



Advance to Zero: Campaign Briefing

As at: 17 March 2020



advance to zero

local communities
ending homelessness



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About the AAEH

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending street homelessness in Australia since 2013. We are an incorporated entity with a Board of Directors that has worked with thirteen communities around Australia.

Despite the common misconception to the contrary, we recognise that the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable. We are committed to working to ensure that any incidents of homelessness that do occur should be rare, brief and non-recurring. We understand that access to safe, affordable, appropriate and sustainable housing is not merely about shelter.

AAEH supports Australian communities to individually and collectively end homelessness. Specifically, we work with local communities at all levels to ensure everyone has access to safe and affordable housing with the support they need to sustain that housing – including healthcare and employment. The AAEH believes that any incidents of homelessness that do occur are rare, brief and non-recurring.

Our membership includes individuals and organisations who are social service and policy leaders from across Australia who share our commitment to the vision of preventing and ending homelessness.

We are not a peak body, but a community of practice, seeking to share with and support local communities to end street homelessness in new and innovative ways. We are modelled on the highly successful Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and have worked with Community Solutions since our inception to train and coach local communities as well as working closely with the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH).

Community Solutions are the organisation that has pioneered the zero homelessness (or functional zero approach in the US and Australia (with participating cities so far including

Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane) and their approach has a heavy focus on technical, data driven, improvements to homelessness service systems. The Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) supports the emerging global movement of communities seeking to end street homelessness and has listed Adelaide and Sydney as two of its Vanguard cities leading the way in tackling street homelessness as part of its Place to Call Home Initiative. Its approach complements the work of community solutions with a focus on supporting local leadership, knowledge exchange and collaborative approaches.

The work of the AAEH is evidence-based. It is informed by global best practice and research available from the most innovative, credible and successful international studies and programs in the most effective ways to end homelessness. Our members include organisations dedicated to identifying, promoting, championing and implementing these evidence-based ideas and adapting to Australian and local community conditions.

We work with local community practitioners, policymakers, academics, corporate and community leaders so as to build shared understanding of the complex and interconnected causes of homelessness. This requires an understanding of the challenges of overcoming homelessness at a personal and community level, with the most effective programs and policies for preventing and ultimately ending it in our towns and cities, our states and our country.

Our Strategy

Based on evidence from around the world we know the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable.

Housing First is a proven approach that connects people experiencing homelessness with long-term housing as quickly as possible and without preconditions. Work performed by our member organisations around Australia using the Housing First approach has demonstrated that homelessness is not inevitable, that Housing First principles work in the Australian environment, and the work done and successes to date are scalable.

The collaborative, multi-organisation projects completed to date that successfully met and exceeded targets also highlighted that there is excellent impact potential when organisations work together to deliver a coordinated approach to ending homelessness.

Homelessness is solved by providing an adequate supply of safe, appropriate and affordable housing and for those who require it, supportive housing with tenancies that have intentional community services. In some situations, people who experience homelessness will also need ongoing community support to sustain their housing and to access other services they need like health and employment. Resolving homelessness requires collaborative efforts to deliver a range of responses to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Our homelessness services system should help to prevent homelessness and resolve it quickly when it does occur – it should not be delivering long term and repeated responses to people experiencing homelessness.

We are committed to working in partnership with local communities to develop effective local responses to homelessness built on robust and well-informed research. We seek

strong, bipartisan, national, state and local political leadership on the issue to ensure homelessness will be solved by a coordinated local effort. We need a national agenda that focuses on providing our communities with an adequate supply of affordable housing, one that matches people to the housing and support services they require to access and successfully maintain their tenancy.

Our plan to end homelessness is multi-faceted, reflecting the holistic nature of homelessness, and the collaboration required to prevent and end it.

Our success to date

In 2010 Brisbane held the first 50 Lives 50 Homes Campaign in Australia using a common assessment tool the VI-SPDAT. The campaign helped house and support the 50 most vulnerable people on the streets through system improvements, setting a target and measuring progress through collaborative effort. Shortly after achieving the goals, Brisbane expanded the model by launching the 500 Lives/500 Homes campaign to support all population groups resulting in 580 families and individuals housed including 430 children.

Perth also launched a 50 lives 50 homes campaign in 2016, included in it were over 30 organisations in a collective impact approach. The Perth Campaign achieved an 85% sustained tenancy rate for the 220 people housed and has now expanded to other locations. Importantly the collaborative efforts have not just improved outcomes in Perth they have also changed the way the homelessness system in West Australia operates.

