Homelessness NT

Northern Territory Homelessness Implementation Plan

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) was agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in December 2008. The NPAH provides additional investment to achieve outcomes that reduce repeat homelessness and rough sleeping, increases access to sustainable housing, and improves social inclusion of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness.

Under the NPAH, the Northern Territory will receive approximately $25.5 million in Commonwealth funding over five years, which will be matched with Northern Territory Government funding of $29.389 million.

The Northern Territory’s Homelessness Implementation Plan was approved by the Commonwealth Minister for Housing on 27 August 2009.

The Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments are currently in the final stages of reviewing the Implementation Plan which will strengthen the links between the targets and performance benchmarks and objectives set out in the NPAH.

Northern Territory Homelessness Implementation Plan 2009–2010 highlights

A Place to Call Home

The A Place to Call Home program is a joint initiative between the Australian, State and Territory governments to build 600 new homes across Australia to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

People assisted under A Place to Call Home move directly into permanent housing. Households receive tenancy and other support services for the first 12 months to help address issues that led to homelessness and support reintegration with the broader community. Tenants are able to remain in their home at the end of the support periods and become regular public housing tenants.

Under this program Commonwealth funding of $7.84 million will be provided over five years to construct an additional 32 new public housing dwellings.

In 2009–2010, the Territory placed ten households into A Place to Call Home in the Darwin region, and of these households 70 per cent were Indigenous. Planning commenced in 2009–2010 for expansion of the program across all regions from 2010–2011.
Street to Home Projects

In 2009–2010 an expression of interest process was undertaken to fund non-government providers to deliver Street to Home initiatives for chronic homeless people (rough sleepers). The following four initiatives were successful and were awarded funding to the total of $2.2 million under the NPAH.

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Status (as at end 2009-10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Vincent de Paul Society</td>
<td>To construct and manage 10 rooms for transitional accommodation targeted at adult males from the Territory Housing Priority Waitlist.</td>
<td>Construction has commenced and is anticipated to be completed by end November 2010.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA)</td>
<td>To provide crisis accommodation and intensive support to enable participants to transition to conventional accommodation. This service will provide two beds in a hostel plus two one-bedroom units and one two-bedroom unit for people at risk of becoming homeless due to mental illness.</td>
<td>MHACA has been approved use of three Industry Housing Assistance Scheme dwellings through the Northern Territory Government and is working with government to identify appropriately located dwellings. MHACA commenced recruitment in October 2010.</td>
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<td>Salvation Army Red Shield Hostel</td>
<td>To employ a part-time case worker to work with clients and conduct an outreach program at the Red Shield Hostel in Darwin.</td>
<td>Part-time case worker employed and service delivery commenced in February 2010.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA of the Top End Incorporated</td>
<td>To repair and upgrade the Doctors Gully Hostel. The project will retain 63 rooms and make available a further 15 rooms and refurbish a two-bedroom flat and a three-bedroom house.</td>
<td>Refurbishments to the facility have commenced and are anticipated to be completed by end of November 2010.</td>
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Northern Territory Homelessness Profile Study

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services is conducting a research project known as the Northern Territory Homelessness Profile Study. The study’s aim is to develop an understanding of homelessness in a local context, and it will inform better targeting of homelessness and other government services. Initially the study will be targeted in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs.

An in-house literature review and service mapping process is well underway with a discussion paper planned to be completed in December 2010. Place-based planning processes will commence in 2011.
Youth Development Crisis Accommodation – Tennant Creek

This program provides youth accommodation services to assist young Indigenous people to access secure accommodation, attend school or training, remain engaged with family and receive the necessary support to build life skills.

Accommodation is provided in two houses set aside in Mulga Camp in Tennant Creek. Provision is contingent on the young people being identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their agreement to engage in work, training or education.

In 2009–2010, supported accommodation was provided to 64 Indigenous youth in Tennant Creek.

Assistance for people leaving correctional services

This initiative targets people exiting prison and juvenile detention. The key aim of the program is enable a smooth reintegration into the community with a case management model which builds on the strengths of participants to assist people to overcome barriers to re-integration and reduce re-offending behaviour.

The service is provided either pre-release, at prison or detention centre, on the street or as required. The service will facilitate the development of reintegration plans, and encourage the active involvement of clients, their families and other significant support networks and agencies in finding suitable accommodation and support services.

Mission Australia is the service provider for this project. The service has been successful in providing comprehensive post release plans and practical support to persons on their release from prison or detention. A particular strength of this service is that it does not focus solely on providing accommodation but focuses on facilitating an effective transition from prison to supported community participation.

In 2009–2010, all of the 53 clients of this program received sentence or case plans incorporated in post release plans and all clients were referred to appropriate support services.

