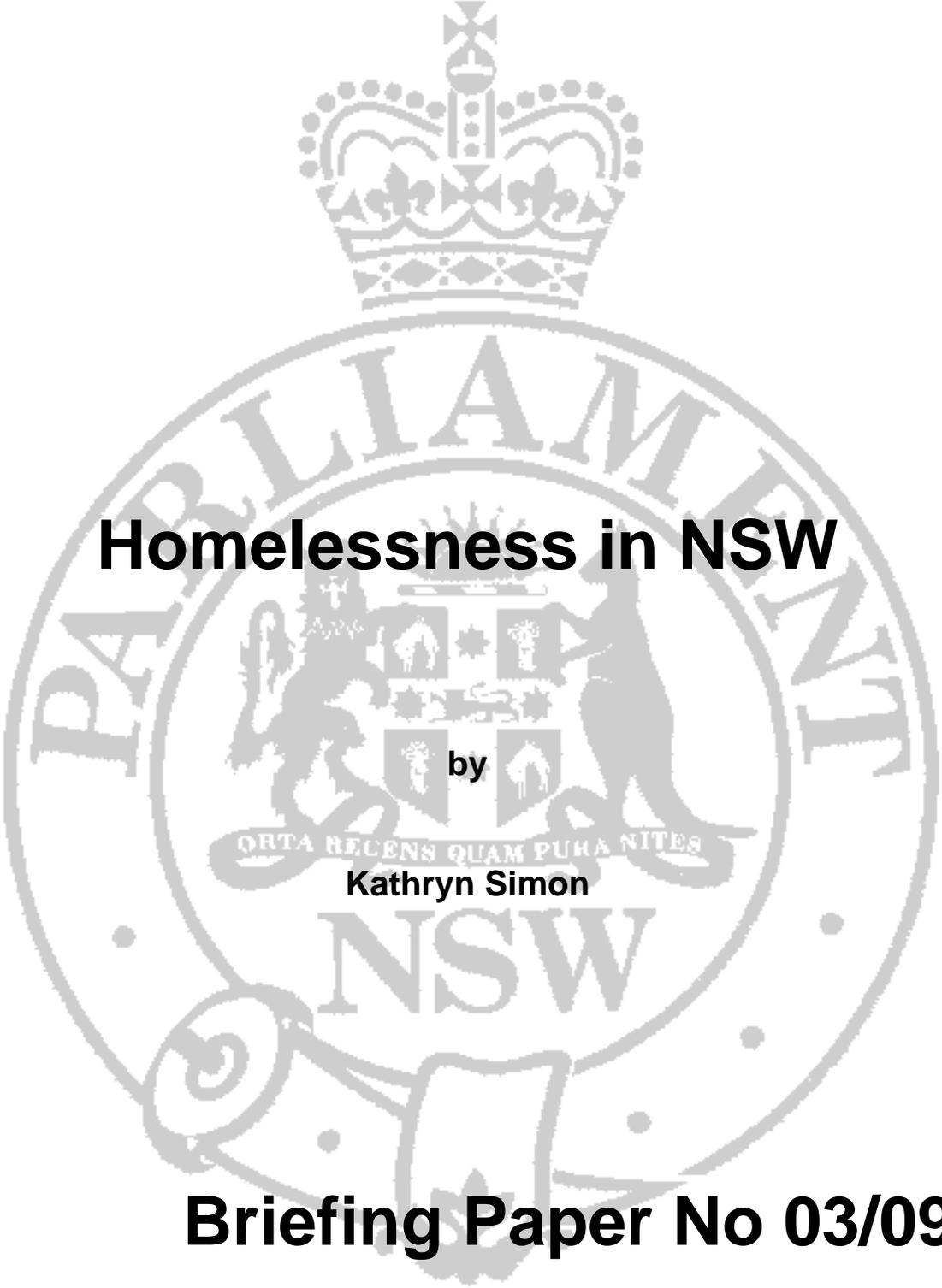


**NSW PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY  
RESEARCH SERVICE**



**Homelessness in NSW**

by

**Kathryn Simon**

**Briefing Paper No 03/09**

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Affordable Housing in NSW: Past to Present by John Wilkinson, Briefing Paper No. 14/05

**ISSN 1325-5142**

**ISBN 978-0-7313-1848-3**

April 2009

© 2009

Except to the extent of the uses permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including information storage and retrieval systems, without the prior written consent from the Librarian, New South Wales Parliamentary Library, other than by Members of the New South Wales Parliament in the course of their official duties.

# **Homelessness in NSW**

**by**

**Kathryn Simon**

## **NSW PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY RESEARCH SERVICE**

David Clune (MA, PhD, Dip Lib), Manager ..... (02) 9230 2484

Gareth Griffith (BSc (Econ) (Hons), LLB (Hons), PhD), Senior Research Officer,  
Politics and Government / Law.....(02) 9230 2356

Jason Arditi, (BA, LLB), Research Officer, Law..... (02) 9230 2768

Tom Edwards (BSc (Hons)), Research Officer, Environment.....(02) 9230 3085

Kathryn Simon (BA, LLB (Hons), LLM), Research Officer, Law...(02) 9230 2003

Stewart Smith (BSc (Hons), MELGL), Research Officer, Environment  
..... (02) 9230 2798

John Wilkinson (MA, PhD), Research Officer, Economics.....(02) 9230 2006

**Should Members or their staff require further information about  
this publication please contact the author.**

Information about Research Publications can be found on the Internet  
at:

[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/WEB\\_FEED/PHWebContent.nsf/PHPages/LibraryPublications](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/WEB_FEED/PHWebContent.nsf/PHPages/LibraryPublications)

Advice on legislation or legal policy issues contained in this paper is provided for  
use in parliamentary debate and for related parliamentary purposes. This paper  
is not professional legal opinion.

## CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	DEFINING HOMELESSNESS	4
2.1	The development of the definition of homelessness .....	4
2.2	The cultural definition of homelessness .....	5
2.3	The SAAP definition of homelessness .....	6
2.4	International obligations .....	7
3.	THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN NSW	8
4.	CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE	11
4.1	Age.....	11
4.1.1	Young people.....	11
4.1.2	Older people .....	14
4.2	Gender .....	15
4.3	Indigenous People .....	17
5.	CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS	19
5.1	Three pathways into homelessness.....	19
5.2	Five pathways into homelessness.....	20
6.	HOMELESSNESS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE	24
6.1	USA.....	24
6.1.1	New York .....	25
6.1.2	Los Angeles .....	26
6.2	UK.....	27
6.3	SCOTLAND .....	30
7.	RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HOMELESSNESS POLICY	33
7.1	The White Paper .....	33
7.2	Developments in NSW .....	35
8.	CONCLUSION	39
	APPENDIX A	41



## SUMMARY

This Briefing Paper considers the issue of Homelessness in NSW. It provides a brief overview of the key changes to homelessness policy that were introduced in December 2008 by the Federal Government's White Paper. The White Paper sets two key goals, namely halving homelessness by 2020 and offering supported accommodation to all "rough sleepers" who require it by 2020. The response to the White Paper has been generally positive. Representatives of the NGO sector have commented that the strategy is based on a realistic assessment of the causes of homelessness, sets long terms goals and allocates resources accordingly. Comments have also been made that the White Paper's focus on the prevention of homelessness mirrors best practice developments overseas in countries such as the USA and UK. [1]

The NSW Government is also developing a Strategic Framework to guide the future of NSW policy with respect to homelessness. The Draft Strategic Framework into Homelessness was released in May 2008 and the Final Action Plan is due to be finalized later this year. The Draft Strategic Framework responds to the NSW Auditor-General's "Responding to Homelessness" Report, tabled in Parliament in May 2007. The NSW Parliament's Public Accounts Committee also recently released a report in March 2009 examining the responses to the 2007 Auditor-General's report. The Legislative Council's Social Issues Committee is also considering the issue through its Inquiry into homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation. [1]

The second section of the Briefing Paper provides a brief discussion about the different definitions of homelessness. For example, it considers the cultural definition of homelessness that has been developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie, which defines homelessness in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness. According to Chamberlain and MacKenzie's definition, primary homelessness refers to being roofless and includes "rough sleeping". Secondary homelessness includes people moving between different forms of shelter, including people staying with friends, relatives, in emergency or transitional accommodation or boarding houses. Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis. The other well recognized definition of homelessness in Australia is the definition in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 (Cth). [2]

The third section of the Briefing Paper considers the number and location of homeless people in Australia and NSW. Data from the last Census in 2006 published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its "Counting the Homeless Report", indicated that at the time of the last Census, there were approximately 104,676 people who were counted as homelessness, with approximately 27,374

people counted as homeless in NSW. There were also approximately 16,375 people who were “sleeping rough” in Australia on the night of the Census and approximately 3,715 people “sleeping rough” in NSW. The City of Sydney also recently conducted a street count of people “sleeping rough” on 17 February 2009. It found that there were 340 people “sleeping rough” in the CBD and surrounding suburbs, including Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Paddington, Glebe, Surry Hills, Ultimo and Redfern. The highest numbers of “rough sleepers” were located in the suburb of Woolloomooloo, followed by Kings Cross. The City of Sydney “Winter Street Count” in August 2008 counted 354 “rough sleepers”. Homelessness also impacts on people in the outer suburbs as well as rural and regional areas. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has highlighted that only 26% of “rough sleepers” live in capital cities. Recent statistics released by the Homeless Persons Information Centre have indicated an increase in the number of calls on their service from people living in suburbs such as Campbelltown and Liverpool. Recent media reports have also commented on the number of homeless people in suburbs such as Hornsby, where a new Homelessness Taskforce has been established to address the problem. [3]

The fourth section of the Briefing Paper provides an overview of some of the characteristics of homeless people. The age of the homeless population is much younger than it was 40 to 50 years ago and a significant proportion of the homeless population is 18 years and under. The problem of youth homelessness has become an increasingly important issue, which was considered in the 2008 National Youth Commission Report. Even though the homeless population appears to have become younger over recent years, older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have specific needs for housing and support. Research has also suggested that there will be increasing demand for housing assistance for older people in future years, particularly services that assist older people with independent living. Furthermore, a significant number of homeless people are female. Statistics also indicate that there are a large number of single parent families who are homeless. Commentators have suggested that one of the causes of an increase in the number of women who are homeless may include domestic violence. Furthermore, Indigenous people are over-represented in the homeless population and their experience of homelessness is often different to Non-Indigenous people due to their understanding of what constitutes “home”. [4]

The next section of the Briefing Paper discusses the causes of homelessness. As stated by the Prime Minister: “Homelessness is not just the result of too few houses - its causes are many and varied. Domestic violence, a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia”. The Mental Health Council of Australia also released a report in March 2009 that highlighted that mental illness is a significant issue impacting on homeless people. Research has also suggested that out of these people who had reported as being homeless at least once in their lives, more than half had experienced a mental disorder in the previous twelve months. Commentators have highlighted that it is important to

understand the process by which people become homeless in order to effectively address the issue. Furthermore, a number of typologies have been developed to understand the process by which people become homeless. For example, Chamberlain and MacKenzie have developed a “pathways” or “careers” approach in order to understand this process. [5]

Homelessness is also not a problem that is confined to NSW. Policies and programs developed overseas have informed the development of those in NSW. Accordingly, the sixth section of the Briefing Paper considers homelessness in comparative perspective, drawing from case studies in the USA, UK and Scotland. For example, an organization called the Common Ground in New York developed a project to assist homeless people who had been homeless for more than nine months move into stable housing with services such as mental health counselling, job training and financial management. The initial “Street-to-Home” project involved creating self contained units near Times Square to house homeless people in stable accommodation as an alternative to temporary or transitional housing. The project was based on the assumption that people need stability and support to address the issues that contribute to their situation of homelessness. Similar initiatives have been developed in South Australia and more recently NSW, through a partnership between Mercy Foundation, Housing NSW, The City of Sydney, KPMG and others. This model of supported housing aims to provide permanent, socially integrated housing to the chronically homeless through stable housing as well as the provision of services. Other developments in countries such as Scotland and the UK indicate a shift in focus towards the prevention of homelessness. [6]

