Showcasing Innovation
Case studies of recent homelessness initiatives

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For the past half decade governments have focussed on finding solutions to the challenge of homelessness in our society. Approximately 100,000 persons are homeless on any night in Australia and almost 400,000 people will experience homelessness over the course of a year (ABS 2012). Homelessness is not restricted to one group within Australian society. Homelessness remains a major challenge for:

- women fleeing violence in the home;
- Indigenous Australians;
- families and individuals living in poverty;
- persons with a disability – physical, intellectual and psychological;
- recent humanitarian arrivals; and
- young people.

In December 2008 The Road Home – The Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness was released and this document set the strategic agenda for reducing homelessness to 2020. It recognised that homelessness can affect anyone and that reducing homelessness is everyone’s responsibility. The White Paper argued that homelessness can be prevented by working together, with national leadership, and towards a common goal. The White Paper, and its subsequent implementation, made a strong case that Australia’s efforts to reduce homelessness have to be urgent, as well as sustained.

Specifically, The Road Home set goals to be achieved by 2020 that included:

- halving the rate of overall homelessness; and,
- offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it.

In order to achieve these goals, the paper argued that future effort and investment should be focussed on three strategies:

1. **Turning off the tap**: Services will intervene early to prevent homelessness.
2. **Improving and expanding services** which aim to end homelessness: Services will be more connected, integrated and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve social and economic participation and end homelessness for their clients.
3. **Breaking the cycle**: People who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system into stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.
This document sets out to highlight some of the innovative practices being developed across Australia in response to homelessness. The paper draws upon some of the new ways of thinking encountered by researchers at the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning in their work on homelessness. The diversity of approaches evident in this document reflects a new commitment to change within the homelessness sector and government.

It is encouraging that new perspectives on homelessness are not limited to one part of Australia. The case studies covered in this document come from virtually all parts of the nation and reflect the diverse ways homelessness is experienced – by Indigenous Australians, the long term homeless, humanitarian arrivals, women and families.

*Innovation in social policy is critical to finding real solutions to the challenges of homelessness.* The case studies in this document highlight that there is a genuine commitment to improvement, and in the future we can expect more positive outcomes as systems are integrated and new models of practice implemented, refined and developed.
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This initiative

Port Augusta has long had a homeless population. As a town sitting on the crossroads of rail and road networks it is an important transport corridor, but it is also an important transition point for Aboriginal people as they move across the lands of a number of Indigenous nations. At any one time Port Augusta will see people from the APY lands or Coober Pedy to the north, Ceduna and Port Lincoln to the west and east towards the Flinders Ranges and Broken Hill.

Until recently there were few accommodation options in Port Augusta for Aboriginal people as they sought access to services, employment and training or engaged in cultural or business activities.

Fluctuations in population had impacts on family and community resources, housing and the delivery of other services. Rough sleeping was widespread and carried a multitude of risks.

In the mid 2000s State and Australian Government funding was allocated to build residential accommodation for transient, visiting and homeless Aboriginal people to provide a safe and secure place for the influx of visitors who come to Port Augusta.

When first opened the Lakeview Accommodation Centre was mainly for the transient Aboriginal population, it is now open to any Aboriginal person who may be experiencing homelessness or who is at risk of homelessness.

How it addresses homelessness

The Lakeview Accommodation Centre is located just out of the main part of town along a road that passes by Lake Umewarra. The site is overlooked by the Flinders Ranges to the east and is adjacent to the Davenport Community. The Centre is built on land donated by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. A kitchen provides meals, and social services and a clinic providing routine services is located on the site.

Families coming to Lakeview most often occupy units, but there is also wiltja accommodation. Three fully self-contained independent living units are also available, targeted to those with health conditions or a disability. The units are managed on an exceptional needs basis and visitors can access a range of wrap-around services.

Some 75 to 85 per cent of groups coming to the Centre are families with children. In recent times the staff have noticed larger groups of people coming through who can be more difficult to accommodate.

Lakeview has a 100 person capacity and is often at, or near, capacity throughout the year. Stays are limited to 12 weeks, with an average stay of about 6 weeks. But...
people can come through several times on their journey to more permanent housing arrangements, or as required. For security, Lakeview Accommodation Centre is locked at night and an accommodation worker provides access so people can come and go as they please. Drugs, alcohol and violence are not tolerated. Visitors value the safety, and low cost (just $5 per night) of this housing option.

Staff at the Centre work in shifts to provide 24/7 accommodation and care to Aboriginal people. A mobility officer, accommodation worker and case manager, along with the Centre’s manager, work to build the trust and loyalty of visitors to the Centre as well as to gain information in order to provide individual support and obtain needs assessments. Immediate needs are dealt with first and visitors are linked into the services they require and referrals to private accommodation or to the waiting list of Housing SA are initiated. Combined with an on-site maintenance worker, cook and cleaners the transient population is well cared for at Lakeview.

The Centre has been recognised as a success and has been used as a model for other developments elsewhere in South Australia. Similar accommodation is offered in Ceduna and a similar centre is soon to open in Coober Pedy. There is also broadly comparable accommodation in Adelaide, which aims to cater for the mobile lifestyle and cultural practices of some Aboriginal people. Importantly, this model of housing and support for transient Aboriginal people could be adopted in other states, as long as local needs are assessed and Aboriginal people are consulted.

The City of Port Augusta and broader Port Augusta community are supportive of the Lakeview Accommodation Centre.

Other services in Port Augusta work to meet the needs of Aboriginal people and there is a positivity to engage – the future looks bright for Port Augusta and Aboriginal people who live and visit this regional city.

