

NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025–2035



August 2025



Homes
NSW

Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Government pays respect to the Traditional Custodians throughout NSW. We listen and learn from the knowledge, strength, and resilience of Aboriginal communities. We extend our respects to Elders past and present, the Stolen Generations Survivors and their descendants.

We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands, sky, and waters of NSW. We extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed by the NSW Government and homelessness sector, recognising the unique and vital contributions they provide.



Contents

Strategy on a page	4	Our vision	15
Strategy overview	6	Guiding principles	16
Introduction	8	Our focus areas	24
The current NSW service system	10	How we will direct our effort	30
An integrated approach to homelessness	12	How we will measure success	32
Building on what we know	14	Glossary	34
		Services and support	39



Our vision:

Homelessness in NSW is rare, brief and not repeated because people have a safe home and the support to keep it.



Rare:

People can get and keep a safe, accessible and affordable home

People know where to get information and support to prevent homelessness

People at risk of homelessness are identified early and linked with the right supports



Brief:

People's needs are quickly identified, and they are referred to the right supports

People get safe crisis accommodation with appropriate support when they need it

People are supported out of homelessness into longer-term housing with tailored supports



Not repeated:

People with complex needs can access comprehensive, longer-term support so they do not experience repeat homelessness

People have strong connections to their community that protect against repeat homelessness

People's housing meets their changing needs across their lifespan



Guided by these principles:

Housing is a human right

Aboriginal expertise and leadership are respected

People with lived experience inform service design

Person-centred principles are embedded in policy and practice

Prevention is prioritised

Housing First principles are embedded in policy and practice

Service planning and delivery is flexible, local and joined up

The workforce is strong and capable

Systems, tools and measurement are consistent and fit for purpose

Shifting the system from:

Crisis focus → **Prevention**

Service centred → **Person centred**

Central delivery → **Local delivery**



Strategy overview

The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025-2035 sets out a vision and new directions to build the capacity of the NSW service system to prevent and respond to homelessness over the next ten years.

It provides a blueprint to:

- focus effort and ensure agencies are working towards a common vision and goals
- guide policy, decision-making, commissioning and service delivery within and across agencies
- direct the allocation of existing resources and funding
- direct any new housing and homelessness investment
- identify priorities and areas for system improvement and reform
- promote common approaches to measure individual and collective agency impact.



Our vision is:

‘Homelessness in NSW is rare, brief and not repeated because people have a safe home and the support to keep it’.



We will be guided by the following aspirational principles and focus areas:

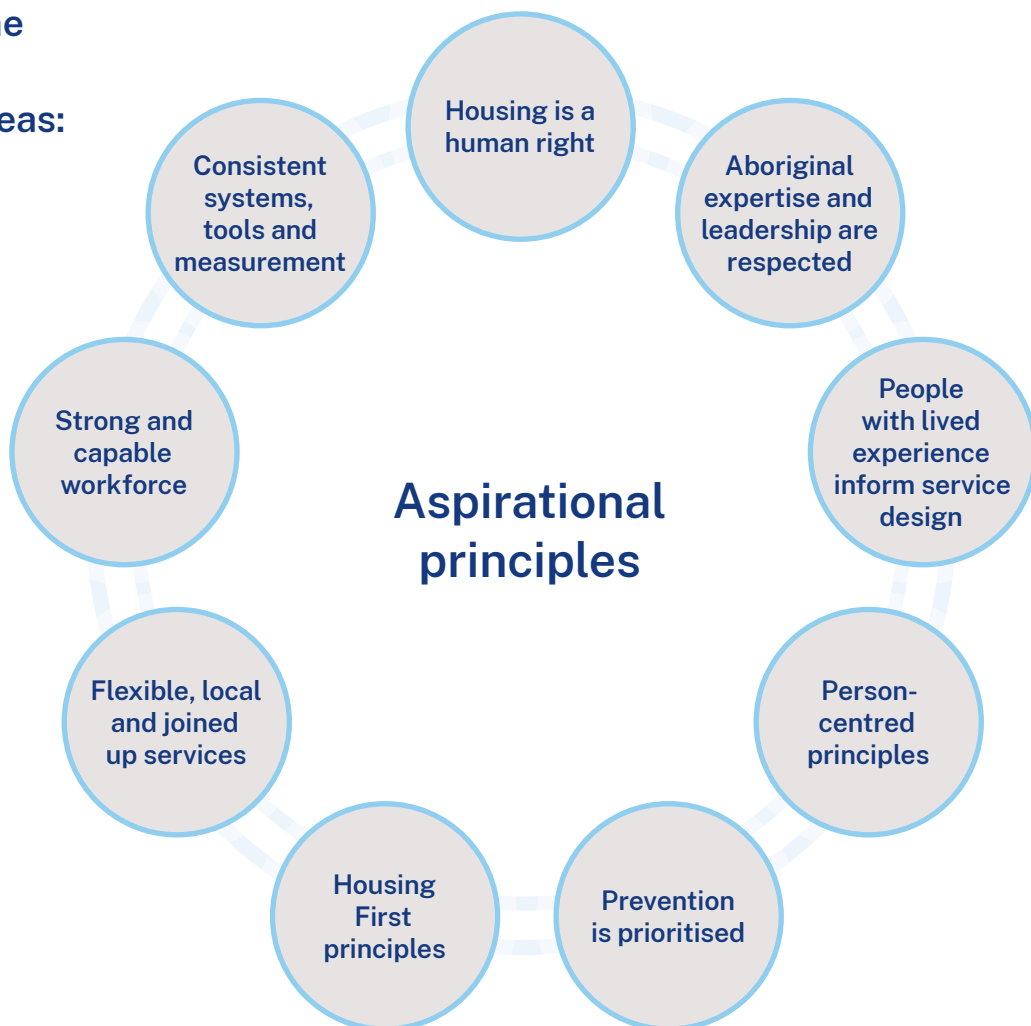




Figure 1 – Principles of the NSW Homelessness Strategy

Figure 2 – Focus areas of the NSW Homelessness Strategy

Strategy focus areas

 **Rare**
 **Brief**
 **Not repeated**

Outcome 1

Wherever possible, homelessness is prevented from happening in the first place, making it rare