The next section of the Briefing Paper discusses the White Paper (December 2008) and Green Paper (May 2008). This section of the Briefing Paper provides an overview of the three strategic directions for homelessness policy and the ten key principles that will guide the future direction of policy making with respect to homelessness until 2020. This section of the Briefing Paper also discusses the NSW Auditor-General’s report about homelessness, which was tabled in 2007. The Report found that despite the establishment of initiatives such as the Partnership Against Homelessness, it could not determine how the NSW Government was responding to homelessness because there were no statewide performance indicators or targets on homelessness. The Auditor-General noted that while there were a number of local initiatives where government and community agencies work together to deliver services to homeless people, they were not supported by central policies. Accordingly, the Auditor-General recommended that agencies adopt a more strategic, collaborative and comprehensive approach to homelessness. As already mentioned, subsequent to the Auditor-General’s Report, the NSW Government released its Draft Strategic Framework into Homelessness in May 2008. The Final Action Plan, which is the second and final stage of the two-stage process of developing a NSW Strategic Framework into Homelessness is due to be finalized later this year. Furthermore, in

March 2009 the NSW Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee released its "Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007", which included the "Responding to Homelessness" report. In its report, the Committee noted that many of the Auditor-General's comments have been incorporated into the NSW Draft Strategic Framework. However, the Committee specifically recommended that the Area Health Services and Local Courts review the extent to which homeless people access their services, develop new ways of delivering services to the homeless, and consider homeless people when planning new services. [7]

The Briefing Paper concludes with some general comments about the impact of the current economic situation on homelessness and the Federal Government's economic stimulus package with respect to social housing in NSW. It also makes a general observation about the need to understand the complex and interrelated causes of homelessness in order to develop effective strategies to address the issue. For example, the importance of developing programs to address issues such as domestic violence and mental illness, which are closely linked to experiences of homelessness. [8]

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent months, there have been a number of key changes in State and Federal policies towards homelessness. On 21 December 2008, the Federal Government released the White Paper titled “The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness”.<sup>1</sup> The White Paper provides a new national plan to address homelessness, committing an additional \$1.2 billion over the next four years, including \$800 million for support services for homeless people and \$400 million on accommodation, which is an increase in funding of 55%.<sup>2</sup> This is the first stage of a twelve-year plan to halve homelessness by 2020 and eliminate “rough sleeping”.<sup>3</sup> The White Paper provides three key strategies, namely “turning off the tap” through services that will intervene early to prevent homelessness; improving and expanding services so that they are more connected and responsive; and breaking the cycle of homelessness.<sup>4</sup> As part of the reforms, a new National Affordable Housing Agreement also commenced in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

There have been a number of different responses to the White Paper. The leader of the Federal Opposition promised bipartisan support and commented on the need to provide people with jobs to prevent homelessness.<sup>6</sup> Sue Cripps of Homelessness NSW described the White Paper as providing a “strong policy framework and a down payment on funds to focus efforts over the coming years”.<sup>7</sup> The Salvation Army commented that the White Paper “provides a framework of protection and models for effective intervention during the global economic downturn and will assist in minimizing effects on disadvantaged Australians”.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Australian Government, *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, December 2008; The Prime Minister, “Government launches 12 year plan to reduce homelessness in Australia”, Media Release, 21 December 2008.

<sup>2</sup> John Stapleton, “Rudd’s homeless vow ‘ambitious’”, *The Australian*, 22 December 2008; Sharri Markson, “Federal Government to halve number of homeless people”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 December 2008.

<sup>3</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p viii.

<sup>4</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p ix.

<sup>5</sup> The Council of Australian Governments, *National Affordable Housing Agreement Fact Sheet* at [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/20081129\\_national\\_affordable\\_housing\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/20081129_national_affordable_housing_factsheet.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Damien Murphy and Mark Metherell, “Rudd’s vow to homeless called bold, visionary”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Homelessness NSW, “Release of the Road Home – a National Approach to Ending Homelessness”, heralds a new era in the development of services for homeless people, Media Release, 21 December 2008.

<sup>8</sup> The Salvation Army, “Real Christmas Cheer for the Homeless”, Media Release, 22 December 2008.

Kevin Crowe, the President of the National Youth Accommodation Association stated that the White Paper “suggests a range of new opportunities which will build on and enhance the foundational and critical work that has been done by youth homeless services over the last three decades”.<sup>9</sup> Tony Nicholson from the Brotherhood of St Laurence said that it was by far the most substantial commitment to tackling homelessness ever seen in Australia, stating that the goals of eliminating “rough sleeping” and halving homelessness are far more ambitious and visionary than anything he had seen in comparable countries”.<sup>10</sup> He continued to state that the “focus on prevention is most welcome and long overdue. Half of this massive increase in resources goes to prevention, and that’s where we will see the greatest impact on overall homeless numbers”.<sup>11</sup> The policy was also described as being based on a realistic assessment of the causes of homelessness and adequately resourced.<sup>12</sup>

Since the release of the White Paper, there have been reports that the number of homeless families in NSW has increased by 51%.<sup>13</sup> A total number of 22,500 people sought immediate help from the Department of Housing in 2007/2008.<sup>14</sup> These figures indicated that immediate housing assistance increased by over 7,600 in 2007/2008, which was an increase of 643 a month compared to the previous year.<sup>15</sup> The Minister for Housing, the Hon David Borger MP stated that “Increasingly, we’re having people who’ve been renting a property, the mortgage has been foreclosed and sold and they just can’t find a place in their local neighborhood”. Even though the Minister for Housing suggested that this trend pre-dated the economic downturn, he continued to say that he expects more people to become homeless because of unemployment in the next 12 months.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, The City of Sydney’s Homeless Persons’ Information Centre (HPIC) recently reported an increase in the number of callers who had become homeless

---

<sup>9</sup> Youth Accommodation Association, “Youth homeless services in NSW give the ‘thumbs up’ for the Prime Minister’s white paper on homelessness”, Media Release, 21 December 2008.

<sup>10</sup> The Brotherhood of St Laurence, “Homelessness White Paper: a bold coherent strategy”, 21 December 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “22,500 people in NSW lost their homes last year”, The Australian, 4 March 2009.

<sup>14</sup> The Minister for Housing, The Hon David Borger MP, “Statistics show more people needing housing help”, Media Release, 4 March 2009; Gemma Jones, “Families lose their jobs and homes”, The Daily Telegraph, 4 March 2009; “22,500 people in NSW lost their homes last year”, The Australian, 4 March 2009.

<sup>15</sup> ABC News, “Charity ‘forced to turn away homeless families’”, 4 March 2009; “Homelessness surges in NSW”, ABC News, 4 March 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

due to eviction because they were unable to meet rent or loan repayments.<sup>17</sup> The HPIC data for the last two years shows that more callers said that eviction was a primary reason for homelessness. The other reasons included family breakdown, substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence. The largest number of callers said that Surry Hills was their last place of residence, which is where a significant number of services are provided to homeless people. Further, the number of callers from the South Western suburbs of Campbelltown and Liverpool rose significantly.<sup>18</sup> The Lord Mayor, Clover Moore MP suggested that this trend is consistent with the current economic crisis.<sup>19</sup> It was also recently reported that welfare agencies are experiencing a greater demand for their services from the outer suburbs as a result of the economic downturn.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the issue of homelessness in NSW, the NSW Government is currently developing a Strategic Framework in response to the 2007 report by the NSW Auditor-General.<sup>21</sup> The Draft Strategic Framework was released in May 2008 and the final framework is due to be released during this year.<sup>22</sup> The NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues is also conducting an Inquiry into homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation, examining the policies and programs (outside of mainstream public housing) that are being implemented to reduce homelessness and increase the availability of key worker accommodation and low-cost rental accommodation.<sup>23</sup> The Committee is due to provide a final report to NSW Parliament in September 2009.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Angela Saurine, "Economic Crisis brings the new homeless", The Daily Telegraph, 16 March 2009; The City of Sydney, "Housing repayment problems top of list for homelessness", Media Release, 16 March 2009; Paul Bibby, "Cash problems now main reason for living rough", The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 March 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; See also "Homelessness a "catastrophe": Abbott", The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 March 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Oscar McLaren, "Homeless numbers surge as nights get colder", ABC News, 18 March 2009; The Hornsby and Upper North Shore Advocate, "Homeless in Hornsby – the figures will surprise you", 9 December 2008; NSWPD, 11 November 2008 at p 11141; NSWPD, 13 March 2009 at p 13508.

<sup>21</sup> The Audit Office of NSW, Auditor-General's Report Performance Audit: Responding to Homelessness, May 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee, Report on Examination of the Auditor General's Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007, Responding to Homelessness, Connecting with Public Transport, Dealing with Household Burglaries and Government Advertising, Report No. 5/54 (168) - March 2009; Alex Arnold, "Rees' pledge to act against homelessness commended", Illawarra Mercury, 9 September 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, Inquiry into Homelessness and Low-Cost Rental Accommodation, Media Release, 4 December 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, Inquiry into Homelessness and Low-Cost Rental Accommodation, Terms of Reference, 3 December 2008.

## 2. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

### 2.1 The development of the definition of homelessness

Homelessness is not a new problem, however, the notion of what constitutes homelessness has changed over time and has been the subject of much debate.<sup>25</sup> A number of academic commentators have attempted to categorize these changes. Anne Coleman has suggested that there are “four waves” of literature defining homelessness.<sup>26</sup> According to Coleman, the “first wave” of literature about the definition of homelessness developed after World War Two and focused on single, older white males with alcohol problems living in cheap hotels and boarding houses as emergency accommodation.<sup>27</sup> During this period, homelessness was understood as a permanent way of life that was brought about by the characteristics of the homeless person rather than a process influenced by a number of different individual and structural factors.<sup>28</sup>

According to Coleman, the “second wave” of literature began to recognize the complexity and diversity of homelessness as well as that homelessness impacts on other social groups including women, children and families.<sup>29</sup> The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released the Burdekin Report in 1989, which contributed to a shift in understandings about homelessness and brought attention to the issue of youth homelessness.<sup>30</sup> According to Anne Coleman, the “third wave” of literature developed an understanding of homelessness that was based on service delivery definitions of homelessness, for example the definition of homelessness which is provided in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 (Cth) (the SAAP Act).<sup>31</sup> Finally, the “fourth wave” of literature re-evaluated

---

<sup>25</sup> Carole Zufferey and Donna Chung, *Representations of Homelessness in the Australian Print Media: Some Implications for Social Policy*, *Just Policy*, December 2006, No 42 at pp 33 - 38; Chris Chamberlain and Guy Johnson, *The Debate About Homelessness*, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, (2001) 36(1) at pp 35 - 49; Sophie Watson, *Homelessness Revisited: New Reflections on Old Paradigms*, *Urban Justice Conference Papers, Urban Policy and Research*, (2000) 18(2) at pp 159 - 170; Chris Chamberlain & David MacKenzie, ‘*Understanding Contemporary Homelessness: Issues of Definition and Meaning*’, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* (1992) 27(4) at pp 274 - 297.

<sup>26</sup> Anne Coleman, *Five star motels: spaces, places and homelessness in Fortitude Valley Brisbane*, Phd Thesis, The University of Queensland (2000) at p 22.

<sup>27</sup> The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Australia’s Welfare Report (2003)* at p 289; David MacKenzie and Chris Chamberlain, *Homeless Careers: Pathways in and out of homelessness*, A report from the Counting the Homeless 2001 project, funded by all state and territory governments and the Salvation Army, May 2003 at p iv.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> AIHW, *Australia’s Welfare Report (2003)* at p 389; Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) at pp 278 - 279.

<sup>30</sup> The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Our Homeless Children (1989)* (The Burdekin Report); Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) at p 279.

<sup>31</sup> AIHW, *Australia’s Welfare Report (2003)* at p 391.

the earlier narrow definition of homelessness and renewed debate about traditional understandings of homelessness.<sup>32</sup> During this period, Chamberlain and MacKenzie developed a cultural understanding of homelessness, which is discussed further in the next section of this Briefing Paper.<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that in Australia there are two widely accepted definitions of homelessness, namely the cultural definition and the definition contained in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act 1994.<sup>34</sup> Both of these understandings of homelessness are discussed in more detail below.