Implications for policy and practice

The Lakeview Accommodation Centre is a success with fewer people sleeping rough and a reduction in overcrowding among families and family groups locally. This project demonstrates that new models of delivery are viable, worthwhile and well received. Over a dozen former residents have been permanently housed by non-government organisations, in private rental or public housing. And, with the recent addition of Common Ground (see pages 20-21) in Port Augusta even stronger transitions to stable housing are in prospect.
This initiative

Helping the most disadvantaged within society is part of the core business of the James Brown Memorial Trust, a non-government agency based in South Australia that has recently led the way in providing attractive, sustainable housing for the homeless.

The James Brown Memorial Trust has been in operation since the 19th Century, and through that time it has been active in a number of fields, including assisting people with a disability, providing care for the aged and helping the financially disadvantaged.

How it addresses homelessness

Over the last five years the James Brown Memorial Trust has been partnering with the Australian and State Governments to develop new and better quality housing for people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

Starting first with a development at Mansfield Park in Adelaide’s western suburbs, the James Brown Memorial Trust set out to redevelop housing that had passed its use by date and in place create new and inspiring places for formerly homeless people. Many of the properties were originally developed in the 1950s as small attached units, with large areas of open space that were both difficult and expensive to maintain. Often these units had been built at low quality as ‘temporary’ housing solutions that somehow managed to last 60 years or more.

Redevelopment saw the old dwellings replaced with new, purpose built accommodation that provided improved amenity, better facilities,
a more attractive living environment and a greater sense of community.

**Sustainability was a key goal of redevelopment.**

Existing sites were redeveloped at higher density, while still retaining the low rise nature of the housing, in keeping with new and planned housing in the neighbourhood. Increased densities help keep rents low, which in turn improves the ability of the residents to get out and about in the community. Passive solar design, in combination with solar panels and hot water, plus reverse brick veneer building technologies has reduced energy costs, keeping lifetime housing costs to a minimum.

Development at Mansfield Park was followed by the rebuilding of a property in Campbelltown in Adelaide’s north east (pictured). This site was converted from 16 low-density, one bedroom bedsits to a vibrant community of 24 purpose built dwellings. Rents are low and all tenants are on some form of income support, with the majority moving out of homelessness as they took up this housing. Service providers not linked to the Trust, work with the tenants to maintain their tenancies and produce the best possible outcomes in how they participate in society and the economy.

Resident Don* (pictured) said he couldn’t be happier in his neat home. He loves being close to the city, public transport and the benefits of living within a supportive environment. The Campbelltown site has a strong community of interest with a sense of ownership.

**Implications for policy and practice**

In the design and delivery of these award winning projects the Trust has been able to build upon the goodwill and supportive spirit of local councils and neighbouring communities. Council endorsement and approval has allowed the redevelopment of run down sites at higher density, while good community consultation has ensured that the residents of surrounding housing both welcome and appreciate the new development.

Working in partnership with others has been a key part of the Trust’s success. The Trust was able to tap into the Australian Government’s National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), as well as the South Australian Government’s Affordable Housing Innovation Fund to bring about this housing transformation. Without such support, this innovation would have remained an unrealised dream.

And while this is a story of innovation in housing policy and practice, the real beneficiaries are the homeless people who have already had the opportunity to move into this housing, while those who fall homeless in the future will also have a chance for good housing that wasn’t there in the past. It is notable, therefore, that the Trust is planning further similar developments.

*Name has been changed.

www.jamesbrown.org.au/
This initiative

I am young and I am homeless. Who does what to help me? Where do I go to get that assistance? What are my options? Why isn’t it easy for me to answer these questions and get access to the help I need?

Imagine you are young, you were born overseas, and don’t have a clear handle on English. Your literacy skills are minimal, you don’t have a support network around you, you don’t have a job, you don’t have money saved, you face discrimination in the housing market, and you may have had a traumatic start to your new life in a new country. Who would you turn to find out how to get support and how to secure suitable accommodation?

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are at risk because they do not know how to navigate the housing and social support system. They are also at a marked disadvantage when accommodation is scarce and services are stretched.

That’s where Youth Links in Melbourne’s outer suburbs steps in. Youth Links support is person-centred and reaches out to young people to provide help that is in tune with their needs, capacities and capabilities. Youth Links is part of the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau (SCAAB) and is a busy, safe and inviting place where young people aged 14 to 25 years can drop in and use computers, play chess, get help, and receive support and advice on a range of issues including money, legal concerns, school, work, family, health, or anything else they may need.

How it addresses homelessness

Youth Links has broken down funding silos and provides an integrated service to support young people who are immigrants or come from immigrant backgrounds. For instance, in an attempt to get youth job ready, Youth Links provides assistance with resumes, job searching, interview skills and Australian workplace law. It also provides some accommodation: SCAAB is a specialist provider of housing for the homeless, and manages 12 properties. Of this number, eight are managed by Youth Links to provide transitional housing for young people for up to 12 months. Youth Links works with, and supports, many unaccompanied minors.

Youth Links is innovative in the attention it gives to educating young people to be house-ready. Norma Goyenecha runs the Housing Options Workshops where intensive support is provided over three sessions to refugee and migrant youth needing assistance with entering and negotiating the housing market. The assistance ensures that these vulnerable young people understand how the housing market in Australia works, what is and isn’t acceptable and who to turn to when they have concerns or need assistance.

The workshops take young people though housing in all its forms – from social housing to private rental. Step-by-step practical help is provided, for instance, how to:

• search web sites for accommodation;
• fill out a housing/rental application;
• ensure hand writing is neat;
• provide copies of documents;
• collect the key and take responsibility for the property and its utilities; and,
• how to undertake a condition report.

The workshops also provide advice on budgeting, and what to wear when visiting real estate agents and properties. The whole purpose of the workshops is to up-skill young people and ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities. They build their capacity to be a good tenant.

