town from remote locations to access health services. Under the strategy, the PATS service model will be reviewed to address the risk of homelessness among these clients. Accommodation options for PATS clients

and their families will also be considered through the Department of Health's Health Services and Infrastructure Plan, under which accommodation options may be developed to reduce exits into homelessness services for this priority group.

1.4 Develop a housing response for young people leaving out-of-home care

The NT Government has committed \$5.2 million over four years to support care leavers to access housing. Young people, especially young people in the child protection system, experience vulnerability to homelessness for a range of reasons. Often when young people leave care at the age of 18, they don't have the skills needed to access or sustain housing. To prevent young people leaving care from exiting into homelessness, a holistic housing response will be developed that includes wraparound support and equips people with the capabilities they need to live independently. Young people accessing housing and support will be assisted to transition to independence over time.

1.5 Develop a proposal for Youth Foyer programs

Youth Foyers assist young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to develop the skills they need to lead fulfilling, independent and productive lives. They do this through providing accommodation, personal support and mentoring, living skills and education and training pathways. Through this strategy, DLGHCD will explore potential options to establish a Youth Foyer model that considers the NT's unique context and issues associated with youth homelessness.

1.6 Work with Territory Families to develop housing and homelessness responses for women and families experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, including early intervention, crisis and post crisis support

People escaping violence often need specific interventions that provide a safe and stable environment to respond to immediate crisis and support long-term recovery. Families need specialist assistance to help them deal with the trauma they experience. DLGHCD will work with Territory Families to develop housing and homelessness responses that more effectively support women, children, young people and families impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence to access and sustain stable housing with support. This includes the development of a five-year master plan of current and projected demand for emergency women's shelters.



Streamline and strengthen preventative support to people at risk of homelessness

Tailored and targeted tenancy support and other wraparound support can assist people who are vulnerable to sustain their housing. To effectively prevent homelessness, support needs to be provided holistically and not limited to providing tenancy education or living skills³².

Tenancy-related issues are often the result of other more complex problems. Sustaining a tenancy can hinge on the effectiveness of wraparound support to assist people with complex needs, including mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse and disabilities³³.

Noting the high numbers of families and children experiencing homelessness in the NT, family support is needed for children and families who are at risk. Effective case management and person-centred support is best achieved through service agencies coordinating and collaborating with each other³⁴.

**The NT Government
has committed
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What we are doing

Family support programs and services

Under the Territory Families Strategic Plan 2017–20, Territory Families is working to expand collaborative partnerships to facilitate the delivery of more integrated and coordinated services. Central to this effort are place-based family support initiatives that are flexible and take an early intervention approach.

Trial an integrated housing and support model for people with severe mental health support needs

Following the successful delivery of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative in New South Wales, the NT Department of Health in partnership with DLGHCD has established a trial program to operate initially in the greater Darwin area. The program targets people living in public housing who have a diagnosed mental illness and complex additional support needs. In addition to clinical mental health support, other wraparound support is provided. It is anticipated that this model will help people to effectively sustain their tenancy and improve their quality of life.

Focus on minimisation of alcohol-related harm to prevent homelessness

The relationship between substance (including alcohol) abuse and homelessness is well documented³⁵. Under the Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan, the NT Government is adopting a combination of legislative, policy and program initiatives. They focus on strengthening community responses to alcohol-related problems, improving the regulation of alcohol supply and consumption in the NT, undertaking research and evaluation of programs and initiatives that aim to reduce alcohol-related harm and delivering more coordinated and integrated approaches to harm reduction.

What we will do in the five years to 2023

2.1 Strengthen family support and coordination initiatives with a focus on prevention and early intervention

A range of support services and initiatives operate across the NT to support families that are vulnerable. These are tailored to local contexts. Under this strategy, processes for identifying and addressing systemic issues and structural barriers within the system will be strengthened, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of support that targets children and families at risk.

2.2 Extend the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) mental health support trial beyond 2020, subject to an evaluation of program outcomes

People who have mental health issues can often successfully sustain housing when they have the right level and mix of supports in place. Under the HASI, people receive tailored support that focuses not only on their clinical needs, but also their psychosocial and housing support needs. The learnings from the current HASI program trial operating in Darwin will inform the potential expansion of programs and supports for people with mental health issues who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in other parts of the NT.