## 2.2 The cultural definition of homelessness

Chamberlain and Mackenzie developed what has been called the cultural definition of homelessness. This definition identifies shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have a right to expect according to the conventions and expectations of culture. Cultural standards are embedded in the housing practices of a society. According to the cultural definition:

- **Primary Homelessness:** this category conceptualizes homelessness as being roofless. It includes all people without conventional accommodation, for example, people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.
- **Secondary Homelessness:** this category includes people moving between various forms of temporary shelter. It includes people staying with friends, relatives, in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Program and boarding houses.
- **Tertiary Homelessness:** this category refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis (13 weeks or longer). These people do not have a bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure and are categorised as homeless because their accommodation situation is below the minimum community standard.<sup>35</sup>

There is also an additional fourth category of homelessness, namely marginal residents of caravan parks who use caravan parks as alternatives to boarding houses outside of capital cities.<sup>36</sup> In 2006, there were a total of 5,104 people in

---

<sup>32</sup> AIHW, Australia's Welfare Report (2003) at p 390.

<sup>33</sup> AIHW, Australia's Welfare Report (2003) at p 389; Chamberlain & MacKenzie, (1992) at p 274.

<sup>34</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counting the Homeless (2006) at p 1; Census data was last collected in 2001 and 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) at p 291; ABS, Counting the Homeless Report (2006) at pp vii - xi.

<sup>36</sup> Chamberlain and Johnson (2001) at p 43.

NSW in this category.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, 71% of people in this category were located in regional centres, country towns and remote locations and 29% were in capital cities in Australia.<sup>38</sup> It has been highlighted that although the majority of homeless people live in the cities, the rate of homelessness in rural and regional areas is very high.<sup>39</sup> It has also been suggested that homelessness is characterised by constant movement between different types of accommodation and that the categorisation of homeless people into primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness does not always clearly show this mobility.<sup>40</sup>

### 2.3 The SAAP definition of homelessness

The primary response to homelessness in Australia is through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, which is a joint Commonwealth and State program to help those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.<sup>41</sup> The SAAP definition of homelessness is provided in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Act 1994 (the SAAP Act). The SAAP definition of homelessness was developed to inform the delivery of services to homeless people, including those who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Section 4(1) of the SAAP Act defines homelessness as follows:

For the purposes of this Act, a person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.

Section 4(2) of the SAAP Act continues to state that:

For the purposes of this Act, a person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which the person has access:

- (a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
- (b) threatens the person's safety; or
- (c) marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
  - (i) adequate personal amenities; or
  - (ii) the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
- (d) places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.

---

<sup>37</sup> ABS (2006) at p xi.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The Law and Justice Foundation, *No Home, No Justice? The Legal Needs of Homeless People in NSW*, July 2005 at p 38.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ABS (2006) at p 1.

This definition takes into account how people evaluate their housing situations and has been used to define service delivery by welfare agencies to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## 2.4 International obligations

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 recognises that every person has the right to adequate housing. General Comment 4, of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that adequate housing can include a range of factors. Some of these factors include:

- Legal security of tenure;
- Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure;
- Affordability;
- Habitability;
- Accessibility;
- Location;
- Cultural adequacy.<sup>42</sup>

In 2006, the United National Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing identified a number of issues related to housing and homelessness, including the existence of laws that disproportionately impact on homeless people.<sup>43</sup> Further, the Special Rapporteur commented on the widespread problem of homelessness in Australia, the lack of affordable housing, dwindling public housing stock, long waiting periods for access to public housing and inadequate provisions for long term safe housing, particularly in rural areas. He also commented that there appears to be a serious national housing crisis in Australia through the lack of affordable housing, which particularly impacts the most vulnerable people. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's submission to the Federal Government's Green Paper also highlighted that homeless people are impacted by certain legislation, for example the "move on" powers in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 (NSW).<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Homelessness is a Human Rights Issue (2008); Alison G Aggarwal, UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing: strengthening gendered norms for the right to adequate housing, *Australian Journal of Human Rights* (2004) 10(2) at p 8.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kathari, A/HRC/4/18/Add.2, 11 May 2007; United Nations, UN Expert on Adequate Housing Concludes His Visit To Australia, Identifies Hidden National Housing Crisis, 23 August 2006.

<sup>44</sup> The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Submission to the Green Paper, *Which Way Home?* 4 July 2008; Cassandra Goldie, Housing and Homelessness, What's Human Rights got to do with it? Paper presented at the Homelessness and Human Rights Seminar, 7 April 2008; Cassandra Goldie, Living in Public Space: A Human Rights Wasteland, *Alternative Law Journal* (2002) 27(6) at p 277;

### 3. THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN NSW

There are two main sources of data that provide information about the number of people who are homeless, namely data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated using Census and data calculated through SAAP data records.<sup>45</sup> According to the most recent “Counting the Homeless” report that was published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, on Census night in 2006 there were an estimated 104,676 people who were homeless, compared to 99,900 people in 2001.<sup>46</sup> At the time of both Census counts the rate of homelessness was 53 per 10,000 of the population in Australia.<sup>47</sup>

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has highlighted that there are two ways of calculating the geographic spread of homeless people in Australia. It has calculated the number of homeless people in each state in Australia on the night of the Census in 2006 and also the number of homeless people in each state as a rate per 10,000 of the population. These calculations enable a comparison between states and territories of different population size. For example, NSW will always have a higher number of homeless people than smaller states such as Tasmania. However, the rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population may be closer in difference.<sup>48</sup>

According to the Census data, NSW has one of the highest numbers of homeless people yet one of the lowest rates of homelessness in Australia when comparing its size of population with the other states.<sup>49</sup> The statistics indicate that the rate of homelessness is lower in the southern states such as NSW, Victoria and the ACT and higher in states such as the Northern Territory. This is a different picture of the spread of homelessness across Australia to what was previously understood, when it was assumed that the homeless population was distributed across the Australian population in the same way as the general population.<sup>50</sup> The following table shows the rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population for each state in Australia in both 2001 and 2006:

---

The Law and Justice Foundation, *No Home, No Justice?* (2005) at Chapter 4; Jane Sanders, *The Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act* (the more things change, the more they stay the same?), Paper presented at the Aboriginal Legal Service Conference, 2006; See also The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, *Special Police Powers during APEC Conference*, July 2007.

<sup>45</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 3; See also See also Australian Parliamentary Library, ‘There’s no home-like place’ - Homelessness in Australia, E Brief, 9 November 2000.

<sup>46</sup> ABS (2006) at p vii.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> ABS (2006) at p x.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> ABS (2006) at p 34.

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	42	42	69	68	53	53	248	42	53
2001	42	44	70	64	52	52	288	40	53

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 2001 and 2006; SAAP Client Collection, 2001 and 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001 and 2006. Published in ABS (2006) at p x.

The following table shows the number of homeless people in each state in Australia at the time of the 2006 Census:

	NSW	Vic	Qld	Wa	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	27,374	20,511	26,782	13,391	7,962	2,507	4,785	1,364	104,676

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students. Published in ABS (2006) at p x.

On Census night 2006, there were 16,375 people who were “sleeping rough” in Australia and 3,715 people “sleeping rough” in NSW (primary homelessness according to Chamberlain and MacKenzie’s definition).<sup>51</sup> Homelessness is not only a problem in the inner city but also the outer suburbs as well as the rural and regional areas.<sup>52</sup> As stated in the White Paper, 62% of “rough sleepers” in the 2006 Census count were located in rural and remote areas.<sup>53</sup> The number of people who were characterized as “rough sleepers” by state and region is provided in the following table:

	Capital Cities	Regional Centres	Rural and Remote	Total	Capital Cities	Regional Centres	Rural and Remote	Rate per 10,000
	No	No	No	No	%	%	%	No
NSW	1,182	547	1,986	3,715	32	15	53	6
VIC	845	245	1,114	2,204	38	11	51	4
QLD	591	792	3,782	5,165	12	15	73	13
WA	767	207	1,418	2,392	32	9	59	12
SA	251	16	581	848	30	2	68	5
TAS	125	34	226	385	32	9	59	7
NT	488	144	956	1,588	31	9	60	75
ACT	78	0	0	78	100	0	0	3
AUST	4,327	1,985	10,063	16,375	26	12	62	8

Source: Department of Families, Housing, Community and Indigenous Affairs, unpublished table form from ABS Census 2006 data. Published in the White Paper (2008) at p 4.

<sup>51</sup> The White Paper (2008) at pp 3 - 4.

<sup>52</sup> The Law and Justice Foundation, No Home, No Justice? (2005) at Chapter 3; See also NSWPD, 11 November 2008 at p 11141 and NSWPD, 13 March 2009 at p 13508; The Law and Justice Foundation, No Home, No Justice? (2005) at Chapter 3.

<sup>53</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 41.

Further statistics provided by the NSW Bureau of Statistics are included in **Appendix A** of this Briefing Paper. These statistics provide the approximate number of homeless people who were in Chamberlain and MacKenzie's category of primary homelessness during the 2006 Census according to Local Government Area in NSW.<sup>54</sup> Apart from the City of Sydney Local Government Area, examples of other areas with significant numbers of homeless people included areas such as Walgett, which is located in the North West of NSW and has a relatively large Indigenous population.<sup>55</sup>

As recently as February 2009, The City of Sydney conducted a street count as part of the City of Sydney's Homelessness Strategy 2007-2012. The Street Count found that there were 340 people "sleeping rough" in the CBD and surrounding suburbs including Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Paddington, Glebe, Surry Hills, Ultimo and Redfern. This number of people included people sleeping in parks, streets, trains, train stations and overnight temporary accommodation. It excluded the 424 people found in homelessness hostel beds and the 27 people who were found in hospital beds. According to the Street Count, a total of 791 people were counted as experiencing homelessness in the City of Sydney Local Government Area, not including those in accommodation such as squats or boarding houses. The highest numbers of "rough sleepers" were located in the suburb of Woolloomooloo, followed by Kings Cross.<sup>56</sup> In August 2008, a Winter Street Count conducted by the City of Sydney counted 866 people as "sleeping rough" or occupying government funded homelessness hostel beds or health facility beds in the City of Sydney Local Government Area. Of the 866 people, 41% or 354 people were categorized as "rough sleepers"; 54% occupied government funded homelessness hostel beds and 5% were in St Vincent's Hospital health facilities located in the inner-city area.<sup>57</sup> The next City of Sydney Street Count is due to be carried out in August 2009.

---

<sup>54</sup> Personal email communication with the Australian Bureau of Statistics dated 13 March 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Reiny Iriana et al, Legal Needs Survey in Disadvantaged Areas: Walgett, The Law and Justice Foundation, Paper 9, September 2008.

<sup>56</sup> The City of Sydney, "City Street Count finds less rough sleepers this summer", Media Release, 9 March 2009.

<sup>57</sup> The City of Sydney Street Count at <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Community/HomelessnessServices/StreetCount.asp>.

## 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

As highlighted in the Law and Justice Foundation's Report, which was published in 2005, homeless people are not a homogenous group. They include a range of different types of people, including men, women, young people and children living in both cities and rural areas across NSW.<sup>58</sup>

### 4.1 Age

According to Census data, the age of the homeless population is younger than it was 40 to 50 years ago.<sup>59</sup> The statistics from the 2006 Census indicated that 21% of homeless people in Australia were aged between 12 and 18 years old and 10% of homeless people were young adults between the ages of 19 and 24 years old.<sup>60</sup>

The following table shows the age of homeless people at the time of the 2001 and 2006 Census counts:

Age Group	2001	2006	Change from 2001 (%)
Under 12	9,941	12,133	22
12-18 years	26,060	21,940	-16
19-24 years	10,113	10,504	4
25-34 years	16,567	15,804	-5
35-44 years	12,992	13,981	8
45-54 years	10,349	12,206	18
55-64 years	7,883	10,708	36
65 or older	5,995	7,400	23
Total	99,900	104,676	5

Source: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, unpublished table from ABS Census 2001 and 2006 data. Published in the White Paper (2008) at p 5.

#### 4.1.1 Young people

The number of homeless young people has doubled since the Burdekin Report in 1989.<sup>61</sup> However, the statistics indicate that the number of homeless young people aged between 12 and 18 years old decreased by 21% between 2001 and 2006.<sup>62</sup> Young people are also the largest users of specialist homeless services.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> The Law and Justice Foundation (2005) at p 1.

