

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

22 July 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you regarding the urgent situation concerning homeless people sleeping rough and COVID-19.

Australia has led the world in its crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included an extraordinary achievement in temporarily sheltering an estimated more than 7,000 homeless people who were either sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough in the first eight weeks of the pandemic alone.

This makes up a significant proportion of the total number of homeless people currently sleeping rough in Australia which, according to the last census, was approximately 8,200 people.

This phenomenal effort represents one of the most significant homelessness responses Australia has ever seen, but it is only a first step. While temporarily sheltering people sleeping rough has been an important pandemic 'crisis response', it will not be an effective 'recovery response'.

An effective recovery response needs to take into account that if we want people to follow public health directives relating to social distancing, personal hygiene and staying home if unwell, then we must recognise that none of this can be achieved without a home.

**Tipping people back onto the streets simply cannot be an option. Without urgent action it will be the only option for too many people.**

We call on your government to lead the development of a *COVID-19 National Response Plan for Homeless People Sleeping Rough*, which must include investments to:

- Maintain current crisis responses for people sleeping rough for as long as is necessary
- Rapidly house and support people who have been temporarily sheltered – including through the use of medium-term private rental subsidies
- Support community efforts to better meet, track and help prevent future rough sleeping homelessness through improved coordination of housing and support services
- Build more social housing in Australia and provide the needed supports, including dedicated supportive housing initiatives
- Ensure income support payments are adequate.

A number of submissions with additional information are already on the table for your consideration including:

- Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) – Homes beyond COVID – Let's get the Job Done, A Sustainable Response to Rough Sleeping, Winter 2020
- Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), National Shelter, Homelessness Australia (HA)– (SHARP) Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program
- CHIA and HA – Commonwealth Government – Rapid Housing Response Fund

If we don't urgently address the housing needs of people previously or currently sleeping rough, we risk compromising Australia's recovery from this pandemic.

Commonwealth involvement in housing and homelessness has been a feature of Australian life since at least 1949 and the need for Commonwealth leadership has never been greater than right now. The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and signatories below wish to work collaboratively with your government and state and territory governments to address this issue, given the positive funding and support which has been directed to people rough sleeping so far during the crisis.

We believe that there has never been a better time to seek to end rough sleeping homelessness in Australia than right now and we the undersigned encourage your Government to urgently lead the development of a *COVID-19 National Rough Sleeping Homelessness Pandemic Response Plan*.

We would be pleased to discuss this with you or your representative.

Yours sincerely,



David Pearson  
CEO, Australian Alliance to End Homelessness

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to end homelessness**

CC:

- Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
- Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services Hon Luke Howarth MP
- Minister for Health, Hon Greg Hunt MP
- ALP Leader, Hon Anthony Albanese MP
- Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness Jason Clare MP
- Greens Leader Adam Bandt MP
- National COVID-19 National Coordination Commission, Chairperson Neville Power
- National COVID-19 National Coordination Commission, Chair – not-for-profit working group, Mr Tony Stuart





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The Australian Alliance for  
Social Enterprise (TAASE)



WA ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS  
*Together we can end homelessness*

#EndHomelessnessWA



1. Anglicare Southern Queensland, Service Manager Carol Birrell
2. Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Dr Ruth Knight
3. Centre for Social Impact University of Western Australia, Director Professor Paul Flatau
4. Common Ground Queensland, CEO Sonya Keep
5. Community Council for Australia, Chair Rev Tim Costello
6. University of Queensland, Associate Professor Cameron Parsell
7. Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, Transitional Support Services Team Leader Randall Frazer
8. Kyabra, CEO David O'Toole
9. Lawright, Community and Health Justice Partnerships Managing Lawyer Stephen Grace
10. Orange Sky Australia, Program Manager Daniel Glaubert
11. Shelter Housing Action Cairns (SHAC), Executive Officer Sally Watson
12. St George Community Housing, Group CEO Scott Langford
13. St. Patrick's Community Support Centre, CEO Michael Plu
14. St Vincent de Paul Society South Australia, CEO Louise Miller Frost
15. Women's Information, Support and Housing in the North (WISHIN- Victoria), CEO Jade Blakkarly
16. Women's Safety Services South Australia, Chief Executive Officer Maria Hagias