

Junction Support Services (JSS) is committed to social change and has been working to reduce poverty and homelessness in communities in North East Victoria since 1989. The organisation is a not for profit community service organisation providing support to children, young people, single adults and families who are disadvantaged through poverty, homelessness, family violence, mental ill health, and drug and alcohol addiction.

Mission

We work with individuals and families to support them to achieve their full potential.

Vision

Communities without disadvantage.

Our values are embedded in our organisation and form the basis of our strategic and business planning, recruitment processes, training and leadership development. We provide trusted human services to our clients by promoting our values to achieve our goals. We ensure our staff treat people as individuals and promote and encourage decision making and community involvement across our service areas.

Please see below Junction Supports Services responses to the issues paper below:

1. That the Federal Government work, in conjunction with State, Territory and local governments, to develop a ten year National Homelessness and Low Income Housing Strategy and Action Plan. This action plan should also include a focus on the supporting accompanying children living in homelessness as well as providing early intervention to young people who are entering the homelessness system. Such a Strategy must set strong achievable targets to reduce and end homelessness, provide affordable housing for the lowest income cohorts and include sufficient funding to support the required actions. The NHHA is one of the major mechanisms for Governments to implement such a Strategy and providers should be consulted and involved in it's development.
2. Increased affordable, appropriate and safe housing is required for homelessness agencies to achieve sustainable client outcomes. The lack of housing options is the most common and severe block to funded homelessness agencies achieving NHHA outcomes/outputs. There is a lack of affordability; lack of availability; and lack of access to housing for people at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness. Short, medium and long term housing options (preferably social housing) are required to support the sector to efficiently achieve NHHA outcomes with a focus on increasing sustainable long term housing options as the most effective solution to homelessness. Above this consideration needs to be given to appropriately supporting clients in a holistic manner at times with a long-term case management framework. Ensuring that services are able to provide long term case management enables clients the ability to address previous barriers which have resulted in them finding themselves homeless to start with.
3. NHHA funding for homelessness services should reflect the actual demand for assistance including for complex clients with more complex and longer term support needs and expand funding to meet demand in regional areas. Funding allocations do not reflect the demand for assistance particularly in regional areas where homelessness and risk of homelessness has substantially increased in recent years and the more complex support needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness.



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4. Since the beginning of the COVID 19 Pandemic, regional areas have seen an exponential increase in people relocating to regional Australia. This has resulted in increased competition in the private rental market, pushing out lower income earners and resulting in a higher number of people seeking homelessness support. The changing demographics and geography of homeless populations should be reflected in future program funding. Funding for support should provide a flexible spectrum of support rather than a time limited support period that does not equate to the actual needs of people experiencing homelessness.

The NHHA should promote Housing First approaches for both adults and youth which provide housing and support (at different intensities) for effective program and client outcomes as a strong evidence-based approach to ending homelessness. Currently, agencies trying to implement a Housing First approaches struggle to obtain funding for either the housing or the support component of these successful programs as usually Government funding provides either housing or support, not both. Housing without support, or support without housing is bound to fail.

5. Increase effective prevention and early intervention programs under the NHHA. Prevention of homelessness occurring in the first place and early intervention when people are at risk of, or first become homeless, are two key areas that could boost the efficiency of the NHHA. Prevention and early intervention programs reduce the inflow of people into homelessness by diverting them quickly and effectively into sustainable options. The continuing prioritisation of support and housing to those people with the highest needs neglects to address the inflow of new clients into homelessness. This is an intrinsic inefficiency in the current funding models of many housing and support programs under the NHHA.
6. We support models of early intervention including the Community of schools and services model which has been rolled out successfully in Geelong and Albury. They have seen a 50% reduction of young people entering the homelessness system as they have been diverted and supported before homelessness occurs. Investment into early intervention and prevention programs, while costly initially, has been shown to save the government significant money within 10 years.
7. The Productivity Commission should allow for a more thorough consultation process both with the homelessness sector and people with a lived experience of homelessness to contribute to this critical Review. The relatively short consultation timelines over summer holidays with an exhausted and fatigued workforce due to COVID have left many agencies unable to contribute to this Review. This is a missed opportunity for the Productivity Commission to learn from the practice experience of staff and the lived experience of clients/consumers. Many agencies like ourselves would be more than happy to facilitate client voice for the commission.



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