

ENDING HOMELESSNESS: WHY AND HOW?

'Despite the common misconception to the contrary, the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable.'
(Australian Alliance to End Homelessness n.d.)

Why does ending homelessness matter?

Homelessness is taking shape as one of the key challenges of our time.

Australia's housing is among the most expensive in the world. Amidst rising costs of living and a shortage of affordable, suitable housing, thousands of individuals and families in urban, regional and rural communities nation-wide are feeling deeply the effects of Australia's housing crisis.

The widespread nature of Australia's housing crisis has seen levels of homelessness rise to new heights. More adults and children are rough sleeping, couch surfing, in crisis accommodation or in precarious housing arrangements than ever before. For a wealthy country like Australia, this is unacceptable. **Everybody deserves a place to call home.**

A place to call home - safe, stable and appropriate housing - is the foundation of lives. Home is the place from which people connect to family, friends and neighbours, to work, to study, and to the services and organisations they need, like health care and sporting clubs. Home provides comfort and sanctuary and is part of the fabric of communities.

The scale of the homelessness challenge we face means we need to collectively rethink our approaches. 'Managing' homelessness - the dominant paradigm of the past, has simply not worked.

What does ending homelessness mean?

Ending homelessness means that everyone has a place to call home. Ending homelessness doesn't mean homelessness won't ever happen.

Ending homelessness is an ethos and an approach that indicates that systems are working together to ensure that when individuals or families do experience homelessness, it is rare, brief and a one-off occurrence. It is an ethos about system change, which sees the value of collective action to ensure people are housed and supported in alignment with their individual or family needs.

In some communities in Australia and overseas, specifically those following the Advance to Zero (Australia) or Built for Zero approach (US, Canada), ending homelessness is about achieving something called functional zero homelessness. Functional zero homelessness is a dynamic measure whereby the number of people who are experiencing homeless in a given area (community) is fewer than the supply of available and appropriate houses, measured over a specific time period.

Prevention is an important part of ending homelessness, as all system change efforts to end homelessness must both address homelessness when it occurs, and prevent as many people and families as possible from becoming homeless (see also fact sheet 8).

What works to end homelessness?

Everybody deserves a place to call home.

A significant body of evidence exists to demonstrate what works to end homelessness. Such work builds upon community development and Collective Impact approaches (Kania and Kramer 2011). Key elements include:



A 'coalition of the willing', shared accountability and good governance

A dedicated group of stakeholders with clear governance arrangements and decision-making authority driving and championing efforts.



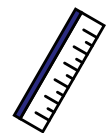
A clear aspiration/goal

Pin-point clarity about what is to be achieved, why and how.



Shared evidence

Collectively held and understood evidence about people's housing and support needs and how homelessness is prevented and ended.



Shared measurement

Mutual agreement about what an end to homelessness means locally and how progress towards it will be demonstrated.



Multi-agency and multi-sector collaboration

Deep partnerships and authentic collaboration across and within agencies and organisations (whether government, non-government, public, academic and/or philanthropic), bringing together expertise, ideas and resources to the end homelessness effort.



Place-based

Focused around community needs, context and resources.



Systems thinking

Understanding that the levers to end homelessness sit across multiple sectors and agencies.



Rapid, tailored service responses

Efficient and sustainable provision of services to meet people's housing and support needs for the duration of their need.



Prevention

Strategies and actions specifically designed to stop people falling into homelessness in the first place or into homelessness again. Such strategies and actions should work alongside crisis responses, keeping people appropriately housed, safe and engaged with supports and their community.



Continuous improvement

Commitment to test, try and continuously learn from strategies and actions.



Monitoring and evaluation

Regular review of strategies and actions to ensure relevance and good practice, as well as periodic evaluation to ensure value and impact from efforts.

A national and international movement

Ending homelessness is an aspiration and desired outcome for communities, as well as a local, national and international movement. The movement is defined by characteristics including community commitment to *ending* not just *managing* homelessness as has traditionally been the case; belief that collaboration is the way forward for action; and, understanding of the importance of using evidence to shape (and trial) actions to end homelessness.