Service Coordination System

This project will develop a housing and homelessness service coordination mechanism that links clients and providers in the Darwin region. It will identify the information management, information technology and practical coordination requirements for a Service Coordination System that provides real time information on the availability of existing services for clients in the Darwin and Palmerston region, with the potential for expansion to other centres. Involving government agencies and non-government service providers, the project will lead to better outcomes for clients through improvements in service coordination.

An implementation approach for the development of a Service Coordination System was developed in consultation with partner agencies and the non-government sector in 2009–2010.

Key outcomes from consultations identified:

- a real need for improved client access to community services and focus on achieving outcomes for clients
- a mechanism should facilitate but not force referrals between services
- a website to facilitate information sharing would be the most appropriate format
• scope should not be restricted to supported accommodation within the homelessness sector but should incorporate other homelessness, housing, allied and mainstream services
• potential for the system to be expanded across sectors should be explored.

A system will be rolled out in 2010–2011 that includes an online service directory and search fields that enable the user to locate a suitable service. The mechanism would work through a website portal and could include information such as: a description of services available, eligibility requirements, target client groups, restrictions and guidelines, hours of operation, transport and map, facilities, accommodation vacancies, available staff, news feed and careers.

**Domestic and family violence support**

A significant proportion of homeless people in the Northern Territory are victims of domestic and family violence. Successful prevention, early intervention and crisis responses to victims of family and domestic violence are essential part of any response to homelessness in the Territory.

The Department of Health and Families is progressing a Family Violence Investment Strategy which supports the mandatory reporting provisions in the *Domestic and Family Violence Act* which took effect on 12 March 2009. The Act made the reporting of serious physical harm between people in a domestic relationship mandatory across the health, community, legal and domestic and family violence sectors in the Northern Territory.

The Family Violence Investment Strategy will assist in prevention, early intervention and crisis responses and are informed by service gaps in frontline responses to domestic and family violence, as well as to expand the sector through the provision of some additional accommodation facilities.

In 2009–2010 there were 3000 support periods with accommodation provided to people experiencing domestic and family violence. The following progress was achieved:

**Evaluation of mandatory reporting legislation**

Processes were endorsed and service specifications finalised to complete a report on the impact of amendments to the *Domestic and Family Violence Act* which requires all adults in the Territory to report to police any domestic and family violence involving serious physical harm.

**Base-line data project**

An out-posted Australian Bureau of Statistics officer to be based in the NT Families and Children’s Services to improve the domestic and family violence data collection, recording and analysis across the Territory.

**Placement of social workers and Aboriginal liaison officers in the Territory’s five public hospitals.**

Regional specific service models were developed that meet the needs of each hospital. Social Workers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers are being recruited.

**Investment in operational capacity of domestic and family violence shelters across the Territory**

Increased funding was allocated to domestic and family violence shelters across the Territory. This support is being provided to YMCA, Dawn House, Catherine Booth House, Alice Springs Women’s Shelter, Tennant Creek Women’s Shelter, Gove Crisis Accommodation, DAIWS and Katherine Women’s Shelter.
Young people leaving care program

This program assists young people leaving the care system and those who have previously left care of the Department of Health and Families to gain independence by providing linkages to employment, education, housing and other support services.

In late 2009–2010 Anglicare NT were awarded the tender for delivery of this service. Prior to the confirmation of the tender, Department of Health and Families employed a project officer to and provided a service to 25 clients still in care.

Intervention and Case Management Services

Intervention and Case Management Service (ICMS) aims to reduce antisocial behaviour and primary homelessness in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs regional areas. The ICMS, principally aimed at Indigenous people sleeping rough in town areas, provides Return to Country, intervention, referral and identification services for homelessness and itinerant people across the Territory.

The ICMS links in with a range of patrolling, rehabilitation and accommodation services provided through the government and non-government sector to assist people living as itinerants and, where appropriate, assist them to return to their home community. ICMS are tailored to regional needs.

In 2009–2010 there were 3723 people returned to their home community from Darwin and Palmerston and 251 people were referred to accommodation.

Prison In-Reach Program

The Prison In-Reach Program provides comprehensive alcohol and other drug (AOD) assessments, individual group counselling, and after care referrals to prisoners with AOD problems in the Darwin area. The program is targeted towards adult or juvenile prisoners at Don Dale and Darwin Correctional Centre with alcohol and or other drug problems who have been sentenced to prison for six months or less, or those who are on remand and awaiting trial.

The program offers voluntary group sessions, brief interventions, one-on-one counselling and post-release referral to inmates who would like to access AOD services while incarcerated.

While the program is voluntary, inmates are encouraged to attend the in-reach sessions if the crime is drug or alcohol related. The program has a strong emphasis on linking people with support and after care services following release.

In 2009–2010 the program provided 506 episodes of care and almost all have been for alcohol related assessment, counselling and group work. The average monthly case load was about 42 clients. While the service is for both adults and juveniles, most referrals are for adult offenders.