Since then Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania and others have all undertaken adaptations of this methodology with significant success. These efforts have supported hundreds of people sleeping rough to move off the streets and into homes.

Initially the focus of the approach was to 'count up' to the number of people housed, the development of the methodology has seen the focus shift to 'counting down' to the outcome of functional zero street homelessness.

The Zero Homelessness Approach (Functional Zero)

In 2017 Adelaide was the first city to commit to functional zero street homelessness and to develop a public dashboard that is updated in real time to show how the city is tracking in reaching its goal. In its first 12 months, the Adelaide Zero Project helped to house a record 161 people who were previously sleeping rough in the inner city. Importantly though the data the project collected, it was learnt that despite housing this record number, a total of 356 new people were identified as sleeping rough for the first time during this first 12 months. As a consequence, efforts to prevent and divert people from sleeping rough have become a greater focus of the systems efforts to end homelessness.

There exists significant interest from other communities across Australia in utilising this methodology. Perth and Sydney have both launched projects modelled on the functional zero approach. A resourced national campaign will be crucial to making these local efforts sustainable and to supporting other communities to adopt the approach.

The Tools

To date the AAEH has engaged Community Solutions from the United States to deliver a series of mentoring programs and action labs to support all of these efforts. The action labs have occurred in Brisbane, Perth and the latest in Adelaide, in 2019, saw representatives from Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide participating. These action labs are followed by online coaching over an extended period. They have helped to catalyse the development of local collaborations and the establishment of a number of local by-name lists - including the first certified 'quality' by name list outside of North America in Adelaide.

The AAEH has pioneered the use of the common assessment tool for each community to use. The VI-SPDAT has been reviewed by Professor's Paul Flatau and Ian De Jong along with each of the participating communities.

The Mercy Foundation has supported through the AAEH the development of a tool kit for conducting connections weeks or registry weeks and Micah Projects is developing the Advance to Zero (AtoZ) Database to enable local communities to securely store and appropriately share data relating to their by name lists.

Further Background - The Zero Homelessness approach

There are a growing number of cities and local government areas in the United States and Canada that have ended rough sleeping homelessness using the functional zero approach as developed and championed by an organization called Community Solutions. The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness has adapted this approach for use in Australia, and we have called this our Zero Homelessness approach.

Success in Built for Zero communities

10 COMMUNITIES ENDED VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

3 COMMUNITIES ENDED CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

41 COMMUNITIES HAVE ACHIEVED A MEASURABLE REDUCTION

68 COMMUNITIES HAVE ACHIEVED QUALITY REAL-TIME DATA ON HOMELESSNESS

8 FUNCTIONAL ZERO PROOF POINTS SUSTAINING GOAL

108,928 TOTAL PEOPLE HOUSED

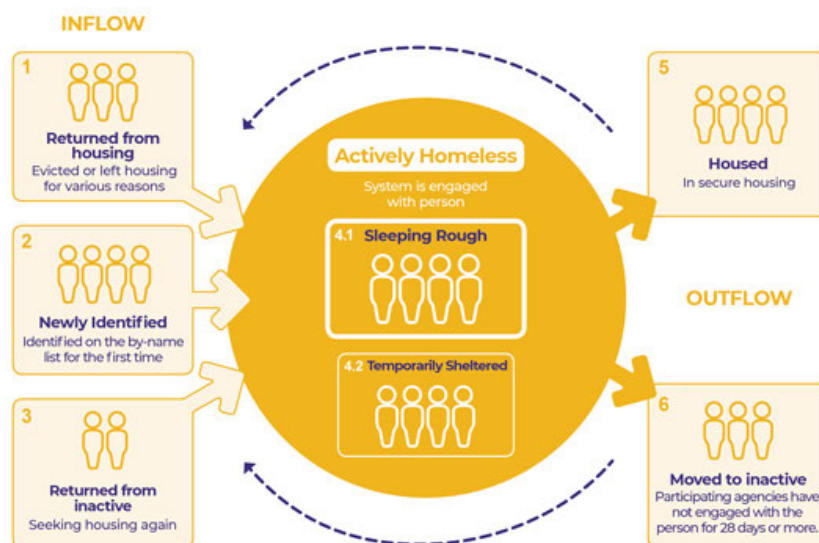
Two things differentiate the Zero Homelessness approach from business as usual— first, it demands dynamic measurement, meaning the ability to monitor and respond to homelessness in real time, rather than through static annual estimates. This puts more actionable data in the hands of local teams and officials. Second, it measures outcomes not primarily at the program level, but at the whole community level, by focusing on the question of whether the total number of people experiencing homelessness is declining toward zero at any given time, rather than on the outputs of particular programs.