People can get and keep a safe, accessible and affordable home

People know where to get information and support to prevent homelessness

People at risk of homelessness are identified early and linked with the right supports

Outcome 2

When homelessness does occur, people are quickly connected to housing and the supports they need

People’s needs are quickly identified, and they are referred to the right supports

People get safe crisis accommodation with appropriate support when they need it

People are supported out of homelessness into longer-term housing with tailored supports

Outcome 3

When homelessness does occur, people do not experience multiple episodes of homelessness

People with complex needs can access comprehensive, longer-term support so they do not experience repeat homelessness

People have strong connections to their community that protect against repeat homelessness

People’s housing meets their changing needs across their lifespan

Introduction

Homelessness is not a personal failing or a lifestyle choice. Many people are one challenging life event or one climate disaster away from homelessness.



For more detailed information about who is impacted by homelessness see [Appendix 1: Respecting and responding to the diversity of homelessness experiences](#)

The current economic conditions including declining rental affordability, high interest rates and increasing food and energy prices mean more people are finding themselves at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The face of homelessness is changing and will continue to change over the life of this Strategy. For example, more families are becoming homeless, 17 per cent of people who presented to homelessness services in NSW in 2023-24 are working,¹ and people are presenting to homelessness services with more complex needs.

People living in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW are resilient in response to challenges. However, increasing population growth, lack of accessible services and job opportunities, limited social housing supply, increased rental unaffordability, the impacts of the short-term rental market and climate change all increase the risk that people in these areas will experience homelessness.

People's pathways into and out of homelessness vary. For some people homelessness is a one-off event. Others will cycle in and out, unable to find and keep housing.² Homelessness has significant and lasting impacts on individuals and families and there is also a concerning intergenerational impact. Almost half of all people that experience homelessness had parents who also experienced homelessness.³ Homelessness has substantial social and economic costs, particularly for people with complex needs. The longer a person experiences homelessness, the more complex their needs become, requiring more intensive support. Even more concerning is evidence that homelessness contributes to premature death, with a recent

investigation finding people in Australia experiencing homelessness are dying at an average age of 44 years.⁴

Homelessness is the result of a range of systemic, structural and individual factors including housing affordability, limited access to services, unemployment, mental and physical health issues, financial instability, family breakdown, trauma, misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and addiction. Domestic and family violence is also a leading cause of homelessness in NSW.⁵

People who experience barriers to access such as disability, age or visa status, or discrimination based on race, religion, age, gender, sexuality or interaction with the justice or Out of Home Care systems are also more at risk. For example, Aboriginal people, children and young people, and older people are significantly overrepresented in homelessness statistics in NSW.

It is also important to understand that these factors are often interconnected. People have unique histories, identities, circumstances and needs. We require a range of housing and homelessness responses that are based on the individual needs of people and families to effectively end homelessness.⁶

The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025–2035 sets out new directions to build the capacity of the NSW service system to prevent and respond to homelessness, and provides principles to guide policy, practice, investment and resource allocation over the next ten years.




The current NSW service system

Homelessness in NSW has significantly worsened over the last decade. A wide range of programs work to address homelessness in NSW.

These program costs have been rising over the last decade due to increasing inflation, award wages, and complexity of client need, but funding levels have not kept pace. Historic under-investment in social housing, prevention and early intervention has led to a system that is expensive, inefficient, crisis driven, and unable to meet demand. Natural disasters and COVID-19 added pressure and complexity to an already struggling service system. Securing affordable housing is now the biggest single issue facing people in NSW.

Homelessness is a solvable problem. Government action in other countries demonstrates it can be prevented and virtually ended.⁷ The Commonwealth and NSW

Governments recently made historic investments in new supply and homelessness responses. We know it will take time to build this new supply and increase opportunities for people to exit homelessness. The NSW Government's appointment of the NSW Rental Commissioner and landmark rental reforms are providing more security and stability for renters and creating a fairer and more affordable rental system. As demand increases and certain types of homelessness become entrenched, we need to think beyond business-as-usual. We need to adopt a systems-based approach so we can increase prevention, build capacity, share accountability, and remove the barriers that contribute to homelessness.⁸



For more detailed information about the drivers of homelessness see [Appendix 2: Why is Change Needed?](#)

Snapshot so far

Demand is increasing, with current figures likely to be an undercount...

...and services are failing to keep up...

...because the current system:

>35,000

People experiencing homelessness in NSW

↑ **27%**
between 2011-21 Census

29,799

Households that accessed temporary accommodation in 2023-24

↑ **122%**
since 2022-23

Young people



↑ **11%**
since 2011

Unassisted requests for SHS* in 2022-23



↑ **88%**
in 3 years

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



↑ **14%**
since 2011

~17,000

People assisted by SHS* in 2022-23



↑ **31%**
since 2011

>68,000

Priority social housing applicants on NSW Housing Register (June 2024)



↑ **24.5%**
in 12 months

People who have experienced family and domestic violence



↑ **42%**
since 2011

9,428

Older people



↑ **87%**
since 2011

People living with disability



↑ **33%**
since 2011

1. Does not focus enough on prevention or diversion
2. Is subject to extreme housing and cost of living pressures, and historic and continued underfunding
3. Lacks integration and coordination

An integrated approach to homelessness

There are many intersections between the risks, drivers and protective factors of homelessness.