<sup>59</sup> ABS (2006) at p 27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; See also Adele Horin, "Homeless Youth: a nation's shame", The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 April 2008; See also the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre's Submission to the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness, June 2007.

<sup>62</sup> ABS (2006) at p xi; The National Youth Commission, Australia's Homeless Youth: A Report of the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness, 2008 at p 68.

The following table shows the change in the number of homeless young people between 2001 and 2006:

	2001	2006
	No	No
NSW	6,242	4,987
Vic	4,663	3,896
Qld	6,381	4,469
WA	3,508	4,280
SA	2,394	2,129
Tas	1,008	770
ACT	400	307
NT	1,464	1,102
Australia	26,060	21,940

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, SAAP Client Collection in 2001 and National Census of Homeless School Students 2006 and SAAP Client Collection, 2006. The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 67 - 68.

In the National Youth Commission Report (2008) and Youth Homelessness in 2006 (2008) by Chamberlain and MacKenzie, the following general observations were made about youth homelessness in Australia:

- 67% of homeless students were from blended or single parent families, whereas only 15% of homeless students were from families with both biological parents;<sup>64</sup>
- Indigenous young people are more at risk of homelessness than Non-Indigenous youth;<sup>65</sup>
- Young people with a background in state-care are over-represented in the youth homeless population. The 2006 Census of school students found that approximately 15% of homeless students may have had an experience in state care;<sup>66</sup>
- Young people who are homeless have mental illness at a higher rate than the general population.<sup>67</sup> The National Youth Commission has suggested that mental health issues can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 4.

<sup>64</sup> David MacKenzie and Chris Chamberlain, Youth Homelessness 2006, Youth Studies (2008) 27(1) at pp 17 - 25.

<sup>65</sup> The National Youth Commission Report (2008) at p 165.

<sup>66</sup> Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, Youth Homelessness in Australia 2006, The Counting the Homeless 2006 Project, Melbourne, 2008; The National Youth Commission Report (2008) at pp 127 - 128.

<sup>67</sup> The National Youth Commission Report (2008) at pp 139 - 142.

<sup>68</sup> The National Youth Commission Report (2008) at pp 141 - 144.

There has also been a significant amount of research about the causes of youth homelessness.<sup>69</sup> As stated by the National Youth Commission, explanations for homelessness tend to be constructed either in terms of micro “individual” issues or macro “structural” factors. Individual factors include sexual, physical or emotional abuse, conflict within families, mental health and drug problems or a disability. Structural factors are factors such as the local labor market, the availability and affordability of housing, the operation of government programs and services and institutions such as care and protection, juvenile justice and drug and alcohol treatment.<sup>70</sup> The National Youth Commission suggested that both structural and individual factors impact on the lives of young people and it commented that “policy must address larger structural issues while at the same time provide support and assistance to individual homeless youth with attention to how much needs to be done to make a significant difference”.<sup>71</sup>

Chamberlain and MacKenzie have also identified “pathways” or “careers” into homelessness by young people and identified family breakdown as a major factor contributing to homelessness.<sup>72</sup> The development of a conceptualization of youth homelessness as a process has contributed to an understanding of homelessness as a dynamic rather than a static process.<sup>73</sup> As stated by the National Youth Commission: “Youth homelessness does not involve a particular type of person but a process of events that happen in a young person’s life”.<sup>74</sup> This understanding of youth homelessness has contributed to the development of policy-making, for example there has been an increase in early intervention services such as the “Reconnect Program”, which is a program that was established in 1998 and is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to provide services such as counselling, mediation and practical support to families.<sup>75</sup> The program aims to address the underlying reasons for a person leaving home, for example family conflict, family separation,

---

<sup>69</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003); Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Youth Homelessness: Four Policy Proposals*, AHURI Final Report No 69, September 2004; Guy Johnson and Chris Chamberlain, *From Youth to Adult Homelessness*, *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, (2008) 43(4) at pp 563 - 582; Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2008); *Homelessness and Children, Parity*, (2008) 21(8); The National Youth Commission (2008) at Chapter 5.

<sup>70</sup> The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 69.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> The National Youth Commission (2008) at Chapter 5; Law and Justice Foundation (2005) at p 8; Johnson and Chamberlain (2008).

<sup>73</sup> The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 82.

<sup>74</sup> The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 75.

<sup>75</sup> *Reconnect Program Guidelines* at [http://www.facsia.gov.au/housing/reconnect\\_program\\_guidelines/p2.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/housing/reconnect_program_guidelines/p2.htm); The National Youth Commission (2008) at Chapter 13; Anne-Heintjes, *Responding to Homelessness*, AHURI, October 2005, Issue 66; *The White Paper* (2008) at p 90.

school related conflict, violence, poverty, drug use and mental health issues.<sup>76</sup> A recent review of the program showed that 79% of young people reported an improvement in their overall situation as a result of the program and 69% reported improvements in their family relationships.<sup>77</sup> The issues surrounding the causes of homelessness are considered in more detail in **Section 5** of this Briefing Paper.

#### 4.1.2 Older people

Even though the age of homeless people has become much younger, the number of older people who are homeless has increased, with over 18,000 people aged over 55 years, an increase of 4000 people since 2001.<sup>78</sup> Older people who are homeless also have specific needs for housing and support.<sup>79</sup> For example, in 2002/ 2003 Judd et al conducted a study about older people and homelessness.<sup>80</sup>

In their research, they comment that the ageing population means that there will be an increasing demand for housing assistance for older people in future years, in particular services that assist with independent living.<sup>81</sup> Morris, Judd and Kavanagh also argue that housing and services available to help this group of people are not sufficient.<sup>82</sup> In their study, Judd et al conclude that there is a “need to build on current preventative and early intervention strategies, such as improvements in program coordination, to ensure older people in need of housing and support services are identified and do not ‘slip through the net’”.<sup>83</sup>

Research has also been carried out about homelessness and older people from a comparative perspective. For example, Lipmann et al conducted a study of homelessness among older people in Australia, the UK and the USA.<sup>84</sup> They interviewed 125 older homeless men and women aged over 50 years old in

---

<sup>76</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 30.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 5.

<sup>79</sup> ABS (2006) at p ix; See also Meeting the Needs of the Elderly Homeless, Parity, 2008 21(7); AHURI, Older people in Public Housing: Policy and Management Issues, Issue 109, February 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Bruce Judd, Kay Kavanagh, Alan Morris and Yuvisthi Naidoo, Housing and support options for older people who are homeless, AHURI, Issue 61, August 2005; Alan Morris, Bruce Judd and Kay Kavanagh, The Older Homeless and Marginally Housed: The Forgotten Group, Parity, (2008) 27(7) at p 4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. See also AIHW, Older Australians at a glance, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Canberra, 2007 at p 2.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Judd et al (2005).

<sup>84</sup> Bryan Lipmann, Frances Mirabelli, Alice Rota-Bartelink, Homelessness among older people: a comparative study in three countries of prevention and alleviation, Wittringham (May 2004); AIHW, Housing Assistance in Australia, Canberra (2008) at p 49.

Melbourne and found that the factors most reported as contributing to homelessness included problems with the people with whom the participants lived, physical as well as mental health problems and problems associated with housing.<sup>85</sup> The caseworkers in the study reported that the most reported factors contributing to homelessness were problems with alcohol and physical and mental health factors.<sup>86</sup> A high prevalence of problem gambling was also reported amongst the participants of the research study.<sup>87</sup>

## 4.2 Gender

The 2006 Census statistics indicated that 56% of the homeless population is male and 44% of the homeless population is female.<sup>88</sup> The breakdown of the sex and age of the homeless population is provided in the following table:

	Under 12 years	12-18 years	19-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over	All
Male	52%	46%	53%	57%	63%	64%	61%	64%	56%
Female	48%	54%	47%	43%	37%	36%	39%	36%	44%

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students. Published in ABS (2006) at p 28.

Further, in 2006 approximately 72% of boarding house residents were male, compared with 28% who were female.<sup>89</sup> According to the Census statistics, 60% of people in improvised dwellings were male.<sup>90</sup> There are also a large number of single parent families who are homeless. For example, according to the 2006 Census, 80% of households in SAAP were single parent households.<sup>91</sup> The gender of people using homelessness services such as boarding houses and SAAP services is provided in the table below, which is based on the 2006 Census statistics:

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. See also Alice Rota-Bartelink, Newly Published Research Findings in Aged Homelessness, Parity, (2008) 21(7) at p 16.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> ABS (2006) at p 28.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> ABS (2006) at p 25.

	Boarding house	Friends or relatives	SAAP	Improvised dwellings	All
Male	72%	52%	47%	60%	56%
Female	28%	48%	53%	40%	44%

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, SAAP Client Collection and National Census of Homeless School Students. Published in ABS (2006) at p 28.

The “Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2006-2007 Australia” indicated that 61% of clients supported by SAAP were female.<sup>92</sup> It has been suggested that the high number of females who use SAAP services is due to their significance for women who are impacted on by domestic and family violence.<sup>93</sup> As stated in a recent media article:

When most people think of homelessness, they think of kids on the streets doing drugs, alcoholics nursing bottles of booze on park benches and people with mental illnesses wandering the streets begging for a gold coin. But concealed in the official statistics are large numbers of single mothers struggling to bring up children in the most dire of circumstances. Most homeless single mothers are in this situation not because they fall on bad financial times or have problems with addiction, but because they are the victims of domestic violence, the foremost cause of homelessness in Australia.<sup>94</sup>

According to the research of Chung et al, 87% of women who experience violence stay at home or in other accommodation rather than approaching a crisis service.<sup>95</sup>

In a research report prepared by Tually et al, it was highlighted that the provision of safe, secure and affordable housing and support, including outreach services is important when assisting women and children affected by domestic violence.<sup>96</sup> The Federal Government’s White Paper also specifically addressed the issue of

<sup>92</sup> AIHW, Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report, 2006-2007 Australia, July 2008 at p 17; See also ABS (2006) at p 28.

<sup>93</sup> AIHW (2008) at p 37; The White Paper (2008) at pp 5 - 7.

<sup>94</sup> Trish Bolton, “Homelessness and invisible: the broken families”, The Age, 29 December 2008. See also “Aussies urged to stop domestic violence”, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 2009.

<sup>95</sup> Donna Chung, Rosemary Kennedy, Bev O’Brien and Sarah Wendt, with assistance from S Cody, Home safe home: the link between domestic and family violence and women’s homelessness, The Social Policy Research Group of South Australia, November 2000 at p 32; See also the Law and Justice Foundation (2005) at p 26.

<sup>96</sup> Selina Tually et al, Women, Domestic and Family Violence and Homelessness: A Synthesis Report, Prepared for the Office of Women, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, August 2008 at p 3; See also Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse response to 2008, Which Way Home? A new approach to homelessness, Australian Government Green Paper, June 2008; Talina Drabsch, Domestic Violence in NSW, NSW Parliamentary Library Briefing Paper, No 07/ 07.

domestic violence and stated that future service models should include the following features:

- Specialist workers to carefully assess the safety and support needs for women and children to stay in their own homes;
- Funds that could be used to stabilize housing or increase home security for women and children, for example by installing deadlocks, screen doors, security lighting and home alarms or by providing short-term rental subsidies; and
- Integrated criminal justice, health and community service policies and protocols to support women and their children.<sup>97</sup>

The NSW Draft Strategic Framework also recognizes that domestic and family violence is a major cause of homelessness for women and children and includes actions to support this group.<sup>98</sup>

### 4.3 Indigenous People

Indigenous people are overrepresented in the homeless population. Overall 2.4% of people identified as Indigenous in the 2006 Census, however 9% of the homeless population were Indigenous.<sup>99</sup> Homelessness impacts Indigenous people in both urban and remote areas. Furthermore, 43% of Indigenous women in remote areas and 32% of Indigenous women in urban areas reported that domestic and family violence was their main reason for seeking SAAP assistance.<sup>100</sup> The following table represents Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in different segments of the homeless population:

	Boarding house	Friends or relatives	SAAP	Improvised dwellings	All
Non - Indigenous	94.2%	96.2%	80.3%	84.2%	90.9%
Indigenous	5.8%	3.8%	19.7%	15.8%	9.1%

Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing and SAAP Client Collection. Published in ABS (2006) at p 29.