Communities begin by developing a by-name List or a comprehensive person-specific accounting of every person experiencing homelessness and learning to keep this list up to date in real time as individuals' circumstances evolve. This by-name list helps communities improve and customize service recommendations for each individual. It also provides communities with actionable data that can help focus local system improvement efforts to drive reductions in homelessness over time.

Functional zero homelessness is reached when the number of people who are homeless in a community in any given month is no greater than the average housing placement rate for that same period. In other words, a community reaches functional zero when the average performance of its housing system is greater than the existing need and this can be proven that with data.

Ending Homeless does not mean that no one will ever fall into homeless again it means that our homelessness systems function to make homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring.

The functional zero approach has worked because it is a dynamic measure of homelessness - indicating the performance of a community's system in preventing and supporting people out of homelessness over time. The functional zero approach measures the following parts of a community's system:



Importantly this approach places the person who is experiencing homelessness at the center of the support system and ensures that their individual needs are the focus. Using this approach also provides a focus on prevention, by highlighting through real time data how many people are coming into the system and enables a focus on supporting people to sustain housing before they become homeless. The approach can be used for any form of homelessness but its success has been demonstrated initially with rough sleeping homelessness, particularly for veterans and chronic homelessness. In the United States, many communities have since applied the approach to families and young people as well.

In order to maintain momentum AAEH and local communities need investment to keep moving forward. Currently there is no sustainable investment and limited investment by

State Government on facilitating local collaboration and community owned data to inform decision making. Investing in this method will provide communities with real time data that promotes success and challenges rather than relying on Census of historic service delivery data.

About the Advance to Zero Campaign - General

AAEH is seeking to implement an Advance to Zero campaign - a national movement of communities working together to permanently house and support Australia's most vulnerable people starting with rough sleeping – including individuals, families, and children living in cars, squats, motels and cycling through short-term accommodation options.

The campaign supports community-based efforts to build public support for ending homelessness and political support for renewed Commonwealth and State investment in housing, support services and healthcare for the most vulnerable.

The campaign is inspired by 100,000 Homes campaign in the United States and the 20,000 Homes campaign in Canada and has been adapted to work in the Australian Context.

Advance to Zero: In Summary

- **Why** is this campaign needed, because street homelessness of all forms is increasing across Australia, yet despite the common misconception to the contrary, the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable
- **What** we will do is launch a national campaign to connect, support and equip local communities to end homelessness, starting with street homelessness, using the zero homelessness approach, often called the Functional Zero approach, pioneered in north America
- **How** the zero homelessness approach works is by identifying the names and needs of every person sleeping rough in a particular community, called a 'by-name list' and then using, data from that list and quality improvement techniques, to drive down the number of people sleeping rough to what is known as functional zero, and then ensure that any future homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring
- **Who** – the Australian Alliance to End Homeless, with support from the Institute of Global Homelessness and Community Solutions will establish a national improvement team to build Australia's capacity to implement this approach and support communities to achieve measurable reductions in all forms of homelessness, starting with rough sleeping
- **Where** – up to ten local government areas including: Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

The Campaign will deliver the following:

- Strengthen existing community collaborations and build new ones to ensure up to ten in total quality by-name lists are established
- All communities having in place the ten core components of the Advance to Zero Campaign – including quality improvements plans that document successes or lessons learned in reducing inflow, reducing street and temporarily sheltered homelessness and increasing housing placement rates

- Clear targets set for reducing and ending street homelessness from each of the participating communities, with significant progress made on each – including at least three having reduced below their baseline
- A national dashboard and database transparently reporting on community progress
- At least one community having achieved functional zero at a point in time.

Advance to Zero: Method

Our structured, supportive and data-driven approach focuses on creating a sense of urgency, optimizing local homeless systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices and driving continuous improvement.

We are focused on:

- moving from program responses to systemic responses in capital cities and local communities through action learning
- helping communities adopt proven practices, deploying existing resources more efficiently, and using real-time data, rapid cycle testing and human-centered design to improve performance whilst housing and supporting people end their homelessness
- creating local quality improvement plans that inform investment for Housing First evidence-based programs that are locally designed;
- engaging leadership from the government, private and philanthropic sectors in securing new resources for communities and removing policy roadblocks; and
- connecting communities to one another for innovation, knowledge capture and group problem solving.

We set key community milestones beginning with achieving a quality By-Name List to ensure reliable, real-time and consistent data from which to measure progress. Once communities have a quality By-Name List, they can use that data to improve performance and reduce homelessness toward functional zero chronic homelessness.