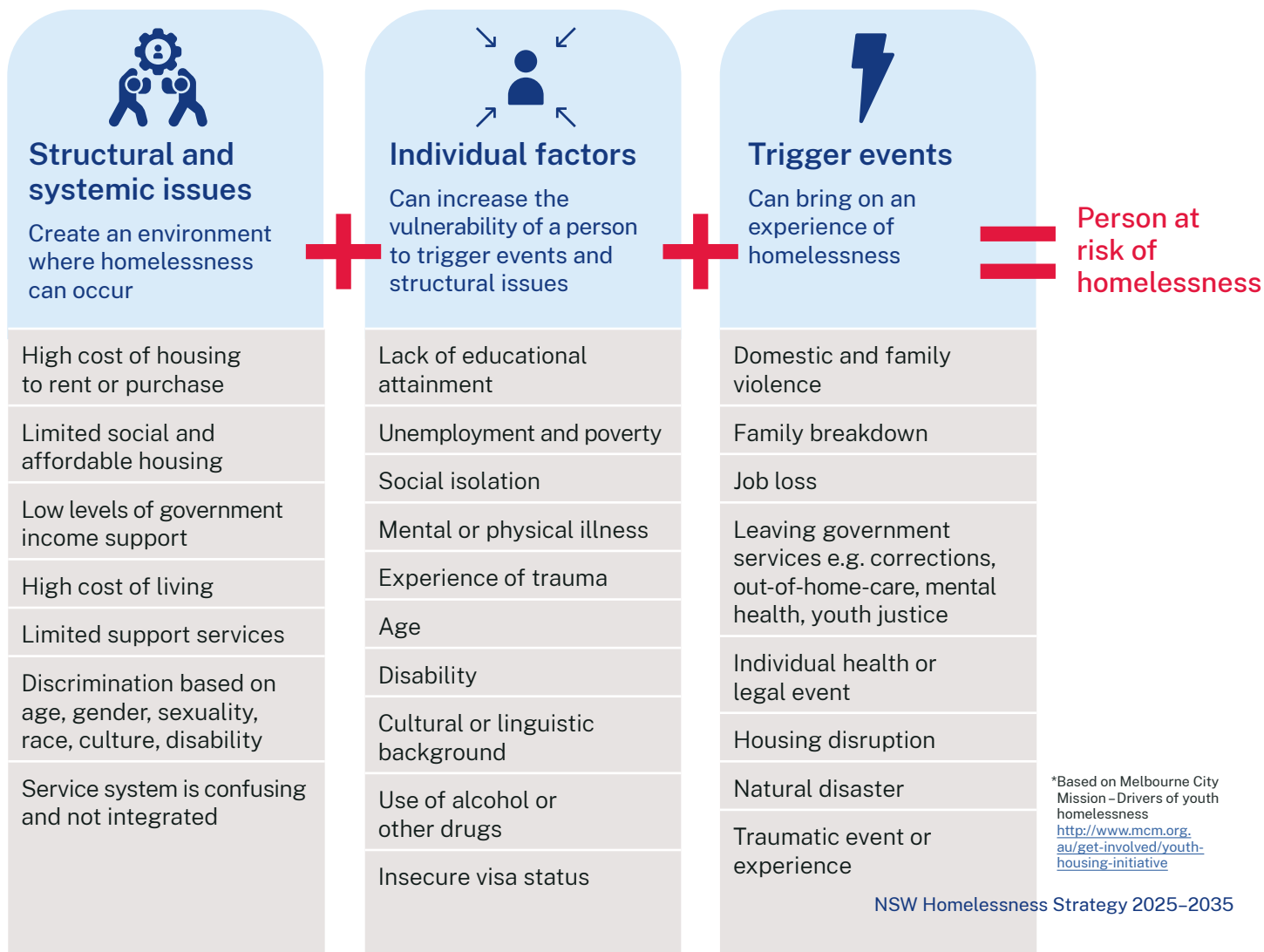
Figure 4 outlines the structural and systemic issues, individual factors and trigger events that can, in combination, contribute to a person's experience of homelessness. Access to education, skills training, employment, income support, disability funding, healthcare, social housing, and early childhood intervention are all critical to preventing and responding more

effectively to homelessness. Thinking about homelessness as a complex and adaptive system is important because changes to one part of the system will often impact other parts.⁹

The NSW housing system is made up of private homes (which are owned or rented), government laws and policy settings which affect housing (such as planning, tenancy regulation and taxation), and the non-market housing and homelessness sector. The non-market housing and homelessness sector includes services for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, crisis and temporary accommodation, and a range of housing (transitional, informal, social, affordable, and key worker).

The NSW housing system operates alongside other government systems including health, child protection, education, corrections, aged care, disability, and income support. To effectively prevent and respond to homelessness we need these systems to work better and together, so services are coordinated, person-centred and focused on prevention.¹⁰ This means the first service a person goes to provides an assisted pathway to the services they need – out of homelessness, when exiting custody, exiting a healthcare facility, recovering from a natural disaster, maintaining a tenancy, or living independently with the right supports at the right time.

