



aaeh

australian
alliance
to end
homelessness

Australian Alliance to End Homelessness media release

Wednesday 22 July 2020

Unprecedented call for action from Australian governments on COVID-19 and rough sleeping homelessness

A broad cross section of organisations across Australia have called on the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to take urgent action to ensure the people who were sleeping rough are not forced back out onto the street after being sheltered from COVID-19.

Penning a letter to the Prime Minister, over 70 organisations – led by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness – have called for a *COVID-19 National Rough Sleeping Homelessness Pandemic Response Plan* to be developed. Signatories span a number of sectors including local governments, philanthropy, businesses, university experts and not-for-profits working in health, homelessness, housing and social support.

AAEH chief executive officer David Pearson says that the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable, saying that this has never been more evident than it is right now.

“Australia has led the world in its crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We’ve provided temporary shelter for an estimated 7,000 people either sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough since this crisis began. This is an extraordinary achievement, with approximately 8,200 people sleeping rough during the last census,” Mr Pearson said.

“This momentous effort shows that we can end rough sleeping homelessness with the right infrastructure and supports. However, it is only a first step – a pandemic ‘crisis response’ rather than a sustainable ‘recovery response’.”

The letter follows sector submissions to the Inquiry into homelessness in Australia and calls on government to lead the development of a COVID-19 National Rough Sleeping Homelessness Pandemic Response Plan, including investments that:

- Maintain current crisis responses for people sleeping rough

- 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

“This letter shows the willingness across multiple organisations and sectors to collaborate with federal, state and territory governments to address this issue. There’s been a lot of positive funding and support for people sleeping rough so far into the crisis, but if urgent action isn’t taken there’s a risk it will be undone,” Mr Pearson said.

“There has never been a better time to seek to end rough sleeping homelessness than right now. We need an urgent, effective recovery response. Without this we risk tipping people back onto the streets compromising Australia’s recovery from this pandemic

Commonwealth involvement in housing and homelessness has been a feature of Australian life since the end of the second world war – the last time we faced a crisis on the magnitude we do today. The need for Commonwealth leadership on homelessness and housing has never been more important.”

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness and signatories of the attached open letter have indicated their willingness to work collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government, as well as State and Territory Governments who share responsibility for addressing this issue.

-ENDS-

MEDIA CONTACTS:

- Julia Macerola on 0422 337 332 or julia@fiftyacres.com
- Jo Scard on 0457 725 953 or jo@fiftyacres.com

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.