Knowing about the end homelessness *movement* is important. It means there are experiences and approaches used elsewhere to learn from, replicate and evolve. It also means there are support mechanisms for communities that are thinking about, starting or further along in their end homelessness journey. A later section of this fact sheet provides links to some key resources. Other fact sheets in the series outline experiences and learnings from other end homelessness movement communities.

Relevant resources (see also References)

- [Adelaide Zero Project](#) (2024).
- Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) (2023) [advance to zero](#).
- [Brisbane Zero](#) (2024).
- Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (2024) [Built for Zero Canada](#).
- Community Solutions (2024) [Built for Zero](#).
- De Jong, I. (2019) [The Book on Ending Homelessness](#), OrgCode Consulting.
- Flatau, P., Lester, L., Seivwright, A., Teal, R., Dobrovic, J., Vallesi, S., Hartley, C., & Callis, Z. (2021) [Ending homelessness in Australia: An evidence and policy deep dive](#), Centre for Social Impact, Business School, The University of Western Australia, Perth.
- Homelessness Australia (2024) [About Homelessness](#).
- [Melbourne Zero](#) (2024).
- Mitchell, L. (2023) [Everybody's Business: What local government can do to end homelessness](#), Winston Churchill Fellow research report.
- Pearson, D. (2023) [Homelessness is solvable: How we can end it in Australia](#), Winston Churchill Fellow research report.
- Pawson, H., Clarke, A., Parsell, C. & Hartley, C. (2022) [Australian Homelessness Monitor 2022](#), Launch Housing, Collingwood, Vic.
- SA Housing Authority (2020) [Future Directions for Homelessness, South Australia's Homelessness Alliance](#).
- Tually, S., Skinner, V., Faulkner, D. & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2018) [Adelaide Zero Project Research Project Final Report](#), Don Dunstan Foundation, Adelaide, August.
- Tually, S., Skinner, V., Faulkner, D. & Goodwin-Smith, I. (2017) [The Adelaide Zero Project: Ending Street Homelessness in the Inner City. Discussion Paper](#), Don Dunstan Foundation, Adelaide, August.
- [Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness](#) (2024).
- See also Canada's [homeless hub](#) for their collective resources and toolkits for preventing and ending homelessness.

References for fact sheet 2

- Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) (2023) [advance to zero](#).
- Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2011) 'Collective Impact', *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9 (1): 36-41.

About **Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government**

This fact sheet is one in a suite which together makes up *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government*. *Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government* has been funded by the LGA South Australia as a practical resource for councils across South Australia to refer to in supporting community and council efforts to end homelessness.

The toolkit has been developed in consultation with the LGA, councils and stakeholders advancing end homelessness efforts in SA, nationally and beyond. The fact sheets synthesise what we know from the ever evolving academic and practice evidence about homelessness and how we can end it. The toolkit has been designed with both regional and metropolitan councils in mind. The fact sheets are sensitive to the different contexts in which councils operate, the ways in which homelessness presents for people and within communities and knowing that councils and communities are all at different stages in their ending homelessness journeys.

Other fact sheets in **Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government**

Ending homelessness: a toolkit for local government comprises nine fact sheets that work together to provide a practical guide for councils interested in or working towards ending homelessness with their communities.

- Fact sheet 1: Understanding homelessness: A guide for local government
- Fact sheet 2: Ending homelessness: Why and how?
- Fact sheet 3: Partnering in efforts to end homelessness: Making and having collective impact
- Fact sheet 4: Ending homelessness brightspots
- Fact sheet 5: Ending homelessness: Culturally safe practices
- Fact sheet 6: Local governments, advocacy and ending homelessness
- Fact sheet 7: Local government, disaster resilience and homelessness
- Fact sheet 8: The role of local government in preventing homelessness
- Fact sheet 9: An ending homelessness glossary

This project has been supported by the Local Government Research and Development Scheme administered by the LGA South Australia.

<https://doi.org/10.25957/gnky-sc45>