Figure 4 – Causes and contributing factors to homelessness*

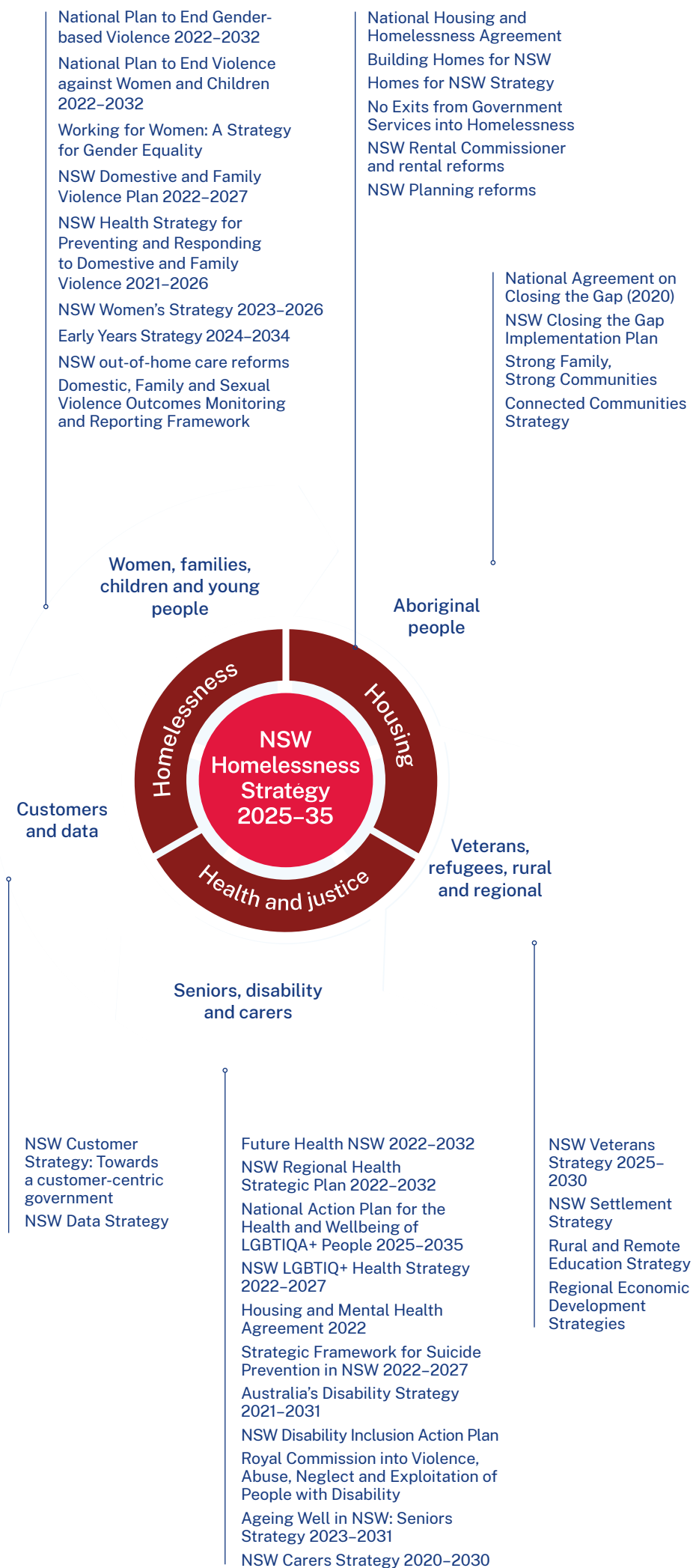


*Based on Melbourne City Mission – Drivers of youth homelessness <http://www.mcm.org.au/get-involved/youth-housing-initiative>

Figure 5 – How the NSW Homelessness Strategy relates to other NSW and Commonwealth Strategies and Reforms

A range of NSW and Commonwealth Strategies and reforms will work alongside this Strategy (see Figure 5).

Some will help prevent homelessness by addressing drivers like family and domestic violence or working to close the gap for Aboriginal people. Others will join up different parts of the service system to provide coordinated support and prevent people falling through the gaps. This Strategy will deliver progress through engagement with all relevant partners including (but not limited to) NSW Government agencies, Commonwealth Government, local government, non-government services, local communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and Local Aboriginal Land Councils.



Building on what we know

Enormous effort has been made over many years by homelessness service providers, peak bodies, people with lived experience, researchers, housing providers and public inquiries to understand the issues and impacts of homelessness and design solutions.

In January 2024, the NSW Government released '[Towards System Change - Update on a new homelessness approach in NSW](#)' which summarised what stakeholders have said over recent years about what needs to change and how.

Homes NSW will continue to embed the voices and experiences of people who need, use and deliver homelessness and housing services throughout the life of this Strategy. Our engagement approach is based on advice from ARTD and the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia who asked stakeholders how they wanted to be meaningfully involved in the Strategy's development and implementation.¹¹

Figure 6 – Building on what we know

This collective knowledge has informed the NSW Homelessness Strategy



For more information on what we know works see **Appendix 3: Evidence Summary**



Our vision

Our vision is that 'Homelessness in NSW is rare, brief and not repeated because people have a safe home and the support to keep it'.


This vision is based on the SHARE Framework developed by the UK Centre for Homelessness Impact.¹² SHARE provides a structured approach and common goals of making homelessness 'rare', 'brief' and 'non-recurrent'. It is an evidence-based tool that can be used to frame discussions and direct efforts towards the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

SHARE is intended to be applied alongside a wider approach that draws on bodies of knowledge, evaluation of what works and the unique experiences of those using it, so we have adapted the Framework for our NSW context. It is aligning efforts internationally and has been adopted by several Australian State and Territory governments, peak bodies, housing providers and homelessness services.¹³



Guiding principles





Housing is a human right

We know that stable, affordable housing is critical to economic security, physical and mental wellbeing, and helps people access jobs and services.¹⁴ However, housing in Australia is increasingly viewed as a commodity. We believe everyone has the right to housing that is safe, appropriate, affordable, accessible and sustainable.¹⁵ This means:

- Understanding that a right to housing is more than a person 'having a roof over their head'.

It is the right to live in security, safety and dignity in housing that meets their needs.

- Ensuring mainstream policies and practices do not discriminate, create service gaps or result in exits into homelessness, and are accessible to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Improving data systems and collection related to deaths of people experiencing homelessness.



Prevention is prioritised

An important part of ending homelessness is preventing it in the first place. Homelessness prevention has traditionally been seen as the sole responsibility of the homelessness sector which has very limited prevention levers.¹⁶ Homelessness is largely the result of other systems failing people, so all levels of government and NSW agencies have a responsibility to contribute to homelessness prevention from a human rights perspective. This means:

- Driving greater efficiencies in the system so that over time, we can redirect our focus and resources towards prevention initiatives across the continuum.
- Providing coordinated responses at key transition points like hospital discharge, exits from prison and leaving out-of-home care.
- Making sure policies and practices reduce the likelihood people will experience homelessness.
- Leveraging all areas of government to address systemic factors and gaps between processes which contribute to homelessness.

Housing First principles are embedded in policy and practice

Housing First contrasts with approaches that require people experiencing chronic homelessness to demonstrate housing readiness or progress through different accommodation types before they can access long term housing. NSW has invested in several pilots to address rough sleeping based on Housing First principles which demonstrate they can be effectively applied in NSW. NSW commissioned the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute to deliver [Housing First – Options and Considerations for NSW \(2024\)](#).¹⁷ We want to apply the Housing First philosophy and principles at a system level to guide system change while new social and affordable housing is becoming available. For people experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness, this means:

- Embedding Housing First principles in housing and homelessness policy including reconsidering wait-turn allocation models and providing choice in housing options.
- Reducing barriers to access long term accommodation and supports.
- Providing support to people in temporary accommodation.
- Housing people in the longest-term options available with the level of support they need.
- Support to maintain housing that is not dependent on tenure or program types.