Participants are presented with a certificate at the end of the workshops and provided with a support letter to show potential landlords they are ‘house ready’.

The results of the workshops have enticed other organisations working with young people from immigrant backgrounds to assist with running the workshops. Some provide interpreters and others provide funding. The workshops build trust between the Youth Links staff and the young people. They also enable the Youth Links personnel to learn about the circumstances confronting individuals. Often young people will pool resources to survive and overcrowding and exploitation are real issues.

With each new wave of immigrants Youth Links endeavours to understand the issues facing young people from different backgrounds. A new program of workshops is being investigated focussing on respectful relationships and providing an understanding of gender relations in the Australian context.

Youth Links is a busy and welcoming place. It is a place where support is responsive and effective interventions provide assistance to young people who are at risk of homelessness. Through Youth Links capacity building programs, young people are given confidence to make informed choices and decisions, to learn independent living skills and to take control of their lives.

Implications for policy and practice

Youth Links demonstrates that the provision of relevant information and skills to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds can be an effective preventative measure in safeguarding them against homelessness.

The story of Gladstone and the LNG Housing Support Program is a story of local innovation, smart thinking and the power of working in partnership to find solutions to the challenge of homelessness.

In the 1970s the Gladstone Regional Council (GRC) established the Community Advisory Service (CAS) with funding from some industrial pioneers. Their willingness to take responsibility for community welfare and social issues enabled the establishment of a counselling service. At the same time, a housing officer and community development officer were funded to support members of the local community who were facing social and economic challenges.

Over the last four decades Gladstone on the central Queensland coast has transformed itself from a modest town into a modern industrial city and port that is plugged into the global economy of the 21st Century.

Situated on a safe, natural and deep harbour, Gladstone and its region is benefitting economically from significant industrial growth. Currently there is $100 billion worth of investment in train, including the LNG industry, port and rail expansions and associated infrastructure.

This investment has resulted in strong economic and business growth, high employment and wages, and a rapid increase in population. Significant pressure on the housing market has accompanied this booming labour market, with reduced housing affordability, a general rise in the cost of living and acute demand for social services.

In the first years of the 21st Century a further 2000 people came to Gladstone to work in the next phase of industrial development. Suddenly the CAS found themselves supporting people who had lost access to affordable housing, who were sleeping in cars and caravans for extended periods and, in some cases, had set up in illegal camp sites under local bridges. For the first time in their lives everyday people suddenly found themselves homeless, or struggling to maintain a roof over their heads.

The most vulnerable in the community – older people on a fixed income and young people under 25 years of age bore the brunt of the steep rise in house prices and rents. Nearly one quarter of those aged under 25 left Gladstone in search of more affordable living elsewhere. As the cost of living and housing increased critical workers, including emergency services personnel, found it hard to make ends meet on their wages.

How it addresses homelessness

The GRC gave a strong message to industry and State and Australian Governments that while industrial developments were welcome economic growth could not come at an unsustainable cost socially. Housing assistance and support programs for families and individuals struggling with their accommodation costs were both expected and needed.
The GRC pulled together a team of 10 professionals with expertise in housing, health, engineering, roads and community development to provide comprehensive submissions to the environmental impact statements (EIS) required for all major developments.

The response was positive. As a consequence of the EIS process conditions were placed on LNG proponents and other major industries to fund affordable and social housing. CAS used the first round of negotiated funding from the LNG industry to provide emergency relief to wage earners who were unable to pay household bills once rent had been paid. It also provided rental assistance on a sliding scale and practical support to residents who were adversely affected by rising housing costs.

The Gladstone Affordable Housing Company was established to manage nearly $20 million in start-up capital and the Gladstone Foundation was established to manage $13.5 million in voluntary financial contributions from project proponents with all resources directed to support affordable housing and social infrastructure. A not-for-profit builder with experience in developing sustainable, social and affordable housing was engaged. Recently, the first development applications were approved and 21 dwellings will be built on land donated by a philanthropic organisation, the Clem Jones Trust.

Implications for policy and practice

There are important lessons for other parts of Australia from Gladstone’s experience. While every community is different, the innovative model and process established and trialled by GRC could work in other regions experiencing rapid industrial development. This example shows that with a willingness to use the tools currently available, the use of multi-faceted strategies and partnerships between local government and business, it is possible to provide affordable housing in mining rich regions.

www.gladstone.qld.gov.au
This initiative

Our Tasmanian case study is not a particular project, rather it is a Resource Package that is a key element in a process of change in the delivery of services to homeless persons and others at risk of homelessness. The aims are to change the ways that workers in all mainstream state services across the state – as well as non-government agencies – think about homelessness. Its key focus is on improving early identification and prevention of homelessness, where possible, and speedy effective action by all agencies to deal with instances of actual homelessness when they are presented with these problems.

The Housing and Homelessness Resource Package has been developed by Housing Tasmania, a business unit within the Division for Disability, Housing and Community Services. It was developed through the Service Coordination and Improvement Program (SCIP), a National Partnership Agreement Implementation Plan initiative. Development of the Resource Package centred on a highly collaborative process of consultation and interaction with all mainstream state services as well as the widest possible cross-section of non-government organisations.

How it addresses homelessness

The Resource Package is in four parts. Section 1 sets out the reasons why the Package was developed and describes its background in Tasmania’s Homelessness Plan 2010-2013. It emphasises that homelessness is everyone’s responsibility and that ‘early responses to homelessness = better outcomes in other areas of people’s lives’!