Using the urgency of a campaign-style movement with a collaborative peer-learning approach, we use a mix of in-person and virtual learning and coaching sessions to build the capacity of local communities to use a structured process to achieving and sustaining functional zero chronic street homelessness by housing and supporting people starting with rough sleepers.

In this context ending chronic street homeless means that our homelessness systems function to make homelessness rare, brief and non-occurring.

Ten Core Components

The following make up the ten core components that the AAEH has identified as being essential to the successful implementation of the zero homelessness approach in Australia and what will underpin the Advance to Zero Campaign:

Housing First Approach

1. **Focus on Ending Homelessness** – including a commitment to the principle of housing

first, but not housing only, working collaboratively and through the setting of shared goals and targets

2. **Assertive Outreach** – including Connections (or Registry) Weeks to comprehensively identify person-specific data of everyone sleeping rough and build a plan to move each into housing
3. **Aligned housing** – ensuring sufficient housing is available, through prioritisation, innovation, throughput in the existing system and additional investment

Community-Wide Measurement and Accountability

4. **By-name Lists** – enabling a focus on people and their individual needs, being able to measure this and drive reductions over time
5. **Continuous Improvement** – enabling data to be used for continuous system and service improvement not judgement - to drive reductions in homelessness across the whole community. This includes being informed by best practice research in other communities, nationally and internationally as well as the development evaluation frameworks
6. **Prevention focus** – the use of data to actually reduce inflow of people sleeping rough (both through prevention and diversion) as well as support the efforts of the broader community to address the causes of street homelessness, i.e. poverty and housing affordability

Coordinated Delivery Systems

7. **Common Assessment Tool** – the VI-SPDAT enables individual needs to be assessed and recommended for support in a consistent, evidence-informed way, and for the full list of people experiencing homelessness to be fairly and effectively triaged according to local priorities
8. **Coordinated Entry System** – local collaborative mechanisms for the triage of housing and support for those most in need – creating a simpler, more streamlined path to housing
9. **Coalition of Stakeholders** – working collaboratively across sectors in new ways to address the problem whilst ensuring a strong voice for people with a lived experience
10. **Streamlined Governance Structures** – clearly identified decision making, communications and accountability mechanisms to find solutions to the challenges facing local systems.

Q&A

Does this approach help increase the housing stock?

The approach has been successfully used to make the case for what type of additional housing is needed. In Brisbane, as a consequence of the data collected through the 50 Lives / 50 Homes and the 500 Lives / 500 Homes campaign's we were able to influence decisions about the nature of the supply needed. In particular, the 50 Lives campaign influenced the decision to build the Brisbane Common Ground facility which delivered an additional 146 units. The 500 lives / 500 Homes has influenced decision making on a purpose-built housing for twenty families with a child under the age of six. With the data collected through the Adelaide Zero Project a spotlight was put on particular properties that tenancies have repeatedly failed in, helped ensure that properties were upgraded.

Importantly, this approach helps to create a sense of the possible, that ending street homelessness is not only a worth aspiration, but an achievable goal that has been demonstrated in a growing number of communities in North America. Being associated with a positive campaign like this is something that politicians in Australia have shown a willingness to do.

Does this approach prioritise one type of homelessness over another?

The Advance to Zero campaign is not about housing for one group of people above others – it's about making sure the available housing can be used as efficiently as possible. In all communities we have worked with we have encouraged whole of population approach starting with rough sleepers.

In the US, campaigns have focused on veterans or chronic homelessness, but what the achievement of functional zero homelessness for these population groups has done is free up the broader housing system benefiting all population cohorts.

Why are outside experts needed

The researchers emphasize the importance of the leadership of the local community to help localize complex interventions, when communities use their existing skills and knowledge and combine that with tools that have worked elsewhere this has produced transformative results. We need to give Australian communities better tools to address issues in more meaningful ways than they have been able to date.

When measuring Functional Zero, what does Inactive mean?

Despite a community's best efforts, there are from time to time people who cannot be contacted. They move onto the inactive list if they are not able to be contacted within a set period of time, often 30 days. Examples of people moving onto inactive list are people who go into hospital or prison, are couch surfing, move interstate or die.

How do communities set up a By-Name List?

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and Institute of Global Homelessness have been providing a range of training and coaching to communities across Australia to establish by-name lists. Communities from across Australia have worked together through the AAEH to engage the assistance of Community Solutions from the US and we are seeking to establish an ongoing training program to support these efforts through the Advance to Zero Campaign.