The workforce is strong and capable

Good outcomes for people experiencing homelessness rely on a skilled and supported homelessness services workforce, and the delivery of consistent, quality services across providers. The NSW homelessness services sector is highly educated, motivated, experienced and resilient.¹⁸ Learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of retaining a strong service sector that is connected to local communities and can operate flexibly in response to unexpected developments.¹⁹ This means:

- Continuing to support and develop the homelessness workforce to retain skilled staff and maintain their wellbeing.
- Supporting the continued development of quality system structures including service standards, workforce and practice capability frameworks, and quality improvement approaches.
- Recruiting and retaining Aboriginal staff, including mentorship and career pathways developed in partnership with ACCOs and higher education institutions.




Aboriginal expertise and leadership are respected

Aboriginal people are the experts in Aboriginal families, communities and needs and must be positioned as leaders of policy and practice development on Aboriginal homelessness. We will work closely with Aboriginal people and organisations at all levels in line with Priority Area One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making. This requires us to work differently, in close respectful partnerships and collaboration with

Aboriginal people and their local community leaders, Land Councils, peaks, advisory groups, organisations and businesses. This means:

- Allocating system resources to align with need.
- Supporting the expansion of the Aboriginal-led homelessness sector.
- Increasing and retaining Aboriginal staff, particularly in regional areas, and supporting Aboriginal staff who are working in mainstream services.
- Supporting the non-Aboriginal sector to increase their understanding of cultural safety so they can deliver culturally responsive services for Aboriginal people and families.



People with lived experience inform service design

No one understands homelessness better than people who have experienced it. They have unique insight into the impacts of homelessness systems, policies and programs on individuals and families. We will work closely with a diverse range of people with lived experience, so homelessness responses are more inclusive, sustainable and better aligned with the reality of people's experiences. This means:

- Respecting the experience, expertise, abilities and leadership of people with lived experience.
- Building the capacity of government agencies (including Homes NSW) and homelessness services to include lived experience in governance, policymaking and operations.
- Building the capacity and capability of people with lived experience to participate in the design, delivery and evaluation of homelessness policy, programs, service specifications and delivery.



3

Person-centred principles are embedded in policy and practice

Person centred approaches are ways of commissioning, planning and delivering services that are based on understanding what people need and want, to help them live in their communities as they choose. Person centred approaches draw on mainstream services and community resources and do not limit themselves to what is available within specialist services.²⁰ This means:

- Designing policy and practice so the person or family is at the centre of decision-making about them.
- Designing policy and practice so that choices about services and supports are meaningful, flexible and customised to the person or family's needs and wishes wherever possible.
- Designing tailored responses for children and young people who have different developmental needs and require targeted social, emotional and physical wellbeing support.
- Equipping service providers with skills in strengths based and trauma-informed care.

Service planning and delivery is flexible, local and joined-up

Local service planning and delivery (also known as ‘place-based’) is where local communities assess their needs and design solutions with relevant stakeholders including community leaders, service providers and people with lived experience. This approach builds local community by using local resources more efficiently, targeting new investment to where it is needed, and supporting innovative, culturally appropriate responses. It helps coordinate or ‘join-up’ services at all levels of the system, so people have a seamless experience and better outcomes. This means:

- Developing local service system capacity by building on the local community’s assets, strengths, and networks for service coordination and collaboration.
- Shifting from siloed, competitive funding to flexible policy and funding models that allow different places to do different things.
- Working across sectors to make services more effective, focusing on intersections between housing, education, health, disability, child protection, out of home care and justice.
- Identifying service system gaps and areas for policy and practice reform.
- Increasing awareness about the impacts of climate and natural disasters on housing and homelessness and building the capacity of local services and communities to plan responses.

Systems, tools and measurement are consistent, accessible and fit for purpose

A mature service system is one that has a shared understanding of desired outcomes and performance, and transparent reporting against these. Homelessness services need easier access to the data they collect and information about their local service system. Homes NSW has a key role to play in data use, stewardship and governance to benefit clients, support better management and inform commissioning practices. This means:

- Developing best practice tools for homelessness screening and assessment for our NSW context and making them available across the system.
- Improving data systems, collection, sharing and reporting for transparency and accountability.
- Implementing effective data governance so data is consistent, reliable and not misused.
- Implementing monitoring frameworks for the NSW Homelessness Strategy and Specialist Homelessness Services sector and supporting measurement across the system.
- Building the evidence base by embedding evaluation in homelessness program design, and sharing lessons learned.
- Ensuring Aboriginal programs are monitored and evaluated by Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal communities have ownership of, and access to, data about them.

Our focus areas

Outcome 1:

Wherever possible, homelessness is prevented from happening in the first place, making it rare

To make homelessness rare, we need to provide people with clear and accessible pathways to information, resources and support so they can find and keep housing that is affordable and meets their needs. We know there are critical points

where targeted support can prevent people from experiencing homelessness. There are opportunities for mainstream government services to identify people at risk and intervene early before people reach crisis.



1.1

People can get and keep a safe, accessible and affordable home

We need more housing in NSW, especially housing that is affordable. Evidence tells us we need a range of affordable housing options to suit different needs, with supports where required, to prevent homelessness. Data tells us that people leaving government services are at particular risk of homelessness and that targeted action at this transition point can prevent homelessness.



We will focus on:

Increasing the supply of a range of quality housing models across NSW that are accessible and resilient to climate change and natural disasters.

Improving protections so people can keep their private rental tenancy.

Supporting people to remain in or enter the private rental market through subsidies and products.

1.2

People know where to get information and support to prevent homelessness

Homelessness can be prevented if people know where and how to get information and assistance. Information needs to be easy to find and understand, culturally appropriate, with multiple ways to access support. This is particularly important for people with low written or digital literacy, older people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, Aboriginal people, young people and people with disability.