Key principles are set out from the beginning:

• need for early identification of people at risk of homelessness;
• need for effective service integration and coordination;
• need to ensure that help comes quickly from any and all agencies, and that ‘every door needs to be the right door to get help’;
• provide shared assessment practices to ensure early intervention to prevent homelessness wherever possible; and,
• enhance workers’ shared understanding of collaboration across agencies.

The rest of the Package is made up of three ‘toolkits’. Toolkit 1 provides general information about homelessness. It identifies the main risk factors and elaborates on early identification of risk and strategies for the prevention of homelessness. One important element is how mainstream services can consider a range of possible interventions. A second key element is advice for mainstream service providers on how best to manage client discharge from care environments to reduce the possible risk of homelessness. This section lists the range of available services and methods for determining which are appropriate for different clients.

Toolkit 2 is a training and resource kit for managers, trainers and facilitators to use in educating their staff about homelessness and the services that are available to prevent and deal with homelessness in Tasmania. It contains a facilitators’ guide and a set of modules for training sessions. The
material is timely and up-to-date, but can be revised, added to or modified in the light of changing circumstances or observed staff training needs. As with the whole package, this is a tool to be used and developed over time, not a one-off blueprint that cannot be changed.

Toolkit 3 provides a practice guide and tools for mainstream services. The central theme is the need to use a common assessment framework (CAF) and how it works in practice. A distinctive feature of this toolkit is its commitment to working with non-housing mainstream workers and determination ‘to ensure that they have the appropriate

triggers and processes in place within their existing frameworks’. The CAF has four steps:

- early identification, screening and proactive interventions;
- assessment of client circumstances;
- planning appropriate action; and,
- connecting clients with services and supports.

The CAF practice guide and toolkit is set out at the end of the overall Housing and Homelessness Resource Package. This provides a comprehensive assessment methodology for all case workers, regardless of their particular service. It also

seeks to identify clients’ other needs in addition to their housing needs, on the basis that homelessness is not just a housing problem and its prevention and solutions are not confined to the provision of suitable accommodation.

**Implications for policy and practice**

This Package represents a significant shift in thinking about homelessness and early intervention to prevent homelessness. If successful, it will demonstrate that the supply and dissemination of appropriate information and resources can have a positive impact on the delivery of services to homeless persons and others at risk of homelessness by influencing the way people conceptualise and respond to homelessness. It is the start of a new journey, not an end-point in an old one. It has a visionary long-term, strategic perspective, but its orientation is also highly practical. The effectiveness of this new approach will be assessed over time and progress carefully monitored to ensure that it fulfils its enormous promise in practice.

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au
This initiative

The City of Sydney is the only local council in Australia with a dedicated homelessness unit. *The City’s role in homelessness* has evolved over the years and is now *one of active involvement in supporting homeless people*, and not just handing out grants and other funding to organisations. Working in partnership with other levels of government, non-profits, philanthropic organisations and the corporate sector is central to the City and its efforts to assist homeless people into housing.

How it addresses homelessness

The City’s innovations started in 1985 when it established the Homeless Person’s Information Centre (HPIC). This telephone-based information and referral service for people who are homeless, or who are at risk of becoming homeless, now provides a lifeline to approximately 16,000 individuals or families across NSW each year. These are individuals in desperate need of emergency accommodation and other forms of crisis intervention. In the 2011-12 financial year over 58,500 calls for assistance were made to HPIC, with most calls relating to emergency accommodation.¹

Other innovative programs the City has implemented with the support of many and varied partners include:

- **Way2Home** – A ‘housing first’ approach started in April 2010 and jointly funded by the City, Housing NSW and Australian Government and operated by Neami and St Vincent’s Hospital. *Way2Home is now exceeding its objectives and has housed 170 people over the past three years, most of whom remain housed.*

- **90 Homes for 90 Lives Project** – A collaborative partnership that is focused on reducing the number of people sleeping rough in Woolloomooloo – one of the state’s highest concentrations of rough sleepers (see story on United Way on pages 26-27).

- **Common Ground** – *(see story on pages 20-21).*

- **Woolloomooloo Integrated Services Hub (WISH)** – a one-stop-shop where 22 organisations (including Centrelink, Housing NSW, a range of health services, legal aid services, TAFE and the RSPCA) come together monthly to provide services and help to put people on a pathway out of homelessness. This initiative is not about handing out information; the focus is on outcomes and people are assisted on the spot with forms they need to complete, given assistance in obtaining referrals, helped in applying for housing, checking their housing status, getting ID, health checks etc. The initiative is a cost effective way to support rough sleepers and is being implemented in other areas.

- **Street Count** – In order to track the progress of initiatives and to monitor the numbers of people sleeping rough in the city, a twice-yearly (summer and winter) street count is conducted by City staff, volunteers and peer advisers. *The first street count was in 2008*
and it now provides the City with valuable information in order to advocate for resources. The five years of street count data also enables the City to determine how best to prioritise programs and direct resources.

• Homelessness Interagency Meetings – the City holds bi-monthly interagency meetings that provide services with the chance to network and hear from speakers on related topics. These two hour meetings are kept dynamic and lighthearted, and provide a chance for staff and volunteers from various organisations to network and keep abreast of different issues. Clients and services consumers are also welcome to attend.

• Public Space Liaison Officers – In most local government areas managing public space is the only contact with homeless people. The City of Sydney is a supporter of compassionate and balanced public space management and observes the NSW Homeless Protocol. This means that homeless people have the same right as everyone, should not be discriminated against and should be offered assistance.

In 2007 the City employed Public Space Liaison Officers (PSLOs) to broker practical solutions in a compassionate way between residents, service providers, statutory authorities, building owners and homeless people. For example, residents complained of untidiness around Woolloomooloo. The City’s response was to provide storage for rough sleepers to keep their belongings. This was implemented on a self-managed basis and with respectful engagement. Homeless people now manage the safe storage of their belongings and there is much reduced litter or nuisance to affect other residents.