How is the data stored to measure Functional Zero?

Local communities seek consent from people sleeping rough at the initial point of assessment, using our common assessment tool. Local communities then maintain control of this information, however the AAEH have built a national database to enable local communities to safely and consistently store this data.

Prior to the establishment of this national database, local communities had to use incredibly labour intensive, and inconsistent storage solutions. The national database enables de-identified data to be compared across states for use in improving practices to drive down

the number of people sleeping rough and to build community support for further Government action on homelessness and housing.

How will the Advance to Zero Campaign support local communities?

The campaign will enable the AAEH to continue in a sustainable way and build on what we have already been doing: training and coaching with the support Community Solutions, improving communications and the establishment of a national data analytics capability to support.

How does a coordinated entry system or aligned housing work?

Having a coordinated entry system for access to housing for people who are homeless is an essential part of the Advance to Zero Campaign, this involves ensuring through greater collaboration between agencies that there is appropriate support aligned to housing. The collaborative work enables a better understanding of what needs to change in the system of support services and what we need to advocate for in relation to the type of housing, healthcare and support services people require.

What is the difference between counting up and counting down?

Counting up is where you count towards a set target of how many people you are seeking to house – for example the 50 lives Campaign in Perth or the 500 lives Campaign in Brisbane.

Counting down is where you count everyone and track the progress not only about being housed but also active and inactive. The benefit of this is that you then are reporting on the actual numbers of people who present every month not just those who we house – it is a system response. We would also report on length of time it takes to get housed, duration of homelessness, deaths, etc. Functional zero acknowledges that homelessness will continue for some people whilst others get housed and we can measure both.

Have any communities reached functional Zero in Australia?

The only community so far that has a regularly updated and certified 'quality' by name list that is able to track progress towards functional zero is the Adelaide Zero Project in South Australia. It has been successful in housing a significant number of people, supporting 220 people who were previously sleeping rough in the first twelve months of the project. However over that same time period 403 new people were identified as sleeping rough. The latest data on the Adelaide zero project can be found at: www.dunstan.org.au/adelaide-zero-project/dashboard/

Who else is willing to fund this work?

The Institute of Global Homelessness have made a significant investment in supporting the development of the Advance to Zero campaign, funding David Pearson to work on the campaign's development. Community Solutions have already provided significant in-kinds support for the Campaign and have offered to continue to provide as much as they can to support the development of this campaign.

The Advance to Zero Campaign is modelled on the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and their Build for Zero Campaign. Their experience was that once the campaign was established, it became easier to raise funds from local communities, though government,

private sector and some fee for service work. Discussions are currently ongoing with various local government and state housing authority representatives as well as with the Department of Social Services.

Glossary

Advance to Zero – The national campaign to end street homelessness run by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH).

Functional Zero – when the number of people sleeping rough at any point in time, is no greater than the average housing placement rate for that same period (usually a month) – and this can be proven with data. Rather than a point in time measure it provides a way to measure a communities success over time in ending homelessness.

Absolute Zero – There is no-one currently sleeping rough on the streets at a point in time.

Build for Zero – The name Community Solutions give to the campaign in the US and the methodology being used.

Connections Week (Registry Week) – During Connections Week’s teams of trained workers and volunteers go out onto the streets to connect with people sleeping rough to get to know them by name and better understand their needs.

Count Up Goal – Refers to campaigns like the 50 lives, 50 homes campaign which counts up to a goal of a certain number of people permanently housed.

Count Down Goal – Refers to projects like the Adelaide Zero Project that count down to the number of people sleeping rough in a communities system being zero or functionally zero.

Collective Impact – Is a structured form of collaboration whereby organisations and individuals from different sectors all work together on a common agenda for solving a specific problem. Collective Impact is based on the understanding that existing approaches to creating change are too often ineffective for solving complex issues.

By-name List (Know by Name) – a comprehensive person-specific accounting of every person experiencing homelessness that is keep up to date in real time as individuals’ circumstances evolve

Vanguard Cities – The network of X cities around that world that are being supported by the Institute of Global Homelessness to lead the way in ending and reducing street homelessness. In Australia the Vanguard cities are Adelaide and Sydney.

A Place to Call Home Initiative – The name of the Institute of Global Homelessness initiative that is supporting the vanguard cities.

Zero Homelessness Approach – this is the Australian methodology for implementing the functional zero approach pioneered in the US, but adapted for Australia by the AAHEH.

Our Partners

The following are current partner organizations in the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness:

Founding Partners



Campaign Partners



Major Partners



International Partners



Research Partners