We will focus on:

Improving public awareness about information, services and supports to prevent homelessness, such as tenancy advice, family early intervention services, mental health support and financial counselling.

Equipping mainstream and local community hubs to link people to information and supports without needing a label of 'homeless'.

Working to change the negative attitudes and stigma around homelessness that can prevent people from seeking support.

1.3

People at risk of homelessness are identified early and linked with the right supports

People can avoid the trauma of homelessness if their issues and needs are identified early, and they are linked with helpful support. We know that most people have engaged with other government services prior to accessing homelessness services so mainstream agencies have a key role in the early identification of people at risk of homelessness.²¹



We will focus on:

Supporting people leaving government services into appropriate housing.

Building the capacity of mainstream government and local services to identify people at risk and connect them to appropriate supports.

Building on effective prevention approaches that identify and support people and families at risk of homelessness.

Outcome 2:

When homelessness does occur, people are quickly connected to housing and the supports they need

Despite efforts to prevent homelessness, there will be times when people find themselves without a safe or secure place to stay. When this happens, we need to be able to offer a range of quality temporary and crisis accommodation options and supports to address people's urgent safety needs. We need to provide the time and space for people

to stabilise and work together to find suitable long term housing options such as private rental, with family, or in social or affordable housing. We need to make sure operational models address implementation challenges in regional and remote areas through integrated service delivery, local collaboration, and use of technology and outreach.



2.1

People's needs are quickly identified, and they are referred to the right supports

Entry and intake points need to be easy to access so people do not experience additional trauma or disengage from services. Screening, assessment and referral processes, and tools need to be timely, effective and coordinated to link people quickly to the right supports. A street sleeping registry for NSW will help create a more joined up system where people do not have to keep retelling their story.



We will focus on:

Supporting local collaboration networks to improve screening, triage and referral.

Revising housing and homelessness policies, practices and tools so they are responsive to need, flexible, culturally appropriate and support pathways out of homelessness.

Improving responses to people sleeping rough in public spaces.

Improving responses to people experiencing homelessness during extreme weather and natural disasters.

2.2

People get safe crisis accommodation with appropriate support when they need it

Some form of crisis support will always be needed as a safety net. When homelessness happens, we need to be able to offer high quality crisis accommodation that addresses the person or family's urgent needs while we work with them to find longer term housing solutions. Homes NSW will work with the sector to reform temporary accommodation to provide better outcomes for people.



We will focus on:

Shifting from commercial hotels and motels to temporary accommodation models delivered by the homelessness and housing sectors.

Increasing access to person and family-centred supports, particularly for people with complex needs, who are staying in temporary accommodation.

Delivering a range of safe, quality crisis accommodation models that are responsive to people's needs and have no barriers to access such as age, pets, gender, disability or family structure.

2.3

People are supported out of homelessness into longer-term housing with tailored supports

People's pathways into and out of homelessness vary and their needs are different. When homelessness happens, we need to be able to offer a range of longer-term accommodation options and tailored supports. This will become easier as housing supply increases and practice is driven by Housing First principles and person-centred approaches.



We will focus on:

Supporting people into good quality, stable, accessible and appropriate housing that meets their needs.

Providing flexible person and family-centred supports for people once they are housed for as long as they need it.

Working to make mainstream services more culturally safe, trauma-informed and inclusive for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Outcome 3:

When homelessness does occur, people do not experience multiple episodes of homelessness

We want to break the cycle of repeat homelessness and create long term, positive outcomes for people through longer periods of support,

stable housing that is flexible to their changing needs, and strong connections to the local community where they are housed.



3.1

People with complex needs can access comprehensive, longer-term support so they do not experience repeat homelessness

People who have experienced extended periods of homelessness are more likely to have complex needs. People with complex needs are likely to require longer periods and higher levels of support to remain housed and avoid repeat homelessness.



We will focus on:

Providing tailored support models for people with complex needs so they can maintain stable housing and achieve their goals.

Co-ordinating and integrating responses across agencies to meet people's needs and make sure they do not fall through service gaps.

3.2

People have strong connections to their community that protect against repeat homelessness

Connecting with a new community, or re-connecting with family or culture, can provide a sense of purpose and belonging and help people link to support if they have unmet needs. The transition to home can be particularly difficult for people who have experienced long term homelessness. People can feel lonely and cut off from their networks.



We will focus on:

Supporting people to build resilience and connections to family and community through community development approaches such as community gardening initiatives, playgroups and children's activities, local libraries and community centres.

Strengthening roles and relationships with local councils, which play a key part in developing connected and resilient communities and reducing homelessness through the management of public spaces.

3.3

People's housing meets their changing needs across their lifespan

People need different housing options and support to address changing needs over their lifespan. This can include aged care supports, disability supports, home modifications, or financial supports and subsidies. A flexible integrated approach means people can remain in their homes and avoid repeated homelessness or the risks that come with housing transitions.



We will focus on:

Providing well-maintained, quality social, affordable and key worker homes to ensure people's safety and well-being.

Modifying social, affordable and key worker housing to meet people's ageing, disability, cultural or other needs, such as accessibility, safety or community integration.

Working with Commonwealth Government services to integrate housing, aged care and disability supports so people have greater choice and control.

How we will direct our effort

The homelessness system will require significant reform over the next decade to achieve and sustain our vision.

The extent and pace of change will depend on the level of investment and cross-agency commitment over the life of the Strategy. The Roadmap below (Figure 7) outlines three broad stages for reform. Many of the activities are interconnected and may overlap or continue beyond the ten years of the Strategy.

The first stage is about stabilising the homelessness and housing system, removing barriers, and building the foundation for reform while we continue to deliver critical services. Later work will transition and transform the sector through local planning and delivery, and the supply of more social and affordable homes with support.

There will be two commissioning horizons during the life of the strategy, with the first from 2026-2031. These are opportunities to provide stability, flexibility and service continuity so we can support services to do the work they do well. They will also enable us to work with the sector on strategic reforms which can be implemented incrementally over the life of the Strategy.