Implications for policy and practice

The City of Sydney cannot continue this innovative and supportive work without the determined assistance of its many and diverse partners. The State and Australian Governments have a valuable role in providing the necessary funding for affordable housing and support services. What is evident from this case study is that pooling resources through partnerships offer collective impact and better and stronger outcomes for vulnerable people.


www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
This initiative

YouTube is often thought of as a feature of popular culture in the 21st Century; one with little substance and a lot of media hype. But it can be a powerful impetus for change – and positive change at that.

Since the mid 2000s the Brisbane City Police have completely transformed their approach to homelessness. The push for a change for the better came from a 2006 YouTube clip that featured officers in Brisbane’s Queen Street Mall using force to restrain an elderly homeless man after he disobeyed a “move along” order. The ensuing public and policy attention created the right environment for a new approach to homelessness to emerge.

How it addresses homelessness

The first and most important change was a shift in attitude: police on the beat – including Senior Sergeant Corey Allen – argued that there was a need to engage with the homeless as individuals, coming to learn their needs, experiences and aspirations in order to find long-term solutions. After 2006 these views had the full support of senior police and change was rolled out throughout the City. Some of the first initiatives developed to engage vulnerable people were successful for a time, however they depended on a group of police officers seconded to a project. Now engaging with vulnerable people is every police officer’s job.
Increased dialogue is the key to the Brisbane City Police’s success. Previously 150 police officers talked to 300 people each month. Now a simple street check helps the police start conversations and approximately 1300 – 1500 conversations happen a month.

A second key initiative was to empower police on the frontline with better information about the nature of homelessness and its manifestation in Brisbane City. First year police constables were given the task of engaging with homeless people and filling out a profile on each individual. The creation of the profile was used:

- as a way of developing rapport;
- as a tool for uncovering the reasons behind homelessness;
- as a way of understanding family relationships;
- in the creation of a record of where a homeless person’s belongings were stored; and,
- to document the support services they preferred.

The profile also acted as a head count of homeless people and ensured that the first contact most people had with the police was a positive one.

A vulnerability index developed from the homeless support profiles had a clear medical orientation. The index enabled the Brisbane City Police to establish priorities for at risk people and connect them with the services they need. It also serves as an avenue to housing support.

Third, the Brisbane City Police work in partnership with others, including Micah Projects, a community based non-government organisation, who are involved in the case management of homeless people. The Brisbane City Police regularly attend a Rough Sleepers Coordination meeting where cases are discussed and new cases added. Over 200 homeless people have been housed through the Street to Home and 50 homes 50 lives initiatives. The goal is to get homeless people connected to services and into housing. Some cases can take 18 months to two years and tailored strategies are needed to assist different people. The conversations with homeless people continue to connect them to services and have now broadened to include discussions with doctors, pharmacists and licensed venues. The message is clear – in the first instance the police are here to provide help and support rather than to arrest.

Fourth, the police have made a commitment to continuous improvement in their dealings with the homeless and this has seen them invest in culturally appropriate strategies in their ongoing efforts to better engage with some groups. The Brisbane City Police have funded youth workers to engage and connect to the African and Pacific Islander cultures and communities.

Implications for policy and practice

The decision of the Brisbane City Police to be innovative in their approach to homelessness has reaped substantial rewards. Key staff have been nominated for national homelessness awards, the level of crime reported has reduced across all categories and there are fewer vulnerable people on the streets. The police service in Brisbane City has tackled the problem of homelessness with compassion, patience and intelligence.
This initiative

Common Ground is a ‘housing first’ approach to support people who are homeless. It has a goal of providing homes to a small cohort of people who are chronically homeless, including long-term rough sleepers. The core idea is to bring together a mix of people on low incomes (chronically homeless, students and workers) in a residential development with communal spaces, where they can rebuild their lives. In addition, these apartments include office space for health and support services, workshops and training activities.

How it addresses homelessness

Support staff work closely with tenants and provide health and community services, but are not involved in the management of the tenancies, other than to provide support to a tenant to avoid eviction. These on-site tenancy management and support services are vital to many tenants who have been homeless for years and often have multiple physical and mental illnesses. Importantly it is not compulsory for tenants to accept support – it is available should they choose.

The first Common Ground in Australia opened in 2008 in Adelaide and was funded by the State and Australian Governments working in partnership with a group of local business leaders. Adelaide now has two Common Ground sites and two sites will be operating in Port Augusta by the end of 2013. The Port Augusta establishments will address the needs of homeless Aboriginal people and are the first examples in regional Australia.

The Australian Common Ground Alliance brought together a number of organisations in each state (South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania) and was formed in 2008 to advocate and provide support to each state in their quest to provide additional affordable housing units with support services. Common Ground has now been developed in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Hobart.

A working group was created by the Mercy Foundation to establish Common Ground in Sydney and the project launched in 2008. That launch saw both the State and Australian Governments make a commitment to the project, and also attracted support from a range of corporate and non-government organisations. A Housing NSW site was provided and Grocon put its skills to work under its Corporate Social Responsibility charter to deliver the project at no profit and at no margin. Grocon has also built Common Ground sites in Melbourne and Brisbane under the same conditions. Sub-contractors also work for reduced or no profit and people who are, or were, homeless have worked on each of the projects.

Operating for approximately 18 months now, the development in Camperdown (pictured) reflects the collaborative partnership of more than 30 private, public and government agencies. This innovative quality six-storey development has been designed and constructed to a 5-star green rating which enables tenants’ on-going running costs to be kept to a minimum. The 104 unit property consists of 52 units aimed at those moving away from homelessness,
10 social housing units and 42 affordable housing units. The property also includes shared communal spaces (gym, lounge, courtyard and roof garden) and a specially designed clinic and consultation rooms, a computer room and a library. Safety and security are key elements in the design and management of Common Ground. A 24-hour, 7 day a week concierge service is located in the secure access lobby.