2.3 Increase access to and engagement in alcohol and other drugs community based support and rehabilitation programs

The relationship between substance use and homelessness is complex. Once a person becomes homeless, addiction and substance abuse can become a major barrier to accessing and maintaining stable accommodation. This strategy will focus on providing better pathways into rehabilitation programs and then to stable housing by identifying and addressing barriers for people who are struggling with substance abuse or addiction³⁶.



Once a **person** becomes **homeless**, addiction and substance abuse can become a **major barrier** to accessing and maintaining **stable accommodation**.



Improve departmental policy and practice to better respond to homelessness and the risk of homelessness

DLGHCD manages over 10 000 public housing dwellings across urban, regional and remote areas of the NT³⁷. This can create challenges in balancing the need to manage assets efficiently with the need to appropriately support people. The needs and characteristics of people living in public housing have changed significantly over the past 40 years and the number of clients who have complex needs has increased³⁸. This creates challenges for providing effective tenancy management and support³⁹.

Public housing is an important housing option for people experiencing homelessness⁴⁰. In recognition of this, DLGHCD must operate under a 'social landlord approach', meaning it owns

and manages social housing with consideration of the impact of housing on tenants' welfare and quality of life. Departmental policies, guidelines, procedures and staff capability must also reflect this. With changes to the client profile and increasing complexity of need experienced by people living in public housing, the demands on frontline staff for specific skills and capabilities have also changed.

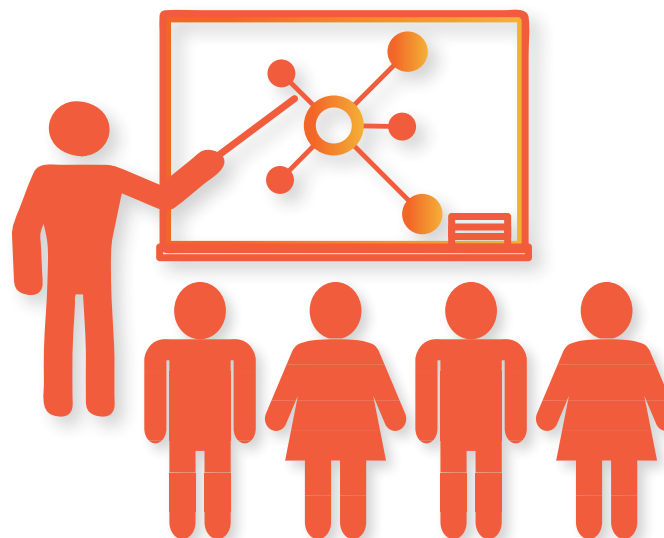
What we are doing

Policy and practice improvements

DLGHCD has an ongoing housing policy development and review program, with all policies being subject to periodic review. This process is undertaken with reference to broader impacts across the public housing system, as well as their alignment to strategic priorities and objectives across the housing and human services system.

Workforce and capability development

A training and skills analysis is underway in DLGHCD. The project will examine current workforce capabilities, trends and skill gaps, and identify future training and development needs. This work also aligns to the embedding of a social landlord approach within the broader DLGHCD service delivery environment. The training and skills analysis findings will inform a whole-of-department workforce development strategy to underpin the focus on improving service responses.



What we will do in the five years to 2023

3.1 Embed homelessness prevention policy principles in the development and implementation of DLGHCD operational policies and practices

Under this strategy, DLGHCD policies and practices will be reviewed to ensure they do not unintentionally create barriers for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and instead assist people to access stable housing. Service delivery teams and front line staff will implement updated public housing policies to ensure they are consistent with a social landlord approach.



**assist people
to access
stable housing**

3.2 Develop the skills and capabilities of the DLGHCD workforce to more effectively support people who are experiencing vulnerability and have complex needs

Findings from the training and skills analysis will be used to develop a DLGHCD workforce strategy. This will include an agency-wide blueprint for developing employees' ability to effectively deliver services that meet clients' needs. The workforce strategy will help prioritise training requirements for staff, particularly frontline service delivery staff who are in regular contact with people who are homeless or at risk and have complex needs.



Public housing is an **important** housing option for people experiencing **homelessness.**



#

PRIORITY
ACTION

Increase access to and supply of private rental, affordable and social housing

One of the biggest obstacles to addressing homelessness is the availability of affordable housing⁴¹. Social housing, which includes public housing and community housing, therefore must continue to play a key role. Public housing has traditionally been the main option for many people in need of housing assistance⁴². However, waitlists for public housing are long and continue to grow⁴³. People often wait many years to be housed.