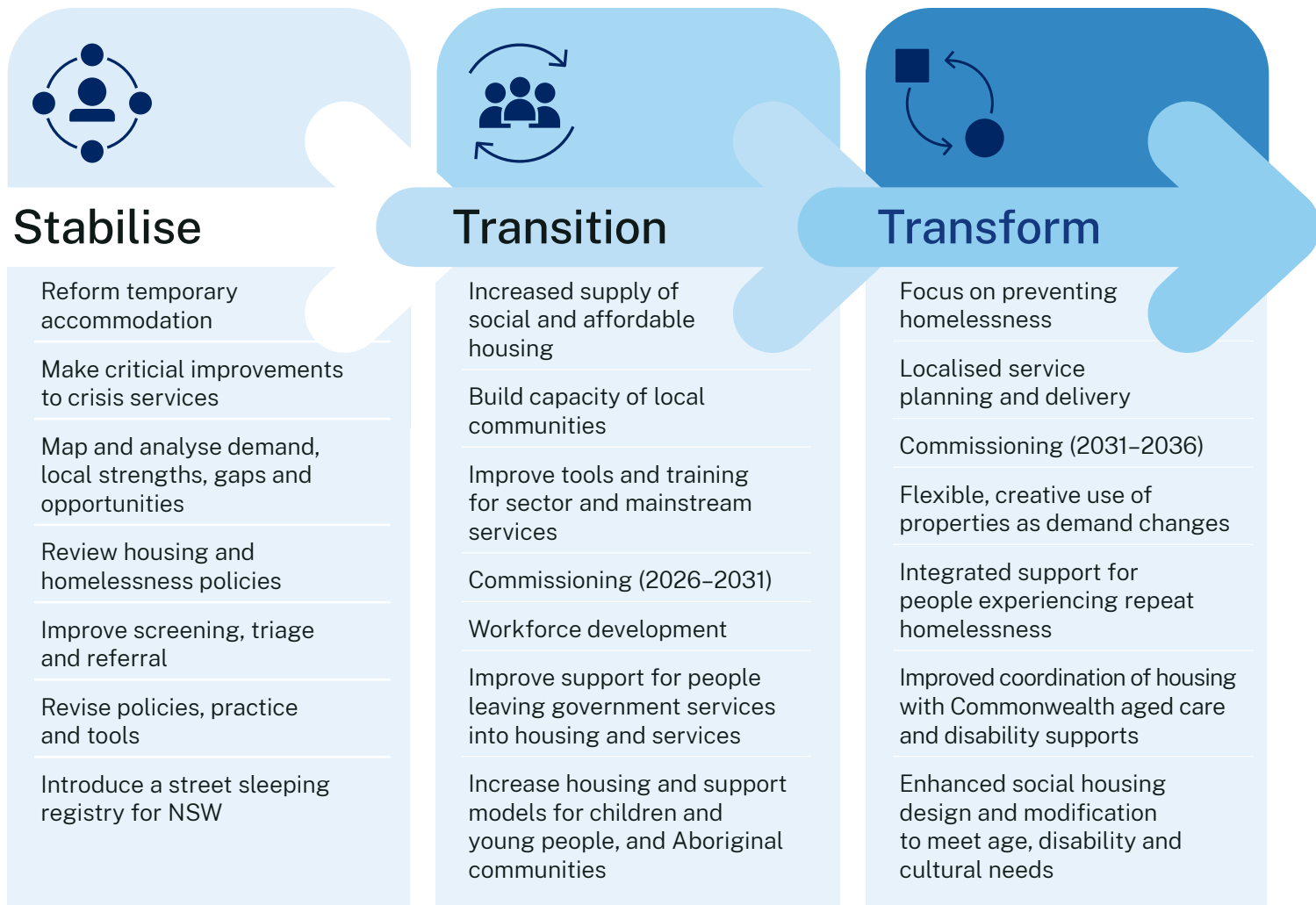
One early opportunity to shift to a more person-centred system is driving support for local collaboration networks. This will involve introducing a street sleeping registry for NSW, strengthening established collaborations and supporting newer collaborations to mature. The approach to 2026 commissioning will continue to build local service system coordination and collaborative person-centred engagement between local services, and funded services and Government.

The Strategy will be implemented through rolling action plans so we can be flexible to respond to changing priorities and circumstances (such as natural disasters) or new opportunities over the life of the Strategy. As we work to create a person-centred system we will focus on priorities for specific people, including children and young people and Aboriginal people, acknowledging their over-representation in homelessness and unique needs that require specialised service responses.

The action planning process will provide the NSW Government with a map of all the activity occurring across agencies to prevent or respond to homelessness so we can:

- identify potential opportunities
- eliminate duplication
- optimise resources
- create synergies between agencies for more effective responses to homelessness.

Our efforts will continue to shift and evolve over the life of the Strategy as we assess outcomes and integrate our learnings.





How we will measure success

Homes NSW will develop a Homelessness Monitoring and Reporting Framework to measure progress against the Strategy's goals of making homelessness rare, brief and not repeated.

The Framework will identify and define outcomes, indicators, culturally validated measures, data sources and reporting mechanisms.

The Framework will be developed in line with relevant existing and forthcoming frameworks including: the National Outcomes Framework under the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness,²² National Agreement on Closing the Gap,²³ NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework,²⁴ NSW Treasury Performance and Wellbeing Framework,²⁵ NSW Treasury First Nations Investment Framework,²⁶ Specialist Homelessness Services Outcomes Framework,²⁷ NSW Government Property Framework,²⁸ the Commonwealth Government's Measuring What Matters Framework²⁹ and The NSW Cabinet Office Housing Outcomes Framework.³⁰

We acknowledge that the current state of housing and homelessness data collection is complex and fragmented. It will take time to improve cross-system data collection and sharing, develop consistent tools and metrics, and implement robust reporting.

A Report Card will be updated at the end of each Action Plan period to inform planning and decision-making over the life of the Strategy. Homes NSW will develop the Framework and Report Card in consultation with NSW agencies, sector peaks, people with lived experience and Aboriginal people, to ensure their involvement in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.