Keys Young also identified five types of homelessness relating to Indigenous people:

<sup>97</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 33.

<sup>98</sup> NSW Government, Discussion Paper on NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework (2008) at p 25.

<sup>99</sup> ABS (2006) at p 29; See also AIHW, Homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients in SAAP 2006-2007, 12 February 2009 at p 289.

<sup>100</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 6; See also The Green Paper (2008) at p 26 and the NSW Government, Discussion Paper on NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework, 2008 at p 29.

- Spiritual forms of homelessness, which relate to separation from traditional land or from family;
- Overcrowding, a hidden form of homelessness, which is said to cause considerable stress and distress to Aboriginal families and communities;
- Relocation and transient homelessness, which results in temporary, intermittent and often cyclical patterns of homelessness due to transient and mobile lifestyles and also contributes to the necessity of a larger proportion of Indigenous people having to travel to obtain services;
- Escaping an unsafe or unstable home for their own safety or survival is another form of homelessness affecting large numbers of Indigenous people, especially women and young people;
- Lack of access to any stable shelter, accommodation or housing, literally having 'nowhere to go'.<sup>101</sup>

Keys Young identified a lack of access to secure and affordable housing as the major factor impacting on Indigenous homelessness.<sup>102</sup> The experience of homelessness by Indigenous people can also be different to the experience of Non-Indigenous people due to Indigenous cultural understandings of what constitutes "home".<sup>103</sup> The "Indigenous Homelessness within Australia" Report (2006) also highlighted the spiritual connection of Indigenous people to their land and country and the need to understand the impact of homelessness on Indigenous people in this context.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Keys Young (1998) at p 45; See also Paul Memmott et al, Final Report: Categories of Indigenous 'Homeless' People and Good Practice Responses to their Needs, AHURI, Queensland Research Centre, Brisbane 2003; The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous Homelessness within Australia, May 2006 at p 19.

<sup>102</sup> Keys Young (1998), cited in The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous Homelessness within Australia, May 2006 at p 3.

<sup>103</sup> Christina Birdsall-Jones and Wendy Shaw, Indigenous homelessness: place, house and home, AHURI, Positioning Paper No. 107, July 2008.

<sup>104</sup> The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous Homelessness within Australia, May 2006 at p 9; HREOC, Submission to the Green Paper on Homelessness, Which way home? 4 July 2008.

## 5. CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

One of the most important shifts in thinking about homelessness is the now widely accepted view that homelessness should be thought of as a process.<sup>105</sup> For example, prior to the Burdekin Report in 1989, youth homelessness was described in terms of what caused homelessness, the reasons why young people became homeless and the state of being homeless. However, in the early 1990s, Mackenzie and Chamberlain developed a sociological understanding of homelessness, proposing what they described as homelessness “careers” or “pathways”.<sup>106</sup> These terms refer to the process of change by which people become homeless and pass through various stages before they develop the self-identity of being a homeless person.<sup>107</sup> By using the term “homeless career”, Chamberlain and Mackenzie argue that there are a number of factors that influence how people move from one stage of homelessness to another, which has implications for the way in which policies are developed to combat homelessness.<sup>108</sup>

### 5.1 Three pathways into homelessness

In May 2003, Chamberlain and MacKenzie published a report in which they argued that there are three fundamental paths into homelessness, described as follows:

#### 5.1.1 Family breakdown career

The family breakdown career into homelessness arises from family and domestic violence. Chamberlain and MaKenzie note that conflict may go on for years before a victim leaves the home and also comment on the importance of protecting the victim once they have left the family home. A crisis response to family breakdown homelessness may include supporting victims of domestic violence move into alternative and secure accommodation.<sup>109</sup>

#### 5.1.2 Housing crisis career

This “career” refers to a situation where poverty and accumulated debt contribute to homelessness. This is often made worse when adults lose their accommodation. Early intervention strategies for this type of pathway into

---

<sup>105</sup> The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 77.

<sup>106</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain, *Homeless Careers: Pathways in and out of Homelessness, Counting the Homeless 2001 Project* (2003) at p iii.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*; See also Rodney Fopp, ‘Pathways’, ‘careers’ and ‘revolving doors’: an exploration of the social function of metaphors in homelessness discourse and research, *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Australasian Housing Researchers’ Conference*, 2007.

<sup>109</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) at p 38.

homelessness focus on providing assistance to people before they lose their accommodation. Other responses to this type of homelessness include financial counselling, emergency relief, or assistance with public housing.<sup>110</sup>

### 5.1.3 Youth career

The youth homeless career is a typology that was developed to describe the process into homelessness by young people. A majority of young people became homeless in their early to mid teenage years and during these years may have had issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health problems. A significant number of the young people in this “career” or “pathway” had experienced contact with the criminal justice system and were unemployed. In their study, MacKenzie and Chamberlain estimated that approximately half of the homeless young adults aged 19 to 24 years old entered the homeless population through a transition from youth to adult homelessness.<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, it has been highlighted that early intervention is important when considering strategies to address this particular path into homelessness.<sup>112</sup>

## 5.2 Five pathways into homelessness

In a more recent publication by Johnson et al, the authors conducted a study of 103 homeless households across Victoria and identified five pathways into homelessness as follows:<sup>113</sup>

- Mental health pathway: the major factors that shaped the experience of people in this pathway included social attitudes towards mental illness, difficulty meeting labor and housing demands and the extent of family support.<sup>114</sup>
- Domestic violence pathway: the key factors that were encountered by people on this pathway included violence, the stigma associated with domestic violence and low income due to poorer labor opportunities of women.<sup>115</sup>
- Housing crisis pathway: financial crisis contributed to the entry of this group

<sup>110</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) at p 30; AIHW Report (2003) at p 393.

<sup>111</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) at p vi.

<sup>112</sup> MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) at pp 13 and 45; The National Youth Commission (2008) at p 8; Johnson and Chamberlain, From Youth to Adult Homelessness, Australian Journal of Social Issues, (2008) 43(4) at p 563; See also Phil Crane, Developing the Practice of Early Intervention into Youth Homelessness, Early Intervention and Prevention: An Australian Focus, Parity, (2009) 22(2) at p 13.

<sup>113</sup> Johnson et al, On the Outside, Pathways in and out of homelessness, Australian Scholarly Publishing (2008).

<sup>114</sup> Johnson et al (2008) at p 14.

<sup>115</sup> Johnson et al (2008) at p 24.

into the homeless population. There were three typical ways through which housing crisis came about, namely job loss, sustained poverty and the gentrification of inner city household markets. According to Johnson et al, families accounted for 58% of the group on the housing crisis pathway, with sole parent families accounted for 79% of the group.<sup>116</sup>

- Substance use pathway: the study indicated that substance use was the entry into homelessness for only 17% of the group and 55% of the group reported substance use issues as one of the problems that emerged as a result of their experience of homelessness.<sup>117</sup>
- Youth pathway: 41 people who were interviewed reported that they had their first experience of homelessness before they were 18 years old. Accordingly, the author's discussion of this pathway considers the factors that mediate young people's entry into homelessness, for example family problems.<sup>118</sup>

Johnson et al also identified 'material and non material' structures that impact how people manage and experience homelessness. These are set out below:

Material Structures	Non-Material Structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing market conditions</li> <li>• Labor market conditions</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Deinstitutionalization</li> <li>• Homelessness service system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse childhood experiences</li> <li>• Family support</li> <li>• Homeless subculture</li> <li>• Stigma</li> </ul>

Source: Johnson et al, On the Outside: Pathways into homelessness at p 230

The Federal Government's recently released White Paper and previous Green Paper also highlighted a number of causes of homelessness, for example domestic violence, a shortage of affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown as well as drug and alcohol abuse.<sup>119</sup> The Green Paper provides a list of factors that increase the risk of homelessness, including the following:

- Housing stress, as a result of rising costs, eviction, mortgagee sales, unavailable or inadequate housing;
- Unemployment or insecure employment;
- Domestic and family violence;
- Family conflict, or a recent change in family structure;
- Mental illness;
- Being Indigenous;
- Being a refugee on a Temporary Protection Visa;

<sup>116</sup> Johnson et al (2008) at p 33.

<sup>117</sup> Johnson et al (2008) at p 44.

<sup>118</sup> Johnson et al (2008) at p 9 and p 58.

<sup>119</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p iii

- Being a disadvantaged young person;
- Legal problems;
- Any event that leads to further social and economic marginalization.<sup>120</sup>

The risk of homelessness can also be made worse by a number of other personal factors, including:

- Mental health issues;
- Drug and alcohol abuse;
- Problem gambling;
- A history of physical or sexual abuse;
- Limited life skills; and
- Poor financial literacy.<sup>121</sup>

An overview of the factors relating to causes homelessness is provided in the Green Paper as follows:

Socio-economic factors	Social exclusion	Individual issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing under-supply</li> <li>• Unaffordable housing</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Deinstitutionalization</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Poor education</li> <li>• Relationship breakdown and changes to family structures</li> <li>• Limited access to public housing</li> <li>• Lack of coordination between agencies</li> <li>• Barriers to accessing services</li> <li>• Discrimination by landlords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of personal capacity and resources</li> <li>• Domestic and family violence</li> <li>• Sexual, physical or emotional abuse</li> <li>• Living in overcrowded accommodation</li> <li>• Lack of education</li> <li>• Problems with employment</li> <li>• Lack of social networks</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of resources</li> <li>• Non-cohesive family unit</li> <li>• High levels of family conflict or stress</li> <li>• Low levels of social attachment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor life skills</li> <li>• Cultural factors</li> <li>• Alcoholism</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Mental illness</li> <li>• Poor physical health</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Criminality</li> <li>• Homelessness as a lifestyle choice</li> </ul>

Source: The Green Paper (2008) at page 25.

A recent report was published in March 2009 by the Mental Health Council of

<sup>120</sup> The Green Paper (2008) at p 23.

<sup>121</sup> The Green Paper (2008) at p 24.

Australia called “Home Truths: Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness in Australia”.<sup>122</sup> This report considers the relationship between housing, homelessness and mental health and considers models to support people with mental illness.<sup>123</sup> In 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that out of those people who had reported being homeless at least once in their lives, more than half had experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months, which is three times higher than among those who had never been homeless.<sup>124</sup> As stated in the “Home Truths” report, for some people mental health issues contributed to homelessness, whereas for others, mental illness is a result of homelessness, or made worse by it.<sup>125</sup> The Mental Health Council notes in its report that the White Paper acknowledges mental health issues and the importance of developing strategies to improve housing outcomes for those with mental illness.<sup>126</sup>

The Federal Housing Minister, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP also recently stated that there is a clear link between homelessness and mental health policy and highlighted the need to address a range of services, including mental health services to reduce homelessness in Australia.<sup>127</sup> The White Paper notably includes a policy of “no exits into homelessness” from statutory, custodial care, hospital, mental health, and drug and alcohol services.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, a National Mental Health Policy was released in March 2009. This policy recognizes that mental illness is often a cause of homelessness and highlights the importance of preventing the experience of homelessness by those with serious mental illness through intervention at points of crisis and instability.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> The Mental Health Council of Australia, Home Truths, Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness in Australia, March 2009.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, Australia, 2007 at p 14.

<sup>125</sup> Home Truths (2008) at p 22.

<sup>126</sup> Home Truths (2009) at p 25 and the White Paper (2008) at pp 8-9.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Lunn, “Clear path’ to fight homelessness”, The Australian, 31 March 2009.

<sup>128</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 27.

