

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

FACT SHEET

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS

Through this Agreement the Commonwealth and the States and Territories (the States) will work together to reduce significantly homelessness by 2013. It recognises that providing more crisis beds is not the long-term solution and that while extra housing is important, it will not be sufficient to resolve homelessness.

The Commonwealth and the States will commit \$800 million over the four years from 2009-10 to implement this Agreement. Additional funding under the National Partnership (NP) on Social Housing and the NP Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing will increase housing options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

What will the impact of the Reform be?

This Agreement focuses on three broad strategies to reduce homelessness and increase economic and social participation. These are:

- prevention and early intervention to stop people becoming homeless;
- breaking the cycle of homelessness;
- improving and expanding the service response to homelessness.

What will change?

Additional funding will be available through the NP to provide new or expanded early intervention and prevention services for homeless people, expand and improve current services and support people who have been homeless to sustain long-term tenancies. Further details on specific measures will be included in State implementation plans.

This NP agreement will complement new initiatives in the NPs on Social Housing and Remote Indigenous Housing.

What are the benefits that will flow from the Reform?

Homelessness will be reduced, decreasing demand on crisis services. Helping people maintain tenancies through a number of support services, will bring savings in the longer term for social housing and other services. Other elements provide options for new models of housing, so people who are homeless can access affordable housing more easily and quickly.

People who experience homelessness will benefit from a better connected, improved service system, and they will be connected to education and employment.

The higher rates of homelessness currently faced by Indigenous people will be addressed through this Agreement.

When will the changes take effect?

The NP will begin on 1 July 2009.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Is the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) going to continue under the new arrangements?

The new National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) will incorporate both the existing Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement and the SAAP. The current SAAP V Agreement between the Commonwealth and the States will be replaced by the new NAHA from 1 January 2009.

While the SAAP program will no longer exist on its current basis, all governments recognise that there will continue to be a need for homelessness services (including crisis accommodation and support), and the NAHA reflects this.

Homelessness is an agreed priority area in the NAHA. The Commonwealth and the States recognise that a shared commitment to reducing homelessness requires all governments to support actively reforms and improvements to a wide range of policies, programs and services so that they prevent unintended adverse impacts on homelessness, and contribute to sustainable outcomes for people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

2. Is the SAAP Act going to be repealed?

The SAAP Act has set out some important principles and guided the response to homelessness in Australia since 1984.

The NAHA arrangements do not require the SAAP Act to be repealed but provide an ideal opportunity to develop replacement legislation which retains a strong legislative framework to underpin the new national response to homelessness set out in the White Paper.

3. Has funding for research, data collection, and evaluation components of the NP been set aside?

Through the NAHA, it is expected that the Commonwealth and the States will commit to ongoing funding for the collection and publication of data, evaluation and research. In addition, COAG has endorsed a new and expanded role for the COAG Reform Council related to the publication of performance data for each of the new National Agreements. This new role will be supported by enhanced reporting under the 'Report on Government Services'.

Discussions are underway with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on ways of improving existing collections.