The community housing sector⁴⁴ has great potential to support housing needs of people who are homeless or at risk. The NT Government has committed to support the growth of the community housing sector;

however, growth will take time. To increase the range of housing options available, we need to consider how people may be supported to access rental housing in the private market. In recent times, governments across Australia have started to look towards the private rental market to fill the supply gap in social housing using a range of products and schemes to assist people to overcome affordability barriers and other access issues⁴⁵.

What we are doing

In recognition of the supply and affordability constraints facing many Territorians, DLGHCD is delivering a number of key initiatives that focus on increasing the availability of social and affordable housing. In some parts of the NT, the number of private rental vacancies has increased and there has been some improvement in affordability⁴⁶. This creates a unique opportunity to leverage the use of private rental housing to help people transition to long-term housing independence where appropriate.

Social housing headleasing

To increase the number of social housing properties available to Territorians on low incomes and their families, DLGHCD operates a social housing headleasing program. Under the program, long-term leases are offered to property owners. Headleased properties are then subleased to Territorians who are eligible for public housing.

Supporting the growth of the community housing sector

Nationally and internationally we have seen the transfer of public housing stock to non-government organisations to operate as community housing. DLGHCD recently undertook a project to explore the best way to support the growth of the community housing sector.

Private rental housing subsidy program trials

Under the Homelessness Innovation Fund, two programs are being trialled to assist people who are homeless through providing supported access to the private rental market with wraparound services. The learnings from these programs will inform the design and delivery of future private rental support initiatives.



What we will do in the five years to 2023

4.1 Expand the use of the private rental market to assist people with low level support needs

The Bond Assistance Scheme currently offered through DLGHCD assists people to access the private rental market. There is an opportunity to improve the way the Bond Assistance Scheme operates to increase access for eligible people. This strategy will also explore the applicability of other complementary programs and products that unlock access to a wider range of housing options for Territorians.



unlock access
to a wider range
of housing options
for Territorians

4.2 Work with the non-government sector to engage key industry stakeholders in the development of accommodation responses for vulnerable Territorians to access the private rental market

With a growing focus on leveraging the private rental market to improve access to housing for people who may be vulnerable to homelessness or at risk, there are opportunities to build support within the real estate industry for this approach. Through this strategy, DLGHCD will work with NT Shelter to facilitate ongoing engagement between government, key industry stakeholders and the SHS sector.

vulnerable
Territorians
to access
the **private**
rental market



4.3 Strengthen and expand programs for priority groups who are homeless or at risk, to access and sustain housing in the private rental market

Key learnings regarding the feasibility and scalability of the Homelessness Innovation Fund and other programs will be considered to leverage private rental housing to support clients who experience vulnerability. Appropriateness to local housing markets will also be assessed as part of this.

4.4 Develop an investment model to provide evidence for and support future investment in social housing and homelessness assistance

To support future investment in programs aimed at addressing homelessness, it will be essential to develop an evidence base to demonstrate how social housing and homelessness programs contribute to long-term cost savings for governments. Under this strategy DLGHCD will work with key stakeholders to better understand the costs associated with homelessness across the human services system and the wider social and economic benefits achieved through providing long-term housing and support.

To **increase**
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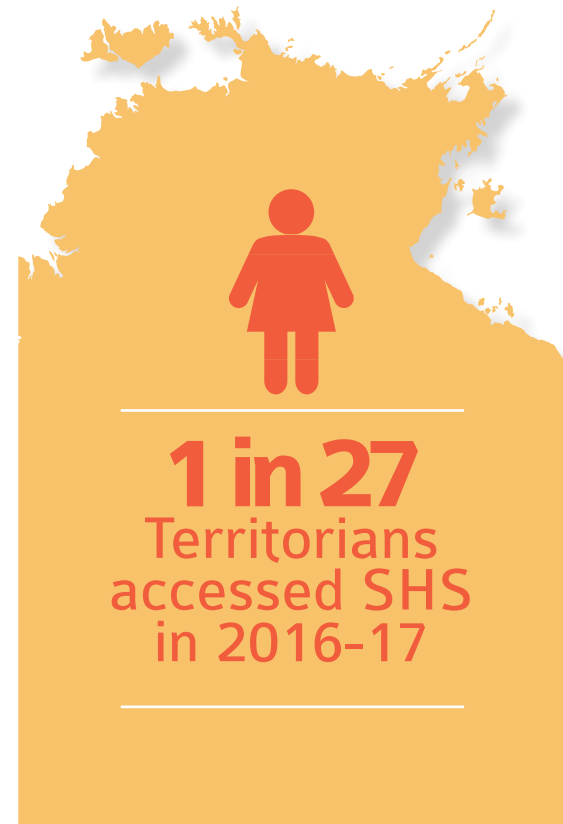
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PRIORITY
ACTION

Work with the Specialist Homelessness Services sector to strengthen responses for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness

There is evidence to show that SHS programs are effective at achieving positive housing and support outcomes for individuals and families⁴⁷. Providing housing coupled with person and family centred support contributes to many other non-housing outcomes as well⁴⁸.