<sup>129</sup> National Mental Health Policy (2008) at pp 21 -22

## 6. HOMELESSNESS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

This section of the Briefing Paper will consider selected case studies from the USA, UK and Scotland, briefly considering selected policies and programs to combat homelessness. In 2007, the NSW Auditor-General in "Responding to Homelessness" suggested that the way in which other jurisdictions have developed homelessness strategies is useful in informing policy and practice in NSW.<sup>130</sup> As also suggested by Minnery and Greenhalgh, an understanding of the policies in other relevant countries and how they are implemented can assist in creating workable and effective policies.<sup>131</sup>

### 6.1 USA

Homelessness in the USA is not a new issue and the current financial situation has meant that the problem has received increased attention.<sup>132</sup> Lessons from the USA have also influenced the development of policies and programs in Australia. During his visit to Australia in March 2009, Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness told *The Australian* that:

Previously in the US we've left out the issue of prevention, and by so doing found ourselves bailing out the leaking boat of homelessness...We'd get people out and others would move in and take their place. If our efforts to address homelessness were to provide job security for providers of homeless services, we were doing it perfectly. If it was to cut numbers, we weren't doing it right at all.<sup>133</sup>

He highlighted the importance of consultation with homeless people when developing policies and programs to effectively address their needs, including employment.<sup>134</sup> Research also indicates that half of the users of homelessness services in the USA came out of institutional settings such as foster care and

---

<sup>130</sup> The NSW Audit Office (2007) at page 15.

<sup>131</sup> John Minnery & Emma Greenhalgh, *Approaches to Homeless Policy in Europe, the United States and Australia*, *The Journal of Social Issues*, 63(3) (2007) at pp 641 - 655; See also David Wright-Howie, *Council to Homeless Persons, Australia's Strengths and Challenges in Responding to Homelessness: An International Comparison*, A Discussion Paper for the National Homelessness Conference, Adelaide, May 2008; The Department of Communities and Local Government, *An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy*, Homelessness Research Summary, 30 November 2007.

<sup>132</sup> Steve Cohen, "Homelessness is on the rise", *The New York Observer*, 27 March 2009; Jesse McKinley, "Cities Deal With a Surge in Shantytowns", *The New York Times*, 25 March 2009.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Lunn, "'Clear path' to fight homelessness", *The Australian*, 31 March 2009; The US Interagency Council on Homelessness at <http://www.ich.gov/>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

prison, which is not dissimilar to the Australian experience.<sup>135</sup>

### 6.1.1 New York

One example of an American program that has been developed in NSW is the “Common Ground”. The Common Ground is a not-for-profit organization that was developed in New York in 1990 by Rosanne Haggerty to combat homelessness in the city.<sup>136</sup> The “Street-to-Home” project was developed by the Common Ground and inspired by an initiative that was developed in the UK called the “Rough Sleepers Initiative”.<sup>137</sup> The project was initially designed to create self-contained units in a building near Times Square with twenty-four hour support for the residents. The project was developed by the organization to assist homeless individuals who had been homeless for nine months or more to move into stable housing. It was based on the principle that people need both stability and support to address the issues that made them become homeless. The “Street-to-Home” project helps homeless individuals to secure permanent housing and it organises services such as mental health counselling, job training and financial management.<sup>138</sup>

The “Street-to-Home” project identifies people who have lived on the streets for at least nine months through a “Vulnerability Index” and creates a registry of these individuals. Outreach workers then assess their clients’ needs and prioritize those who are most vulnerable for housing. The project then negotiates housing options with them and houses these individuals, making long-term independent housing available with appropriate support services. Between 2005 and 2007, the project helped to reduce homelessness in the Times Square area by approximately 87%.<sup>139</sup> In 2007, the strategy was adopted by the City of New York as part of its strategy to reduce street homelessness by two thirds by 2010.<sup>140</sup> The “Housing First” approach to combating homelessness, which is based on the idea that moving people directly into permanent housing is the best way to address homelessness has been implemented in cities across the USA as well as Canada, for example through the “Streets to Homes” program in Toronto.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. See the White Paper (2008) at p 27.

<sup>136</sup> Adele Horin, “Homeless will get a place to call their own”, 10 September 2008.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> The Common Ground at <http://www.commonground.org>; See also The Common Ground Annual Report (2007).

<sup>139</sup> The Common Ground, Street to Home at [http://www.commonground.org/?page\\_id=21](http://www.commonground.org/?page_id=21).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Iain De Jong, What “housing first” means to people housed under Toronto’s Streets to Homes program, Preliminary Findings of 2007 post-occupancy research, National Alliance to end Homelessness Conference, Washington DC, 10 July 2007; See also David Hulchanski, Homelessness in Canada, Past, present and future, Conference Key Note Address, Growing Home: Housing and Homelessness in Canada, The University of

In 2006, the Common Ground project was developed in Adelaide by the Government of South Australia in partnership with a number of other organizations.

This project was based on the New York model and accommodates low-income or homeless people in a residential complex with services.<sup>142</sup> In 2008, a similar initiative was launched in Sydney by organisations such as the Mercy Foundation, Housing NSW, The City of Sydney and KPMG.<sup>143</sup> The project will make available either purchased or newly built apartments to homeless people through a tenancy agreement and four sites have been identified for the project.<sup>144</sup> Influenced by the New York model, the project will provide stable housing to residents, who will also be able to access outreach programs such as drug and alcohol counselling, education and employment training.<sup>145</sup> Felicity Reynolds, who has researched different models of combating chronic homelessness, also suggested that: “once people are in stable housing, and provided with the support they need, they can get better”.<sup>146</sup>

### 6.1.2 Los Angeles

Another example of an innovative approach to combat the problem of homelessness is a program called “Project 50”. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, in 2007 there were approximately 73,000 homeless people living in Los Angeles County.<sup>147</sup> Los Angeles has also been described as the “homeless capital” in the USA.<sup>148</sup> “Project 50” was developed in 2007 to address the problem of chronic homelessness in Los Angeles and involved

---

Calgary, February 2009.

- <sup>142</sup> The Common Ground, Adelaide at <http://www.commongroundadelaide.org.au/news/index.asp?news=4#>; See also Rosanne Haggerty, *Ending Homelessness in South Australia*, Government of South Australia, July 2005; Rosanne Haggerty, *Smart Moves: Spending to Saving, Streets to Home*, The Government of South Australia, 2006
- <sup>143</sup> The Common Ground, Sydney at <http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au/homelessness/index.cfm?loadref=41>.
- <sup>144</sup> “Therese Rein joins homelessness network”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 2008; Sandra O’Malley, “Therese Rein visits NY homeless charity”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 2008; Susanna Dunkerley, “Homeless Project launched in Sydney”, 9 September 2008; “Sydney’s homeless deserve better: Rees”, *ABC News*, 9 September 2008.
- <sup>145</sup> The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Sydney launches ‘Common Ground’ in an effort to reduce chronic homelessness, 9 September 2008.
- <sup>146</sup> Felicity Reynolds, *Report by Felicity Reynolds to Examine Programs That Assist Vulnerable and Complex Chronically Homeless People*, The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia, 31 January 2008 at p 5.
- <sup>147</sup> The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, “2007 Homeless Count Reports Over 73,000 People Remain Homeless in Los Angeles County”, 11 October 2007.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

collaboration between twenty four different agencies.<sup>149</sup> The aim of the project was to move the most vulnerable chronically homeless people in Los Angeles County into permanent supportive housing. Ninety percent of the participants in the program had a form of mental illness, more than half had a history of substance abuse and others had a serious illness.

During the initial stage of the project, three hundred and fifty homeless people were surveyed.<sup>150</sup> The fifty individuals with the highest score on the "Vulnerability Index" were recommended to the Los Angeles County for inclusion in the project. By May 2008, the fifty most vulnerable chronically homeless people were moved into housing, which also provided social and health care services, for example medical care, mental health treatment and substance-abuse programs. By May 2008, at the end of the year long project, 88% of the participants were no longer homeless. As stated by the founder of the project, Zev Yaroslavsky: "What we've accomplished...is meaningful only insofar as we can take it to the next level, turning 50 into 500; and then 500 into 5,000".<sup>151</sup>

## 6.2 UK

There have been a number of important developments in the UK to address the problem of homelessness. In the UK, statistics are available that count the number of people who apply to local authorities for homelessness assistance under the Housing Act 1996 (often described as "statutory homelessness") as well as the number of people who are "rough sleepers".<sup>152</sup> According to the National Rough Sleeping Estimate for 2008, there are 483 people "sleeping rough" on the streets of England on any single night, which is a reduction of 74% since 1998.<sup>153</sup> Approximately 25% of "rough sleepers" were aged between the age of 18 and 25 years and 6% of rough sleepers were over the age of 60 years. Thirty to 50% of "rough sleepers" were suffering from mental health problems, at least 50% had a serious alcohol problem and one in five misused drugs.<sup>154</sup> The National Statistics

<sup>149</sup> The Los Angeles Times, "Project 50 for the Homeless", 26 December 2007; Susannah Rosenblatt, "County homeless plan wins key vote", 9 January 2008; Project 50, One-year progress report by Common Ground for Los Angeles County, 4 February 2009 at [http://zev.lacounty.gov/images/Project\\_50\\_Progress\\_Report\\_2009.pdf](http://zev.lacounty.gov/images/Project_50_Progress_Report_2009.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> Steve Lopez, "Smart-spending skid row program saves lives", 10 February 2009.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> See Crisis: Homeless Policy Watch at [http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/legal\\_definition\\_of\\_homelessness.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/legal_definition_of_homelessness.html).

<sup>153</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/>.

<sup>154</sup> The Parliament of the UK, Statistical Briefing on Rough Sleeping (SN/SP/2007) <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/snsg-02647.pdf>; The Department of Communities and Local Government, Statutory Homelessness: 4<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2008, England, 11 December 2008.

Authority also releases quarterly statistics about statutory homelessness, with the latest statistics released in March 2009. According to these statistics, 12,070 applicants were accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty under the relevant homelessness legislation during the period between October and December 2008, which was 21% lower than during the same period in 2007.<sup>155</sup>

It has also been suggested that the UK is moving towards best practice in its response to homelessness.<sup>156</sup> Since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, local authorities in the UK have been required to assist people who are “unintentionally homeless”, in “priority need” and have a “local connection” to the particular area for which the local authority is responsible.<sup>157</sup> The Homelessness Act 2002 amended the Housing Act 1996 to implement a number of key reforms, including increasing the role of local authorities to combat the problem of homelessness through the development of a strategic approach to the problem.<sup>158</sup>

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities in the UK are required to carry out a homelessness review and then formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the result of the review. The review includes the following:

- a review of the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the district of the local housing authority;
- the actions being taken to prevent homelessness, to ensure that accommodation will be available and provide advice, information or assistance to those who are homeless or most at risk of becoming homeless; and
- the resources available to the authority to carry out these actions.<sup>159</sup>

The homelessness strategies that local authorities are required to develop must cover matters including the prevention of homelessness. The strategies must also consider how the objectives of the strategy can be achieved through collaboration between different authorities and other bodies. The reforms also extended the type of people that local authorities are required to assist, including those fleeing domestic, racial and other forms of violence as well as those who are vulnerable as

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Wendy Wilson, Homelessness in England (Standard Note SN/SP/1164), The House of Commons Library, 30 December 2008.

<sup>157</sup> See Crisis: Homelessness Policy Watch at [http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/english\\_legislative\\_framework.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/english_legislative_framework.html) for an overview of legal obligations towards homeless people in the UK.

<sup>158</sup> The Homelessness Act (2002) at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020007\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020007_en_1); See also Explanatory Notes to the Homelessness Act 2002 at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2002/en/ukpgaen\\_20020007\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2002/en/ukpgaen_20020007_en_1).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

a result of an institutionalized background in care for example, prison.<sup>160</sup>

Another key development in the UK was the release of the “More Than a Roof - a new approach to tackling homelessness” report in March 2003. The report provided an overview of the problem of homelessness in the UK and an outline of a new approach to addressing homelessness. It included a number of practical initiatives, including a greater emphasis on the provision of advice to homeless people on housing, rent deposit schemes, family mediation and domestic violence victim support.<sup>161</sup> The “Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice”, which was published in June 2006, also provides an outline of good practice regarding homelessness in the UK.<sup>162</sup> There has also been a focus in the UK on effectively evaluating programs that have been developed to combat homelessness, for example the “Evaluating Homelessness Prevention” report provides an evaluation of the way in which local authorities in the UK have responded to their obligations.<sup>163</sup>

A recent development in the UK has been the release a “rough sleepers” strategy in November 2008.<sup>164</sup> The strategy sets a vision to end rough sleeping by 2012.<sup>165</sup> The new fifteen point Action Plan developed to address the problem of “rough sleeping” includes the following initiatives:

- Increasing the options available to single people at risk of homelessness, including providing help with deposits for renting a home and more supportive lodgings;
- Expanding street rescue support teams run by charities and encouraging greater use of the 24 hour phone line to provide assistance to “rough sleepers”;
- Working with homeless people to develop achievable action plans to help

<sup>160</sup> The Homelessness (Priority Needs For Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

<sup>161</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government, More than a Roof – a new approach to tackling homelessness (2003).