Fifty two people who were chronically homeless are now housed in this impressive development and receive the on-going support they need.

Common Ground developments are located in the heart of their respective cities so that people are near their community and peer support networks. The Common Ground buildings do not feel like an institution and are quality environments that add value to their neighbourhoods and foster social inclusion. The Common Ground model is based on permanency – for as long as the tenant wants to stay in the housing – which creates a sense of stability. A sense of stability and self-sufficiency can help to settle people who may have experienced chronic and episodic homelessness and who cycle in and out of crisis, temporary and transitional housing.

**Implications for policy and practice**

*The Common Ground ‘housing first’ model works. It requires ongoing, and sometimes intensive, support.* The model makes it easier for health and other providers to assist clients once people are housed. Most importantly Common Ground is a cost effective measure to end chronic homelessness.

www.commongroundaustralia.org.au
www.mercyfoundation.com.au
www.grocon.com

**Cost of serving homelessness vs housing**

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Daily cost comparison Melbourne Common Ground, 2010

Source: Australian Common Ground Alliance
Melbourne

City of Boroondara

This initiative

How can local governments respond to the challenge of increasing numbers of homeless persons? The City of Boroondara in eastern Melbourne has faced this challenge over the past decade and responded by developing a Homelessness Protocol. The Protocol was developed in 2009 and implemented with the support of senior council staff. Prior to implementation of the Protocol, council staff would see a homeless person but not know what to do. What was the correct course of action that they should follow? Should they approach the person and offer assistance? What would they do if the person didn’t want help or became aggressive? Who could they ring to get the person some help?

How it addresses homelessness

The Protocol was developed with the input of housing and social support agencies located in the City of Boroondara region. The Council invited all agencies who supported homeless people to attend focus groups to discuss how best to assist vulnerable people in the community.

One of the outcomes was the City of Boroondara’s Homelessness Protocol which was prepared to ensure that people who are homeless are treated appropriately and are offered relevant support services. The Protocol applies to public places such as parks, open spaces and community facilities, which are accessible to the public and which are owned, controlled or managed by the council. Principles and actions were developed to establish the basis for how council staff responds to homelessness in public spaces.

Every officer in council has cards listing local housing and support services that can be given to a person who is homeless to direct them to assistance. Staff also have the telephone number of Salvation Army EastCare and Boroondara Youth Services, and ring for assistance if they see someone who they think may be homeless. The Salvation Army and Victoria Police Service are both linked into Protocol, and the police also sit on Council’s safety committee and work with the Salvation Army EastCare when needed. The Protocol recognises it is not illegal to sleep in a park and people who are homeless have the same rights as everyone else. They don’t have to move on unless a law has been, or is being, breached and it becomes a policing issue.

Prior to the Protocol, council staff had no clear process for offering support to people who appeared to need assistance. People would come to reception and be given information about local support agencies, but parks and gardens or library staff did not have the information. The new process provides for outreach workers to go to the person without a council staff member needing to contact the person at all. This simple innovation had a positive implication for the Salvos as it sped up their response time. Council staff have become the eyes on the street for the timely assistance of homeless people. Police involvement with the Protocol means that they now have a clear process to work with Council and Salvation Army EastCare.

The community is supportive of the Protocol as they know the Council and Salvation Army EastCare are working together to assist vulnerable people. Local
businesses and residents can inform council that they have seen a homeless person who may need assistance. Council staff also understand that a homeless person’s belongings are not rubbish and must be respected.

The language and dynamic of the interaction between people who are homeless and Council staff has changed to the point where Council staff will not throw out an old mattress or couch if it appears to be being used by someone. Instead they ring Salvation Army EastCare to alert them to the potential that a person who is homeless may need assistance. *It can be difficult for Council staff to understand that it is the right of a person who is homeless to accept help when they are ready. And it is important to ensure the person is offered support and follow-up occurs where health or safety is a concern. Police or ambulance are involved if necessary.*

Council staff are not directly involved in dealing with people who are homeless other than to take notice and to make a report straight away. The Protocol makes it clear that Council staff should not engage directly with homeless people, but instead should make contact with Salvation Army EastCare, or police, to provide assistance.

Many of the people assisted are known by local support services and the Protocol allows them to be linked in with support again when they have become unwell through problems with medication or other issues.

In 2010 and 2011 over 20 people were assisted through the Protocol. The numbers assisted have halved over the ensuing years.

Community organisations have shown interest in the Protocol and are impressed by the good working relationships and strong partnerships that have developed between Victoria Police, Salvation Army EastCare and the City of Boroondara.

**Implications for policy and practice**

In many ways, the City of Boroondara can serve as a model for local governments around the country. *All local governments across Australia have a homeless population, either resident permanently or on a periodic basis.*

It is important for local governments to acknowledge the problem, consult with the community, work in partnership with specialist agencies and enable Council staff to make appropriate responses, within a clear and easily understood framework for action. The programs of the City of Boroondara exemplify this approach.

This initiative

How can busy police services help meet the challenge of homelessness? What information and support would help this vital frontline service connect homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, make a successful transition in their lives?

SupportLink is an organisation established in 1997 that sets out to answer this question and find new and innovative ways of making use of the presence of police on the ground to deliver services to the homeless population.