It must be acknowledged that the overwhelming consensus from stakeholders is that the NT SHS sector is currently operating well in the face of many challenges. These include an increase in demand for services and growing complexity of need. However, there are opportunities to improve and streamline the service system. Crisis support and medium and transitional housing are essential parts of SHS. It is timely, however, to consider ways in which the sector can be refocused to more effectively transition people to long-term stable housing with appropriate case management and support.



What we are doing

Evidence-informed funding arrangements

Some early work to strengthen the SHS sector has already begun with the transition towards more transparent and evidence-informed funding of SHS. From 2016-17, funding to SHS was distributed in two distinct components: housing and accommodation assistance, and intensive, tailored wraparound support. Further work to improve decision making around funding will continue under the NT Homelessness Strategy and form a critical part of the realignment of the SHS sector.

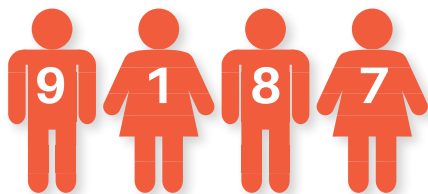
NTG-NGO partnership reform - five-year funding agreements for Specialist Homelessness Services

As part of a whole-of-government commitment to providing greater funding stability to the NGO sector in the NT, from 2018 five-year housing and homelessness support grant agreements began. To support the realignment of the SHS sector, funding arrangements were implemented in a way that aligns with the process of service redesign under the strategy.

Homelessness Innovation Fund

The Homelessness Innovation Fund (HIF) was established in 2016 to trial innovative service and support models for people who are homeless. An outcomes framework for each of the HIF programs is being trialled. The learnings from this process will inform future development of a whole-of-system outcomes framework for the SHS sector in the NT.

A total of



clients were supported by SHS in the NT in 2016-17

\$24 million
in grant funding to support the delivery of SHS in 2017-18

What we will do in the five years to 2023

5.1 Establish a regional engagement model to support realignment of the SHS sector

To support work to strengthen the SHS sector, a regional engagement model will be developed to facilitate collaboration between DLGHCD and regional stakeholders with an interest in addressing homelessness. Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders across each urban and regional centre will support the partnership approach needed to refocus and realign service models and ensure they are appropriate to local contexts. Collaboration, knowledge-sharing and two-way communication will be core features of this model.

5.2 Build the evidence base to inform design of the future sector and undertake sector realignment

A detailed analysis of current service models will be undertaken in the first year of the strategy. DLGHCD will work in collaboration with key stakeholders across the SHS sector to better understand client needs and the service delivery environment. The evidence gathered through this process will guide the realignment of service responses, ensuring consideration of unique needs across different locations in the Territory.

5.3 Develop and implement a service response to support people sleeping rough across urban and regional centres

Rough sleepers in the NT experience high levels of vulnerability and often have complex and intensive support needs. To improve understanding about the experience of people sleeping rough, a cross-government, cross-sectoral response focused on improving health, wellbeing and social inclusion for this group will be established and rolled out across urban and regional centres of the NT.

5.4 Develop and trial an outcomes framework

An outcomes framework for homelessness in the NT will be developed to better understand the impact and effectiveness of the SHS system in addressing homelessness and the risk of homelessness. This will align to national work to enhance outcomes reporting for all jurisdictions under the NHHA and work under way in the NT to develop a social outcomes framework. The design and development of a homelessness outcomes framework will also be informed by learnings from an outcomes evaluation of the Homelessness Innovation Fund.

5.5 Develop an integrated service system response for homelessness, including client assessment, intake and referrals

As part of the focus on improving housing and support outcomes for people accessing the SHS system, options will be explored to develop a more integrated service system response to homelessness. This response will be developed in partnership with the SHS sector, and will aim to integrate services and to more effectively meet the needs of, and reduce service barriers for, SHS clients.