<sup>162</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government (June 2006); See also the Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Strategies – a good practice guidebook (2002); The Department of Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006.

<sup>163</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government, Evaluating Homeless Prevention, December 2007; See also the Department of Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006; The Department of Communities and Local Government, Preventing Homelessness: A Strategic Health Check, September 2006; The Department of Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics June 2007 and Local Authority Survey of Homelessness Prevention – Policy Briefing 19, June 2007.

<sup>164</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government, “No one left out: Communities ending rough sleeping”, Media Release, November 2008.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

- them back into housing and employment; and
- Encouraging charities, businesses and the Government to work more closely in new and innovative ways to help rough sleepers off the street and into employment.<sup>166</sup>

As stated by the Housing Minister, Margaret Beckett:

This strategy is not just about getting someone a bed for the night, it's also about preventing rough sleeping in the first place, recognizing the needs of each individual and offering them genuine opportunities and support to get their lives back on track.<sup>167</sup>

Leslie Morphy, Chief Executive of Crisis, which is a national charity dealing with homeless people also made the following comments about the “rough sleepers” strategy:

...we are delighted to see a commitment to consider changes to the statutory safety net for those at risk of rough sleeping, alongside increased prevention work and greater availability of alternative housing options to stop people from ending up on the streets in the first place...In the current economic crisis, with people losing their homes and jobs and facing potential homelessness, it is more important than ever that the Government takes action to end rough sleeping and we look forward to working with them in delivering this new strategy.<sup>168</sup>

### 6.3 SCOTLAND

In Scotland, there have also been a number of developments to address the growing problem of homelessness. Since 1997/1998, the number of households accepted as homeless or potentially homeless has increased by 26.5%.<sup>169</sup> There were also an estimated 56,609 applications to local authorities under the legislation relating to homelessness in 2007/2008, which represents a decrease of 4.9% compared to the 59,550 applications during 2006/2007. According to the statistics, the majority of households were single-person households (60%) and the main reasons for the applications under the legislation were household disputes or relationship breakdown (27%) or being asked to leave their current accommodation

---

<sup>166</sup> The Department of Communities and Local Government, “New goal to end rough sleeping”, 18 November 2008; Communities and Local Government, “Rough Sleeping” at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/roughsleeping/>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Crisis: Homeless Policy Watch, Official Homelessness Statistics, Scotland: Trends over time at [http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/scotland\\_trends\\_over\\_time.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/scotland_trends_over_time.html); See also Scottish Government, Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland: 2007-2008 at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/29091120/5>.

(25%).<sup>170</sup> Recent media reports have also indicated that the total number of households that were assessed as being homeless in Scotland rose by 2% between August and September 2008.<sup>171</sup> It has also been suggested that the number of families or individuals living in temporary accommodation in Scotland in December 2008 had risen 7% since the previous December.<sup>172</sup> The reasons cited for the rise in the number of homeless people included mortgage repossession as a result of the economic downturn.<sup>173</sup>

In Scotland, The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 is the main legislation in Scotland that addresses the problem of homelessness. Since its introduction, The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 has been amended by legislation including the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act and 2003. These changes were made in response to the fifty-nine recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force, of which five were implemented through the legislative amendments.<sup>174</sup> The Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003 aims to ensure that by 2012, everyone who is assessed as being unintentionally homeless is entitled to permanent accommodation.<sup>175</sup>

The 2003 Act made a number of changes, including removing a distinction between priority and non-priority homeless households by 2012. The abolition of what has been described as the priority need test means that by 2012, local authorities will be required to provide accommodation to all unintentionally homeless people (whether they are in priority need or not).<sup>176</sup> People characterized as being in priority need include those who were pregnant, homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood, at risk of abuse or vulnerable due to age or mental illness.<sup>177</sup> Previously, local authorities were only required to provide

---

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> "More Homeless over mortgage debt", BBC News, 17 March 2009; See also "Homelessness surge warning for 2009", BBC News, 23 December 2008, which reported a similar trend in the UK.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> The Homelessness Task Force Final Report, An Action Plan for Prevention and Effective Response (2002).

<sup>175</sup> Malcolm Chisholm, "Plan to end homelessness unveiled", BBC News, 21 December 2005; Kate Berry, Homelessness, SPICe Briefing Paper, April 2004; Kate Berry, Homelessness (Updated), SPICe Briefing Paper, 24 October 2005, Kate Berry and Steven Herbert, SPICe Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Bill, 23 October 2002. See also Chapter 1 of the Scottish Executive Social Research, the Evaluation of Homeless Prevention Activities in Scotland, March 2007.

<sup>176</sup> The Scottish Executive, Helping Homeless People, Homelessness Statement, Ministerial Statement on Abolition of Priority Need by 2012, 2005.

<sup>177</sup> Shelter Scotland at [http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/getadvice/advice\\_topics/homelessness/help\\_from\\_the\\_councils\\_housing\\_department/the\\_councils\\_homelessness\\_tests](http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/getadvice/advice_topics/homelessness/help_from_the_councils_housing_department/the_councils_homelessness_tests); See section 1 of the

accommodation, advice and assistance to those considered as priority applicants and advice and assistance to non-priority applicants. In the same manner as in the UK, the legislative changes in Scotland have also required local authorities to carry out assessments of homelessness and prepare strategies for their area.<sup>178</sup> The changes in Scotland have been monitored. For example, The Homelessness Monitoring Group was established in 2002 and there have been evaluations of the programs developed by local authorities to prevent homelessness.<sup>179</sup> One notable example is the release of a report in 2007 by the Scottish Executive, which evaluates the activities of local authorities in Scotland to prevent homelessness.<sup>180</sup>

---

Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003; An overview of the Act may be found at [http://www.oqps.gov.uk/legislation/acts/acts2003/en/aspen\\_20030010\\_en.pdf](http://www.oqps.gov.uk/legislation/acts/acts2003/en/aspen_20030010_en.pdf).

<sup>178</sup> The Homelessness Etc (Scotland) Act 2003 at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/asp\\_20030010\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/asp_20030010_en_1); See also Crisis: Homelessness Policy Watch at [http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/scottish\\_legislative\\_framework.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/scottish_legislative_framework.html) for an overview of the Scottish legislative framework.

<sup>179</sup> The Scottish Executive Social Research, the Evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Activities in Scotland, March 2007. See also Scottish Government, Evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Innovation Fund Projects, 2008.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

## 7. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HOMELESSNESS POLICY

### 7.1 The White Paper

On 21 December 2008 the Federal Government launched the White Paper titled “The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness”.<sup>181</sup> The White Paper outlined the Federal Government’s response to homelessness in Australia and announced a plan to halve the number of homeless people in Australia and accommodate all “rough sleepers” by 2020.<sup>182</sup> The Federal Government also stated its commitment to using a framework of social inclusion to address social disadvantage such as homelessness.<sup>183</sup> The social inclusion framework is based on a principle of targeting the problems that keep people in disadvantage and the barriers that prevent them from participating fully in the community.<sup>184</sup>

The White Paper set out three strategic directions for homelessness policy as follows:

- Turning off the tap: developing services to intervene early to prevent homelessness. Half of the Federal Government’s new funding commitments over the next four years will be directed at preventing homelessness. A policy of “no exits into homelessness” from statutory, custodial care, hospital, mental health, drug and alcohol services will be part of this strategic direction;<sup>185</sup>
- Improving and expanding services: services will be more connected and responsive to achieving sustainable housing and improving economic and social participation. When homelessness occurs, time spent in specialist services should be minimum, with a focus on making transitions to long-term stable housing. Further, there will be a “no wrong door” system, which means that there will be multiple entry points to services;<sup>186</sup>
- Breaking the cycle: people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support that they need so that homelessness does not recur. An increase in the availability of affordable housing and boosting specialist modes of supported accommodation will

<sup>181</sup> The White Paper (2008); The Green Paper (2008); “Government launches 12 year plan to reduce homelessness in Australia”, Media Release, 21 December 2008; See also Homelessness Australia, Responding to the White Paper on Homelessness (2009).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 74.

<sup>184</sup> The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Federal Government Social Inclusion Agenda, Speech to ACOSS Conference, April 2008; Sue Cripps, Social Inclusion: The Glue that Binds, Parity, February 2009 22(1) at p 23.

<sup>185</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 27.

<sup>186</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 38.

mean that a long-term response to homelessness is developed.<sup>187</sup>

The White Paper also provided ten key principles to address homelessness. These ten key principles are set out below:

- A national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels of government, the non-government and business sectors, with homelessness as a shared responsibility;
- Preventing homelessness and understanding the causes of homelessness to stop people becoming homeless;
- Building the capacity of people and communities to maximize people's potential to participate in the community both economically and socially;
- Placing clients at the centre of service delivery and design as well as including people who are homeless in decision-making processes;
- Ensuring that responses to homelessness focus on the safety and well being of homeless people, including protecting women and children escaping domestic and family violence as well as children at risk;
- Protecting the rights and responsibilities of individuals and families, balancing assistance to reflect the social and economic objectives appropriate to age, capacity and aspirations;
- Developing an overarching policy framework to guide all government approaches to address homelessness. Bringing change to funding and accountability boundaries to allow governments and funded organizations to take a multidisciplinary approach to address people's needs;
- Recognizing the transition points when people are most vulnerable, for example becoming a parent, adolescence, school-to-work, retirement, family breakdown, leaving statutory care and prison. Changes at these points can be made even more difficult if compounded by factors including poor health and mental health issues. Support at these points can prevent problems later on;
- Focusing on evidence-based policy in order to shape the priorities for action;
- Setting targets to reduce homelessness and ensure accountability, with rigorous and regular reporting against targets to ensure that Australian, state and territory and local governments and service providers are accountable.<sup>188</sup>

According to the White Paper, a National Affordable Housing Agreement will provide \$6.1 billion over five years for measures including social housing, assistance to people in the private rental market as well as support and accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.<sup>189</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> The White Paper (2008) at pp ix and 15; See also The White Paper edition, Parity, February 2009 22(1).

<sup>188</sup> The White Paper (2008) at pp 19-20.

<sup>189</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p ix; The Council of Australian Government's Fact Sheet at [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2008-11-](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-)

According to the White Paper, a number of submissions to the Green Paper recommended that the SAAP Act, which has guided the response to homelessness in Australia since 1985, be amended. Accordingly, the White Paper noted that the introduction of a National Affordable Housing Agreement would provide an opportunity to reconsider the legislative framework relevant to homelessness.<sup>190</sup> The Prime Minister will also appoint a Council on Homelessness to monitor the achievement of the goals in the White Paper. Further, The Bea Miles Foundation will work in partnership with the business and corporate sector to channel funding, sponsor innovation and research to support the work of governments and the not-for-profit sector to address homelessness.<sup>191</sup>

## 7.2 Developments in NSW

In 2007, the NSW Auditor-General released a report about homelessness in NSW called “Responding to Homelessness”.<sup>192</sup> One of the key findings of the Auditor-General’s Office was that although there had been a number of positive initiatives, for example the development of the Partnership Against Homelessness, it could not determine how well the Government was responding to homelessness statewide.<sup>193</sup> The report also noted that homelessness was not a priority in the State Plan and that there were no statewide performance indicators or targets on homelessness. There was also no benchmarking and no formal means of spreading information on homelessness initiatives and projects.<sup>194</sup> The Auditor-General made a number of recommendations, focusing on the need for the NSW Government to adopt a more strategic, collaborate and comprehensive approach to the issue of homelessness.<sup>195</sup> The recommendations of the Auditor-General for the Department of Housing, in co-operation with other agencies were as follows:

---

29/docs/20081129\_national\_affordable\_housing\_factsheet.pdf.

<sup>190</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 68.

<sup>191</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p xii. See the Bea Miles Foundation at [http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=749&Itemid=299](http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=749&Itemid=299).

<sup>192</sup> The Audit Office (2007).

