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Australian Alliance to End Homelessness media release

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Sector seeking urgent action to end rough sleeping homelessness

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) has launched a sector wide lobbying campaign, Homes Beyond Covid, to raise awareness of the urgent needs of people who have now been temporarily sheltered in response to COVID-19.

Without urgent action thousands of people who were sleeping rough and have now been temporarily sheltered are at risk of being forced back into homelessness because of a lack of options.

Throughout winter, the AAEH is calling for collaborative action through the campaign to find permanent housing and support for everyone sleeping rough or in motels placements due to COVID-19.

AAEH chief executive officer David Pearson says that this campaign shows that the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable.

“In the first eight weeks of this pandemic alone, amongst the communities that the AAEH works with, over 5,000 people who were sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough have been temporarily sheltered,” said Mr Pearson.

“Given there were 8,200 people sleeping rough at the last census, this represents one of most significant homelessness responses we’ve ever seen in Australia, but as we know this crisis is not over yet. That’s why we need urgent action from governments – homelessness can be solved by policy.”

The campaign coincides with the organisation's [7-point policy plan](#) and Submission to the Inquiry into the Homelessness in Australia and start of Inquiry hearings in Canberra to not just recover from COVID-19 but to ensure we see an end to rough sleeping homelessness.

AAEH's chair Karyn Walsh says that homelessness is as much a health policy issue as it is infrastructure and social services.

"People sleeping rough are an incredibly vulnerable health population, and if they get COVID-19 it will not just be bad for community transmission, it would be fatal for many of them. The best prescription we can provide for people sleeping rough as we recover from this health crisis is housing with support or simply a home – not a hotel room," said Ms Walsh.

"If we want people to keep public health directives relating to social distancing, personal hygiene and staying home if unwell, then it needs to be recognised that none of this can be achieved without a home.

Tipping people back onto the streets simply cannot be an option, but without urgent action it will be the only option for too many people."

Homes Beyond Covid builds up towards National Homelessness Week, where a special event will bring together members of Federal Parliament and persons with lived experience. The event *Lived Experience Engagement Morning* will be an opportunity to hear firsthand from a number of people who have overcome rough sleeping homelessness and publicly discuss policy and funding commitments which will put an end to rough sleeping homelessness in Australia.

Campaign information and resources can be accessed online here: <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>

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About the Alliance to End Homelessness

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending homelessness in Australia – starting with rough sleeping homelessness. The 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 sustainable housing services and that any incidents of homelessness that do occur are rare, brief and non-recurring.