



MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW homelessness services continue to be stretched at the seams – in a year like no other

NSW homelessness services continued to experience high demand during a period that included bushfires and a pandemic – data released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows in 2019/2020 over 70,300 clients were supported by homelessness services in New South Wales.

Homelessness services continue to support 26% more clients than they are funded to support and have been stretched at the seams as they rapidly responded to bushfire emergencies and adapted their services to help keep people experiencing homelessness healthy and well during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NSW homelessness services have the highest level of unmet need in Australia. More clients did not receive accommodation who needed it (21,790) than those clients who were provided with accommodation (17,157).

Homelessness services were relieved to have their funding confirmed as part of the 2020 NSW Budget. However, despite the existing demands on homeless services additional service requirements are being imposed with no additional funding.

“Once again the AIHW data confirms the unsustainable demand for homelessness services in NSW following the reforms undertaken in 2014”. said Katherine McKernan, CEO of Homelessness NSW.

Even if supported by homelessness services clients are more likely to remain homeless than find long term housing with over 58% of clients remaining homeless – either rough sleeping (16%), couch surfing (37%) or being stuck in crisis accommodation (47%).

“What is concerning is that economic modelling indicates that by June 2021 there is likely to be an additional 9,000 people experiencing homelessness as a result of the economic impacts of COVID-19 and services are already experiencing the impacts of this increased demand.”

‘We urgently need investment in additional social housing in NSW. We believe that the NSW Government needs to commit to at least 5,000 additional social housing properties per year for the next 10 years to even meet current demand. Investing in social housing

Financial difficulties, housing crisis and domestic violence continue to remain the leading reasons for seeking assistance. Action is urgently required to address domestic and family violence in NSW. The AIHW data shows a continued increase in the number of clients seeking assistance due to domestic and family violence with almost 28,000 people seeking assistance in 2019/20.

‘Domestic Violence NSW is concerned that the Premier’s Priority to reduce rough sleeping – while admirable – misses the real need. The AIHW data highlights that the majority of SHS clients – almost 18000 – are women and children escaping domestic and family violence. 14% of clients who requested assistance did not receive it which us causes huge concern.’ said Delia Donovan, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW.

'Ensuring a fully resourced and funded specialist domestic and family violence sector is vital to ensuring the safety of those escaping domestic and family violence. Services need additional funding to meet the current gaps and shouldn't have to be worried about keeping staff and funding with demand this high'.

It is evident that the economic impacts of COVID-19 will continue to affect children and young people in the coming months. Due to the effects of domestic and family violence accompanied children will continue to seek support. Without adequate housing children and young people will continue to be at risk.

"Despite reducing youth homelessness being one of the Premier's priorities, the AIHW figures show that children and young people are increasingly requiring support from homelessness services. Urgent investment is required to prevent youth homelessness and to provide affordable housing options for young people". Yfoundations' CEO Pam Barker said.

Quick Facts

In **2019/20** approximately:

- **70,300** clients were supported by homelessness services (38% increase since NSW Govt reforms)
- Approx **18000** clients were escaping domestic and family violence (38% of all clients)
- Approx **17,883** clients were unaccompanied young people aged 15 – 24 (26% of all clients)
- Approx **30% of all clients were Aboriginal**
- **21,790** clients did not receive crisis or other accommodation despite requesting it whilst 17,152 were provided with crisis or other accommodation
- **58%** of clients who were homeless prior to accessing a service had no long term accommodation or housing at the end of support
- Homelessness services are funded to support around **58,000** clients, yet in 2018/19 provided a service to over **70,300** clients, supporting **25%** more clients than they are funded for.

Further information

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