How it addresses homelessness

Headquartered in Canberra, SupportLink operates throughout Queensland, the ACT, Victoria and NSW, with trials starting in Alice Springs and a possible roll out in Western Australia in the near future. SupportLink works with police services in each jurisdiction to provide them with secure communications and data storage dedicated to meeting the needs of vulnerable individuals. That information is then used to trigger a response from a support service, ensuring that every homeless person has access to the assistance they need. That is, when the police have control of a homeless person or a person at risk of homelessness, SupportLink ensures that a social worker, health service or other agency makes contact with them to provide assistance.

SupportLink has a clear focus on meeting the needs of those at risk on our streets and within the housing market, including:

- rough sleepers;
- youth at risk of homelessness; and,
- those unhappy with current living arrangements and at risk of losing their homes – the precariously housed.

SupportLink aims to present these people with a ‘saturation of interventions’ that can ensure their problems are solved. And if success is not achieved by the first assistance offered, by the second, third or fourth attempt. It is an approach to assistance that does not limit the number of times help is offered, or the amount of time it takes to find a solution. Importantly, it is a systematic approach to improving the interaction between the police and the homeless population. Because while the police have a long history of positive actions with the homeless, it has been difficult to sustain that effort in the face of changing policy environments, the closure

Evolving innovation

The innovation embedded within SupportLink has not yet been fully developed. While the service has been implemented in partnership with a number of police services across Australia, there is the potential to roll out this model to Emergency Departments in hospitals, the ambulance service, fire services and even schools. And the positive thing here is such blanket coverage would help ensure that every contact between a vulnerable person and one of these key mainstream services is a step towards finding a solution to homelessness.
SupportLink Innovation in Brief

- new ways of making use of the presence of police on the ground
- secure communications and data storage
- engaging in ‘three wall policing’ delivers better outcomes


of some services and the opening of new facilities, and staff turnover in individual watchhouses and stations.

A simple fact lies at the heart of the SupportLink innovation: the police are the service on the ground most likely to have dealings with the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. It is an important role and often it is an unrecognised role, and this has meant that their contributions to dealing with homelessness have often gone unrecognised.

Importantly, to date police officers have not had access to a full set of tools needed to produce good outcomes. Police services working with SupportLink can, with the agreement of the homeless individual, take note electronically of individual circumstances and trigger a process to ensure the delivery of personal and other support.

Innovation is also driven by a new philosophy that recognises that in dealing with complex issues, such as homelessness, the police need to look beyond the four walls of their stations and look to others to work in partnership with them. By leaving one wall open and engaging in ‘three wall policing’ better outcomes are able to emerge.

Implications for policy and practice

There is every indication that SupportLink is a success. The feedback SupportLink receives from the officers on the ground and from service providers tells them they are helping to provide real solutions to real problems. And the great thing is, as a computer based system, it is possible to track success rates and take account of every outcome arising from every exchange between police officers and the vulnerable.
This initiative

In 2009 United Way Australia was involved in working with corporate partners to undertake fund-raising and volunteering to cook barbeques for rough sleepers. United Way Australia was also supporting agencies working with approximately 90 entrenched rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo. *Increasingly, United Way Australia and its people asked what meaningful impact and long lasting effects did cooking a barbeque make to rough sleepers – other than a good feed and some company?* This reflection saw United Way Australia move to a brokerage model and into a more active role in addressing homelessness.

How it addresses homelessness

The Woolloomooloo community is faced by serious social challenges that have not responded to conventional policies or ways of working. One solution is to work across sectors to improve outcomes. An example of this joined up approach is the innovative 90 Homes for 90 Lives (90/90). 90/90 is a partnership that embraces the goals of the NSW and Australian Governments and adapts them to local conditions. The power of this initiative lies in getting the right people around the table to get the resources to build more housing and provide support to those once homeless. Advocacy is also an important part of their role.

Starting in 2009, United Way Australia staff looked to increase their skills and participate in workshops on ‘housing first’ models run by the City of Sydney. They brought together a group of interested partners (listed below) working separately to support homeless people in Woolloomooloo and established a collaboration to assist rough sleepers into housing. This more strategic and combined approach focussed on solving homelessness and not simply managing the problem. Partners made a commitment at the outset of this initiative that *90/90 would result in a permanent exit from homelessness.*

The group of partners asked: what does a solution to homelessness look like? In working towards an answer to this question, the partners worked with the Mercy Foundation in 2010 to survey homeless people. One partner organisation offered its staff paid volunteer leave to assist with the surveys. A vulnerability index tool was used to give powerful insights into the challenges and aspirations of homeless people. The
City of Sydney provided local knowledge and data about homelessness and international evidence was gathered by the chief economist at UBS to equip the partnership with the answer to what homelessness costs governments and society, and to lobby for change. An international expert in utilising private head leases and the ‘housing first’ approach was hosted by the partnership to educate and join in discussions with Ministers and senior bureaucrats.

As well as the collective impact of different organisations working in collaboration, 90/90 highlights the importance of having a longer term plan of action rather than an individual program. The evidence provides information for effective advocacy and assists in determining targets which drive all action. The strategic relationships of the partners provide opportunities to identify other partners in the corporate, philanthropic, government and social sector according to the need identified within the plan. 90/90 also challenges perceptions of the role of corporate and philanthropic partners as fund managers only.

**Targets set at the beginning of 90/90 were exceeded ahead of time, with community partners housing an additional 65 people.** Added to the benefits to individuals of being housed, the reduction in the number of homeless people locally has also led to:

- significant improvements in local amenities;
- a reduction in community tensions;
- increased collaboration between services; and,
- almost certainly a reduction in the costs to government and community programs of servicing ongoing crisis.

**Implications for policy and practice**

The story of United Way Australia in Sydney shows that not-for-profits can make a real difference in the lives of homeless people. They have the capacity to apply their own resources and also leverage them in collaboration with other partners to achieve better outcomes.