<sup>193</sup> The Audit Office (2007) at p 2; See also Housing NSW, Partnership Against Homelessness at <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/About+Us/Partnerships/Homelessness/Partnership+Against+Homelessness.htm>; Aimee Cornelius, An Investigation into Homelessness, October 2008, which provides an overview of Government programs in NSW and service providers in NSW.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid; The Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee, Report on Examination of the Auditor General’s Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007, Responding to Homelessness, Connecting with Public Transport, Dealing with Household Burglaries and Government Advertising, Report No. 5/54 (168) – March 2009.

<sup>195</sup> The Audit Office (2007) at pp 3 - 4; The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at p 3.

- Develop a state-wide framework that outlines the Government's response to homelessness and the results it wants to achieve;
- Link the framework to relevant sections of the NSW State Plan and factor in community views of homelessness;
- Report annually against the state framework including a snapshot of key activities and results, and make this report publicly available;
- Examine ways to network with agencies that are not members of Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH);
- Set up a means to benchmark the State's performance on homelessness and spread best practice on local initiatives.

The Auditor-General recommended that the Department of Housing in co-operation with other agencies, encourage Government agencies to:

- Use Census data on homelessness to help them plan and deliver services;
- Adopt similar client identifiers to better track the homeless through their systems.

The recommendations for the Area Health Services, Legal Aid NSW and Local Courts were to:

- Review the extent to which homeless people access their services;
- Develop new ways of delivering services to the homeless; and
- Take homelessness into account when planning new services.

Finally, the Auditor-General recommended that the Department of Health and Area Health Services investigate ways to increase hostel caseworkers' knowledge of mental health services, including appropriate responses to mental health issues.

Since 2007, the Federal Government released the White Paper and in May 2008 the NSW Government released its Strategic Framework Draft Consultation Paper, which was the first part a two-stage process to develop a NSW Strategic Framework into Homelessness.<sup>196</sup> Three strategic directions underpin the draft framework, namely Prevention and Early Intervention; Assessment and Crisis Response and Longer-Term Accommodation and Community Support.<sup>197</sup> A number of comments have been made about the Draft Strategic Framework, for example the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) endorsed the three strategic directions underpinning the draft framework, however, it expressed concerns about the "vague nature of many of the strategy's action items and the failure of the

---

<sup>196</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.10; See also the NSW Government's Submission to the Australian Government's Green Paper, *Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness*, June 2008 at p 3. Other relevant strategic frameworks in NSW are The Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH) Work-plan 2007-2010, The City of Sydney Homelessness Strategy 2007-2012 and The Inner City Action Plan.

<sup>197</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.28.

framework to ensure the involvement of the NGO sector or to commit new resources to the issue of homelessness".<sup>198</sup>

The Public Accounts Committee's "Report on Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007" was also released in March 2009.<sup>199</sup> The Public Accounts Committee inquired whether the NSW Government was achieving its desired results for the homeless and whether the homeless were receiving assistance to access health care and legal assistance.<sup>200</sup> The Committee made comments about the consistency of the Draft Strategic Framework with the Auditor-General's recommendations. It noted that the actions in the Draft Strategic Framework that are consistent with the Auditor-General's recommendations under the action items of Prevention and Early Intervention are as follows:

- Developing tools and methodologies to assist agencies that provide services to people at risk of homelessness to better consider homelessness in service planning;
- Developing a data collection strategy to ensure that issues related to homelessness are used to inform service delivery and planning;
- Developing a research and information sharing process;
- Developing coordinated support for people in contact with the criminal justice system; and
- Developing appropriate referral mechanisms for people exiting a health facility.<sup>201</sup>

The Public Accounts Committee noted that the following action items under the Assessment and Crisis Response in the Draft Strategic Framework are consistent with the recommendations of the Auditor-General:

- Reviewing all homeless outreach pilot programs and developing best practice approaches;
- Improving referral pathways for homeless people to mental health and drug and alcohol services; and
- Developing a data collection strategy so that services are capturing

---

<sup>198</sup> The Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Homeless Persons' Legal Service submission in response to the NSW Government's Homelessness Strategic Framework Consultation Paper, 23 September 2008.

<sup>199</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009); NSWPD, 27 March 2009 at p 27.

<sup>200</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.6. In the report, 'health care' referred to community mental health services, community health centres, drug and alcohol services and 'legal assistance' referred to Legal Aid Offices and Chamber Registrar services within local courts. 'The homeless' in the report referred to people living on the streets and in crisis accommodation.

<sup>201</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.29.

information on homeless people.<sup>202</sup>

The Public Accounts Committee also noted that the following action items under the Longer Term Accommodation and Support in the Draft Strategic Framework are consistent with the recommendations of the Auditor-General:

- Trialing a common data linkage key to monitor the pathways of homeless people through the service system;
- Developing mechanisms to ensure continuity of support from mental health, drug and alcohol services to mainstream community support services; and
- Reviewing emerging evidence regarding service provision to homeless people with complex needs.<sup>203</sup>

The Committee recommended that the Area Health Services and Local Courts review the extent to which homeless people access their services, develop new ways of delivering services to the homeless, and consider homeless people when planning new services.<sup>204</sup>

Since the Draft Strategic Framework was developed in May 2008, a Draft Action Plan has been released for consultation. In their response to the NSW Homelessness Action Plan, PIAC indicated that it was disappointed that it had less than one week to respond and as a result, it was unable to carry out effective consultation with those directly impacted by homelessness. PIAC further stated that as a result of the short consultation period: “it is likely that the resulting Action Plan will be less effective in responding to homelessness”.<sup>205</sup> A number of issues were also raised by PIAC in its response, for example the inclusion of boarders and lodgers as a priority group for intervention and the need to work with the Federal Government on Centrelink issues that impact homeless people. The NSW Action Plan is due to be finalised in 2009.

---

<sup>202</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.30.

<sup>203</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at paragraph 2.31.

<sup>204</sup> The Public Accounts Committee Report (2009) at p 10.

<sup>205</sup> The Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Taking Action on Homelessness: Response to the NSW Homelessness Action Plan, 2 March 2009.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The release of the NSW Auditor-General's report, the Federal Government's White Paper and the creation of a Strategic Framework for NSW, which is currently being finalized, have been important responses to the issue of homelessness in recent years.<sup>206</sup> As highlighted in the White Paper, there are many causes of homelessness including housing affordability, domestic violence, long-term unemployment, family breakdown and mental health and substance abuse.<sup>207</sup> Homelessness can affect people of all ages, includes men and women as well as people from different cultural backgrounds.<sup>208</sup> It can take many forms, ranging from primary homelessness, including "rough sleeping" to other forms of homelessness such as "couch surfing".<sup>209</sup> Homelessness is a problem that is not confined to a certain part of NSW and impacts on people in both the city and the suburbs as well as those in rural and regional areas of the State.<sup>210</sup>

The current financial situation has also changed the nature of homelessness. For example, Clover Moore MP has suggested that in the past two years crisis eviction is emerging as a primary reason that people are providing for their situation of homelessness.<sup>211</sup> The NSW Housing Minister, Hon David Borger MP recently stated that the number of people seeking immediate housing assistance had increased by over 7,600 in 2007/2008.<sup>212</sup> In response to the current situation, the Federal Government's economic stimulus package will provide funds to NSW to build approximately 6,000 new social housing homes.<sup>213</sup> As stated by the NSW Housing Minister, during a time when "families are in financial distress this serious long-term investment will allow the NSW Government to help more people facing housing stress".<sup>214</sup> Not-for-profit operators have also been successful in tenders

<sup>206</sup> See the Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee, "Homelessness, Public Transport, Burglaries and Government Advertising", Media Release, 25 March 2009.

<sup>207</sup> The White Paper (2008) at pp 6-9.

<sup>208</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 3.

<sup>209</sup> Senator Ursula Stephens, Speech at the Royal Institute of Technology Forum, 13 March 2009.

<sup>210</sup> The White Paper (2008) at p 41.

<sup>211</sup> The City of Sydney, "Housing repayment problems top of list for homelessness", Media Release, 6 March 2009; "Homelessness surges in NSW", ABC News, 4 March 2009.

<sup>212</sup> The Hon David Borger MP, "Statistics show more people needing housing help", 4 March 2009.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. See also Cassie White, "Ellis trumpets action in homelessness fight", ABC News, 1 April 2009.

<sup>214</sup> Siobhain Ryan, "Charities win lion's share of low-rent housing tenders", *The Australian*, 31 March 2009; The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, "Government to deliver almost 4,000 new affordable rental homes under Round One of the National Rental Affordability Scheme", Media Release, 30 March 2009.

for Federal Government funding to build low cost rental accommodation for low-income earners as part of the National Rental Affordability Scheme.<sup>215</sup> The recent developments in Federal and State Government policies are timely and important developments in response to a growing problem of homelessness, particularly in the current economic climate.<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

**APPENDIX A****Primary Homelessness By Local Government Area (Based on the 2006 Census)**

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Total Number of People</b>
Albury	9
Armidale Dumaresq - City	3
Ashfield	26
Ballina	28
Balranald	4
Bankstown - North-East	9
Bankstown - North-West	4
Bankstown - South	16
Bathurst Regional	11
Baulkham Hills - North	8
Baulkham Hills - South	17
Bega Valley	130
Bellingen	39
Berrigan	4
Blacktown - North	16
Blacktown - South-East	11
Blacktown - South-West	15
Blayney	6
Blue Mountains	4
Bombala	3
Bourke	15
Broken Hill	4
Burwood	4
Byron	116
Cabonne	20
Canada Bay - Drummoyne	10
Canterbury	13
Central Darling	10
Cessnock	10
Clarence Valley - Coast	17
Clarence Valley - Grafton	20
Clarence Valley	19
Cobar	3
Coffs Harbour	56
Coonamble	6
Corowa Shire	18
Cowra	35
Deniliquin	13
Dubbo	35

Dungog	34
Eurobodalla	71
Fairfield - East	29
Forbes	6
Glen Innes Severn	12
Gloucester	6
Gosford - East	3
Gosford - West	29
Goulburn Mulwaree	19
Greater Taree	82
Great Lakes	63
Griffith	5
Gunnedah	20
Guyra	5
Gwydir	9
Hastings	12
Hawkesbury	120
Hay	4
Holroyd	20
Hornsby - North	16
Hornsby - South	50
Inverell	85
Jerilderie	8
Kempsey	80
Kyogle	46
Lachlan	5
Lake Macquarie - East	19
Lake Macquarie - West	18
Lane Cove	3
Leeton	25
Leichhardt	15
Lismore	92
Lithgow	13
Liverpool - East	13
Liverpool - West	21
Liverpool Plains	7
Maitland	20
Manly	23
Marrickville	3
Mid-Western Regional	13
Mid-Western Regional	3
Moree Plains	4
Mosman	4
Murray	8
Murrumbidgee	5
Muswellbrook	7
Nambucca	42

Narrabri	29
Narromine	11
Newcastle - Inner City	13
Newcastle - Outer West	3
North Sydney	5
Palerang	80
Parkes	4
Parramatta - Inner	67
Parramatta - South	16
Penrith - East	20
Penrith - West	38
Pittwater	11
Port Stephens	51
Queanbeyan	13
Randwick	3
Richmond Valley - Casino	14
Richmond Valley	34
Rockdale	17
Shellharbour	3
Shoalhaven	68
Singleton	34
Snowy River	17
Strathfield	3
Sutherland Shire	6
Sydney - Inner	84
Sydney - East	189
Sydney - South	70
Sydney - West	23
Tamworth Regional	38
Tenterfield	64
Tumbarumba	5
Tumut Shire	8
Tweed - Tweed-Heads	94
Tweed - Tweed Coast	3
Tweed	89
Upper Hunter Shire	3
Upper Lachlan	3
Uralla	7
Wagga Wagga	35
Wakool	3
Walcha	10
Walgett	139
Warringah	12
Warrumbungle Shire	15
Waverley	22
Weddin	3
Wentworth	16

---

Willoughby	3
Wingecarribee	3
Wollondilly	61
Wollongong - Inner	23
Wollongong	24
Woollahra	16
Wyong - North-East	3
Wyong - South and West	7
Yass Valley	38
Young	4
Unincorp. Far West	12
No Usual Address	45
Total NSW	3,718

Source: The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal email communication with the author dated 13 March 2009.