This Strategy will be overseen by a cross-agency governance group, which takes a whole-of-government perspective on the issues covered. The governance group will review progress against the Strategy's focus areas, identify emerging issues and help shape responses to emerging needs.



Glossary

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)

An ACCO is defined in line with the criteria set out in Clause 44 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which states that:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination. Under this Agreement, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation delivers services, including land and resource management that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is:

1. incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit
2. controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
3. connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services
4. governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.³¹

Affordable housing

Affordable rental housing is for very low to moderate income households and is available for rent at a lower price than usual market rent. By paying a lower amount of rent, households are better placed to afford other living costs.³²

At risk of homelessness

A person who is at risk of losing their accommodation or is experiencing one or more factors or triggers that contribute to homelessness. Risk factors include financial or housing affordability stress, inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, previous accommodation ending, sexual, domestic or family violence, and relationship or family breakdown.³³

Complex needs

People who are experiencing homelessness and especially people who experience repeat and/or street homelessness often face a range of complex and compounding issues including:

- intergenerational, historical and/or current trauma
- sexual, domestic or family violence
- physical and/or mental health issues (including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- substance use
- cognitive impairment
- discrimination and racism
- distrust of authorities or services resulting from institutional or custodial experiences
- limited or non-existent history of successful tenancies
- financial difficulties
- other barriers associated with systemic issues that perpetuate homelessness.

Practice responses that include intensive multidisciplinary support are recognised as the best approach for people with complex needs.³⁴

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety is about overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the non-Aboriginal position and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so there is no assault, challenge or denial of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's identity or what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions which recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are recipients of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe.³⁵

Homelessness

There is no single definition of homelessness.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness, for the purposes of the Census of Population and Housing, as the lack of one or more of the elements that represent home. According to the ABS, when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable
- does not allow them to have control of and access to space for social relations.³⁶

The Specialist Homelessness Services collection defines a person as homeless if they are living in either:

- non-conventional accommodation or sleeping rough (such as living on the street)
- short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options (such as living temporarily with friends and relatives).³⁷

Homelessness is typically conceptualised as a situation in which people are not accessing adequate housing that enables them to make a home. This has necessarily required an understanding of the concept of home, which is often culturally determined. It embraces ideas not only of housing (both its adequacy and security of tenure) but also whether it facilitates good relationships (both with household members and those outside it).³⁸

Housing First

An approach that prioritises and provides or maintains access to safe, appropriate and stable housing without preconditions for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with support to maintain it for as long as required. This is delivered through an integrated person and family-centred service approach, recognising that housing is a human right.

Housing First is an internationally recognised, evidence based, person-centred approach for the delivery of housing and support for people experiencing homelessness.³⁹

Informal housing

Informal housing is housing that sits outside regulation under the Residential Tenancies Act. This includes caravans, boarding houses, lodging, and some share housing.

Key worker housing

Government key worker housing is provided to attract and retain workers where the lack of suitable housing is a barrier to service delivery, productivity and service outcomes. The focus for key worker housing is locations with hard-to-fill roles across core education, health and safety services.⁴⁰

Local hubs

Local hubs refer to community-based facilities, services or programs designed to support specific needs or populations.

In NSW services may be co-located or have 'pop up' locations, providing a central place for people to access a range of assistance (such as mental health, legal, housing, health).

Specialist Homelessness Services

Specialist Homelessness Services are non-government organisations that are funded partly or fully by government to support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These services can provide support with accommodation, sustaining a tenancy, domestic and family violence, mental health, family and relationships, disability, drug and/or alcohol use, legal and financial issues, immigration and cultural services, and access to other specialist services.

Social housing

'Social housing' is an umbrella term used to refer to long-term rental accommodation where rents are subsidised (and sometimes set to be a proportion of household income). The main forms of social housing are:

Public housing – housing provided and managed by state and territory governments, which can include dwellings owned by government or leased from the private sector, and generally accessed by people on low incomes and/or those with special needs; and

Community housing – housing managed by community-based organisations (known as community housing providers) which may include dwellings leased from government, and generally provided to low-to-moderate income and/or special needs households.⁴¹

Social housing also includes state owned and managed Indigenous housing and Indigenous community housing.⁴²

Footnotes

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A note on language used

In this Strategy, we respectfully use the following language:

‘Aboriginal People’ – this term is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people, First Nations and Traditional Custodians.

‘People’ – this term refers to all individuals who may be experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It is inclusive of all ages, genders, cultures, family structures, sexual and/or gender identities; and experiences such as trauma, mental and/or physical health issues, disability, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic and family violence, incarceration, out-of-home care or being a veteran or carer.

‘Person-centred practice’ – this term is used to describe a way of responding to people who are seeking support that is holistic, strengths-based and trauma informed. It focuses on what the person can do and what they identify they need, rather than making assumptions based on factors like age, gender, disability, cultural background, Aboriginality or sexuality.

‘Appropriate accommodation’ – this term refers to housing that is safe, accessible and affordable to the residents. Every person’s needs are different, and housing is considered ‘appropriate’ if it meets those needs.

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For more information
and appendices,
please visit [nsw.gov.au/
homelessness-strategy](https://nsw.gov.au/homelessness-strategy)
or scan the QR code.



Services and support

If you or someone you know is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless you can call **link2home**. This statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

link2home

1800 152 152

link2home – Veterans and Ex-Service
1800 326 989

Ask Izzy

Online information about shelter, food, health, and other essential support

NSW Domestic Violence Line

For women experiencing domestic violence
1800 656 463

1800RESPECT

For anyone experiencing or at risk of domestic violence and/or sexual assault
1800 737 732

Kids Helpline

Free confidential counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years
1800 551 800

Child Protection Helpline

24/7 telephone service to report child protection concerns
13 21 11

Lifeline

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services
13 11 14

13 YARN

24/7 crisis support for mob feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping
13 92 76

Beyond Blue

Mental health information and support
1300 224 636

Suicide Call Back Service

24/7 phone and online counselling for people affected by suicide
1300 659 467

Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline

For information, support or to report abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people and adults with disability in their family, home or community
1800 628 221 (9am to 4pm)

