



Homes beyond COVID Campaign Toolkit

Collaborating to advocate for change

<https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>



#HomesBeyondCovid

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to end homelessness**



Who we are

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending homelessness in Australia.

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.

We believe that despite the common misconception to the contrary, the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable and this has never been more true than in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Why we're taking action

COVID-19 has caused so much uncertainty, stress, loss and trauma – but it is also an opportunity to see significant change.

We can all harness the momentum and awareness that COVID-19 has created by asking people to take action which is why we want your community to help spread the word and lobby your elected representatives.

According to the 2016 census, there were an estimated 8,200 people in Australia sleeping rough. We estimate that amongst the communities the AAEH works with at least 5,000 people were provided temporary accommodation in the first 8 weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort represents one of the most significant responses to rough sleeping Australia has ever seen.

We now have an urgent task to ensure that these 5,000+ sheltered people are not pushed back onto the streets. *Homes beyond COVID* is an organised, collaborative effort aimed at providing both short- and long-term solutions.

This toolkit has been designed to support your community's efforts with tips for effectively lobbying government, key messages you want key decision makers to hear and remember, as well as some suggested social media posts to help drive public support for ending rough sleeping homelessness.



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What needs to change

The AAEH believes that the federal government needs to take urgent action to implement a sustainable, health informed COVID-19 response to rough sleeping homelessness. To help drive support for taking action, our key messages are:

- We estimate that amongst the communities the AAEH works with at least 5,000 people were provided temporary accommodation in the first 8 weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort represents one of the most significant responses to rough sleeping Australia has ever seen.
- The near-elimination of rough sleeping during COVID-19 completely shatters the idea that it is simply too difficult to find homes for rough sleepers.
- 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. We must prevent this from occurring.
- There has never been a better time to seek an end to rough sleeping homelessness in Australia than right now – but we need government action.
- If we want people to follow 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.
- Despite the common misconception to the contrary, the scale of rough sleeping in Australia is both preventable and solvable
- We know how to do this, the AAEH is helping communities to implement the Zero Homelessness Approach that has successfully been used in the United States of America to end chronic and/or Veterans homelessness in twelve communities so far.



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Homes beyond Covid policy change

Below is a summary of the key policy asks we are advocating for:

Crisis Response

- Maintain the crisis response – State and Territory Governments need to continue their emergency levels of funding until people temporarily accommodated in response to COVID-19 receive a suitable housing placement

Recovery Response

- Rapid housing and support
- Prevent future homelessness and track progress
- An integrated health care response - including a national policy, a health and homelessness pilot, a Health Housing and Homelessness Network, funding certainty, funding equity and a National Cabinet taskforce

Long term Response

- Build more supportive housing
- Build and upgrade more Social and Affordable Housing
- Income support

The full list of policy asks are available online at:

<https://aaeh.org.au/assets/docs/Publications/Housing-Beyond-COVID.pdf>



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How you can take action

Within the next few weeks and months, AAEH will be requesting meetings with the federal government to present the sustainable response plan and discuss the action the government needs to take. As responses to these requests come in, we may be in contact with you to join a meeting as a representative.

We want to use our collective voice to help shape the outcome and achieve an end to rough sleeping in Australia. It is essential that federal politicians hear from you to understand exactly what's at stake for people sleeping rough as we recover from this pandemic. Here are some ideas about how you can use your voice.

The campaign will build towards a special lived experience engagement forum during National Homelessness Week in August. The engagement forum will bring together members of Parliament and persons with lived experience to understand and discuss what is needed to end rough sleeping homelessness, why it's needed and how government can support this.

The following pages detail how you can get involved and support Homes Beyond Covid.



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Pressure your local federal MP to take action

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Communicating with the government is a crucial activity to help inform and influence their decisions. Here are some tips to make the process as easy as possible:

Send a letter

- Sending letters to government officials is important not only to change views but also to reinforce positive statements, key messages or actions. You can provide background information, facts or research reports if appropriate as additional evidence to support the need for action.

Request a meeting / invite them to visit your organisation

- You can request a meeting by calling or emailing your local federal MP using our template email.
- It may take a few weeks before the meeting occurs.
- Don't hesitate to follow up your meeting request by calling and asking to speak to the office secretary to ensure the request is in process.
- Meetings are usually brief so ensure that you use your time well by preparing a meeting agenda and thinking about the key points you need to get across and how to communicate them in a clear and concise way.
- Plan the key arguments you want to put across, practice saying them aloud and think of possible questions or counter arguments you will be given and plan how to best respond.
- Make sure you're on time and always remain polite and courteous, but don't be afraid to take a firm position.
- Leave a hardcopy of the *Homes beyond COVID—Let's get the job done: a sustainable response to rough sleeping*.
- Send a follow-up letter or email to thank them for their time after the meeting.
- If your local member is visiting your office, you can send a short media release to local media to increase interest and awareness of the campaign and the MPs support to end rough sleeping homelessness.
- The template media release, template email and federal MP details can be found under 'Engage your local MP' at <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>



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Sign our petition

Together we can end rough sleeping homelessness. Sign our petition and share it across your social profiles to demand #HomesBeyondCovid. There is strength in unity - let's show that Australians want to end rough sleeping homelessness. Join us by clicking on the 'Sign the petition' tab on <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>

Take action on social media

Using your social media presence to share stories, voice your demands, and amplify the messages of the campaign are important ways to get the attention of politicians and advocate for change.

Support and reference other campaigns

[Everybody's Home](#) calls on the government to implement a national plan to end homelessness, to build more social houses and to make housing more affordable generally. The [Raise the Rate campaign](#) calls on government to fix our social security safety net for good so that it keeps people out of poverty. Both campaigns are important and are why we reference it in our policy plan document and ask that you please follow @AAEH0 and @_everybodyshome on Twitter, and use the hashtags #HomesBeyondCovid #homesnohotels #everybodyshome and #RaiseTheRate in your social posts.

The Policy Plan is also available online at the AA EH website. Remember to direct your audiences to the Policy Plan or petition so they can support our asks. You can also use these suggested social posts and graphics under 'Share on social media' to help spread the word: <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>



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Engage with media

Getting in touch with your local media

- Send letters to your editor based off the campaign media release and template release for local MP visits.

Radio text lines and talk back

- Get involved in the media discourse and text or call radio hosts live to discuss the Policy Plan and campaign.
- Try get in touch when you hear a story on rough sleeping and/or homelessness and discuss how your organisation is taking action and calling for a national strategy.
- Prepare your key messages from page 4 before calling in or texting. Remember to include what government actions you'd like to see come out of this campaign.
- If calling in:
 - Make sure you have good phone reception.
 - When you call you will first speak to a producer who will want to know what you plan to say. Once you're in the queue, turn off your radio so you don't distract yourself!
 - Be concise. You'll only get about 30 seconds on air so get to your key message quickly!
- Find the campaign media release, media release template and radio media contacts under 'Contact your local media' <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>

Social media

- Research journalists in your region who report on homelessness, rough sleeping and social issues.
- Tag their profiles in your posts about #HomesBeyondCovid to raise the campaign and Policy Plan to their attention.
- Send a direct message to them over social media with a link to the report. Ask them to share the report with their social media audience and see if they would like to discuss the campaign and potential case studies.



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We appreciate your support for the Homes beyond Covid campaign

Further information: <https://aaeh.org.au/homes-beyond-covid>

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