Implementing the strategy

DLGHCD will lead implementation of the strategy in collaboration with key cross-government and non-government partners. It will rely on focused and responsive leadership and a firm commitment to collaborate from all key stakeholders with a role in addressing homelessness.

To support implementation, a governance structure has been established. This structure has representation of all NT Government partner agencies within the Children and Families cluster⁴⁹ and will provide strategic oversight of the strategy during its implementation. The regional engagement process (Action 5.1) will also be a fundamental part of realigning the service system and will act as a platform for ongoing communication and engagement with key stakeholders.

Monitoring and reporting

An action learning approach will be taken as the strategy is implemented. We will review our progress and achievements according to this framework and report in the DLGHCD Annual Report each year. An evaluation of the strategy will be completed at the end of the five-year implementation period.



Appendix 1: Five Year Action Plan - Overview

Priority Action 1	Strengthen interagency responses and support to reduce exits into homelessness from out-of-home-care, health services and corrections		Year 1 2018-19	Year 2 2019-20	Year 3 2020-21	Year 4 2021-22	Year 5 2022-23
	1.1	Develop a post release transitional accommodation program for people exiting the corrections system	•	•			
	1.2	Undertake research into housing and support responses for people exiting the corrections system			•	•	•
	1.3	Explore options to strengthen the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) to address the risk of homelessness among PATS patients and their families	•	•	•	•	•
	1.4	Develop a housing response for young people leaving out-of-home care	•	•	•	•	•
	1.5	Develop a proposal for Youth Foyer programs			•	•	•
	1.6	Work with Territory Families to develop housing and homelessness responses for families experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, including early intervention, crisis and post crisis support	•	•	•	•	•
Priority Action 2	Streamline and strengthen preventative support to people at risk of homelessness		Year 1 2018-19	Year 2 2019-20	Year 3 2020-21	Year 4 2021-22	Year 5 2022-23
	2.1	Strengthen family support and coordination initiatives with a focus on prevention and early intervention	•	•	•	•	•
	2.2	Extend the Housing and Support Initiative (HASI) mental health support trial beyond 2020, subject to an evaluation of program outcomes	•	•	•	•	•
	2.3	Increase access to and engagement in alcohol and other drugs community based support and rehabilitation programs	•	•	•	•	•

Priority Action 3

Improve Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development policy and practice to better respond to homelessness and the risk of homelessness		Year 1 2018-19	Year 2 2019-20	Year 3 2020-21	Year 4 2021-22	Year 5 2022-23
3.1	Embed homelessness prevention policy principles in the development and implementation of DLGHCD operational policies and practices	●	●	●	●	●
3.2	Develop the skills and capabilities of the DLGHCD workforce to more effectively support people who are experiencing vulnerability and have complex needs	●	●	●	●	●

Priority Action 4

Increase access to and supply of private rental, affordable and social housing		Year 1 2018-19	Year 2 2019-20	Year 3 2020-21	Year 4 2021-22	Year 5 2022-23
4.1	Expand the use of the private rental market to assist people with low level support needs	●	●	●	●	●
4.2	Work with the non-government sector to engage key industry stakeholders in the development of accommodation responses for vulnerable Territorians to access the private rental market	●	●	●	●	●
4.3	Strengthen and expand programs for priority groups who are homeless or at risk, to access and sustain housing in the private rental market	●	●	●	●	●
4.4	Develop an investment model to provide evidence for and support future investment in social housing and homelessness assistance			●	●	●

Priority Action 5

Work with the Specialist Homelessness Services sector to strengthen service responses for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness		Year 1 2018-19	Year 2 2019-20	Year 3 2020-21	Year 4 2021-22	Year 5 2022-23
5.1	Establish a regional engagement model to support realignment of the SHS sector	●	●	●	●	●
5.2	Build the evidence base to inform design of the future sector and undertake sector realignment	●	●	●	●	●
5.3	Develop and implement a service response to support people sleeping rough across urban and regional centres	●	●	●	●	●
5.4	Develop and trial an outcomes framework	●	●	●	●	●
5.5	Develop an integrated service system response for homelessness, including client assessment, intake and referrals			●	●	●

Appendix 2: References

- ¹ Key NT Government departments include those represented within the Children and Families cluster. The Children and Families cluster comprises the departments of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Finance, Attorney-General and Justice, Health, Education, Housing and Community Development, Territory Families and the NT Police.
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