There are many organisations across Australia committed to helping homeless people. Often their commitment finds expression in relatively simple – but still important – ways, such as through the cooking of a barbeque or the provision of other food. The Uniting Way Australia experience, however, shows how such measures can transition to a more meaningful engagement with the complex challenges of homelessness. Under the right conditions, such initiatives can be a stepping stone to permanent solutions for homeless people.
This initiative

How can philanthropy do more to address the problems of poverty and homelessness? A recent initiative in Western Australia – Giving West – has pioneered a new approach to philanthropy in the state that offers the promise of better outcomes for the vulnerable in society and the development of a new model of philanthropic activity.

How it addresses homelessness

Giving West is a recently established organisation, operating as a ‘hub’ for giving in WA. It operates with the mandate of making philanthropy ‘an ethos’ and ‘a way of life in WA’. The organisation has been designed as a time-limited non-government structure for facilitating and supporting philanthropy across Western Australia. It promotes itself in line with Sir Winston Churchill’s ideal that ‘We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give’.

The impetus for establishing Giving West arose out of a group of business and community leaders who identified an opportunity in the philanthropic landscape in Western Australia to increase the sector’s contribution to finding solutions to homelessness. An extensive consultation and research project was conducted to discuss the challenges and opportunities for advancing philanthropy in Western Australia. This resulted in the report funded by Lotterywest entitled A Rising Tide? (UWA 2010).

The study also scoped out the potential structure for Giving West and ultimately led to the development of the organisation as ‘…a community resource whose mission is to support, nurture, facilitate, promote and otherwise encourage long-term cultural change in attitudes, action and behaviours about giving’.

The need for the organisation was further cemented by evidence of growing social problems locally, and the emergence of a clear ‘two or three lane economy in WA with significant social and physical challenges, including rapidly increasing house prices and increasing rates of homelessness.

Giving West works with an operational mandate that recognises that ‘the WA community has a patchwork quilt of need, and Giving West can facilitate a patchwork quilt of solutions’.

Giving West is supported by philanthropic organisations, with Lotterywest, Bankwest, The Trust Company, Azure Capital and Atlas Iron Limited all counted amongst ongoing supporters. The organisation itself is small. It is overseen by a 12 member Board, comprising representatives of industry, business, the university sector and philanthropists. The organisation and its Board have strong links with government, other philanthropists and media.

Giving West is an innovative model of philanthropic brokerage, with a central focus on:

- promoting good giving to inspire activity;
- encouraging collaboration between and within not-for-profits and givers;
- collaboration for greater and meaningful impact;
- facilitating best practice and knowledge sharing;
- developing initiatives to grow giving; and,
- connecting through giving networks.
These foci are in line with research and discussion with stakeholders. That is, **Giving West brings together philanthropics and not-for-profits to start conversations with each and work together for mutual and community benefit.** The CEO of the organisation, Mr Kevin McDonald, describes the key role of Giving West as ‘bringing together givers and givers, givers and receivers, and receivers and receivers’ in order to convene, connect, collaborate and communicate about proposed and necessary on-ground activities. The organisation is also about using ‘the networks of stakeholders and their influence’ to grow philanthropy in all its guises. This includes through donations of money, time, skills and knowledge.

Giving West provides practical support to new and existing individual and corporate donors and this assistance takes the form of advice on:

- how and why to provide support;
- how to determine who to support; and,
- building relationships, including facilitating direct connections and introductions between givers and receivers;

They also routinely:

- host workshops and seminars on giving and other aspects of philanthropy, such as outcome measurements; engaging staff in giving et cetera;
- share information on the philanthropic and non-

---

**Giving West, business and sector leaders collaborate to increase the level and effectiveness of giving in Western Australia**
政府部门；和，
- 连接捐赠者和接收者
- 以及顾问服务，
- 包括慈善中介和其他必要
- 的专业建议来源。

Giving West，与它的合作
伙伴，正在试验一系列
的活动来激励当地捐赠。
例如，
- Give 1 是一项旨在激励
- 西澳大利亚
- 的工作者
- 与当地
- 组织/当地
- 项目
- 共同
- 服务
- 100 万
- 小时
- 时间；以及
- • 开发一个在线
- 捐款门户，基于
- 国家的 GiveNow
- 模型，以提高
- 当地非
- 以营利
- 机构
- 和它们
- 的活动
- 并鼓励更广泛的
- 支持
- 这些组织
- 和它们的
- 原因。

他们还正在开发一个
WA 给予指数

Benchmark, monitor and
understand giving locally.

Currently Giving West
is focused on strategies for
engaging younger
generations in philanthropy,
through the use of social
media and working more
directly with not-for-profits
and donors to understand
what each want from their
partnerships, what they
see as working well and
what they feel needs to be
improved.

**Giving West has facilitated
relationships between
donors, not-for-profits
and other stakeholders in
solving homelessness.**

Homelessness has been
identified as an area of
concern in WA, particularly
related to the uneven
benefits of rapid growth
locally. Homelessness and
social disadvantage remain
areas of strong philanthropic
interest throughout the
state, in Perth, other major
settlements, regional WA
and among Indigenous
communities.

**Implications for policy and practice**

Giving West is a unique
model: it is the independently
supported brokerage
agency that many in the
philanthropic and non-
government sectors have
been seeking for a number
of years now. While it is not
specifically a homelessness
focussed intervention, it is
one model among others
for potentially improving
understanding of this issue
among philanthropics and
generating greater support
for homelessness. In the
end, that can only serve
for the betterment of the
most vulnerable in Western
Australia.

www.givingwest.org.au/
References


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The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the author or authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Housing and Homelessness and cannot be taken in any way as expressions of government policy.

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