



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Our Housing and Homelessness Plan

We want to know what you think

An Easy Read paper



How to use this paper



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this paper.

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS.



We wrote this information in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 59.



This is an Easy Read summary of another paper.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other paper on our website.

www.engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan



You can ask for help to read this paper.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of our land – Australia.

They were the first people to live on and use the:



- land



- waters.

What's in this paper?

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About this paper

Many Australians deal with:



- housing challenges



- **homelessness.**



People who are homeless do not have a home.

They must find a place to sleep each night, and these places are not always the same.

We say 'homelessness' when we talk about the experiences of these people.

Many people face issues with:



- finding a place to live



- being able to afford a place to live.

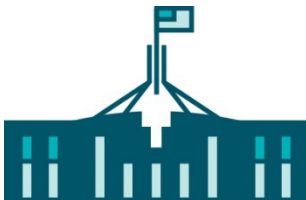
Governments must work together to fix these issues, including:



- state and territory governments



- local governments



- the Australian Government.



Governments also need to work with:

- organisations
- housing services
- experts.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan



Governments are working together to create a plan to support all Australians to get:

- safe housing
- affordable housing.



We call it the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

In this paper, we just call it the Plan.



Governments will work together to use the Plan.



This includes making sure the Plan works with other state and territory plans.

Who will support the Plan



Different groups need to work together to support the Plan.

These groups include:



- all governments



- community organisations



- businesses, like banks and builders



- experts.



A group of experts will give advice about the Plan.

They are the 'Housing Supply and Affordability Council'.



They:

- make their own decisions
- don't work for the government.

Why we need the Plan



The Plan will help everyone set goals to:

- make housing better
- reduce homelessness.



The plan will help everyone work to achieve these goals.



It will also help everyone better understand what causes:

- housing issues
- homelessness.



The plan will also help governments improve how they:

- collect information
- use this information.



And it will help governments find out how they can work with:

- businesses, like banks and builders
- people who pay for housing.

We want to know what you think



Before governments create the Plan, we want to know what you think it should include.

For example, how you think governments can improve housing issues and homelessness in Australia.



Your ideas will help make sure the Plan works well.

In this paper, we explain:



- what governments are doing now



- how housing works in Australia.



We also explain some of the issues that affect:

- housing
- homelessness.



But we don't explain every issue that affects people.

We've just explained some to give you an idea of the issues.



We understand that people's experience with housing changes a lot.

And different issues can affect a person at the same time.

How to tell us what you think



We have included some questions for you to think about.

They are at the end of each section.



You can answer:

- all of our questions
- some of our questions.

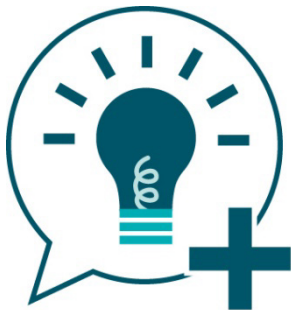


You can also share other ideas you think are important.



You can share your ideas on our website.

www.engage.dss.gov.au/developing-the-national-housing-and-homelessness-plan



If you've already shared your ideas about housing and homelessness, you can share your ideas again.



You can write your ideas in an email.



You can also send us a video or audio recording of your ideas.



You can send them to our email address.

HousingandHomelessnessPlan@dss.gov.au



You can also email us if you:

- want this paper in another language
- have any questions about this paper.



Please share your ideas before
Friday 22 September 2023.

How we will use your ideas



After we get everyone's ideas, we want to publish some of them on our website.



Please tell us if you don't want us to:

- publish your ideas
- include your name with your ideas.



You don't have to give us your name if you don't want to.



You'll also be able to share your ideas with us at other times while we create the Plan.

About homelessness

122,000



Homelessness is a big problem in Australia.

In 2021, more than 122,000 people were homeless.

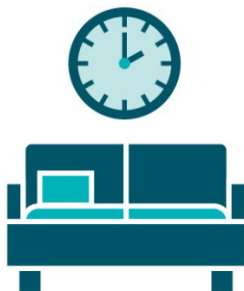


Some people who are homeless don't have a home to live in.

For example, they live in their car or on the street.

We call them 'rough sleepers'.

Homelessness can also include:



- staying somewhere for a short time, like sleeping on someone's couch



- not having enough space to live in a very crowded home



- not having a better place to stay.



Homelessness can affect your:

- mental health
- physical health.



And it can make you feel like you're not safe.

The most common reasons for homelessness are having trouble with:



- finding a place to live



- affording a place to live.

Overcrowding



‘Overcrowding’ is another type of homelessness.

It means your home doesn’t have enough space for everyone who lives there.

3



This happens if a home needs at least 3 extra bedrooms for everyone to have enough space.



There’s more overcrowding in places very far from cities and towns.

The most overcrowding happens in the Northern Territory.



But overcrowding is also becoming a bigger problem in New South Wales and Victoria.



If a home has a lot of overcrowding, it counts as homelessness.

Even if people have a place to live.

Supporting people who are homeless



Homelessness services help people who:

- don't have a home
- must find a place to sleep each night.



They can support people with things like:

- meals
- showers
- a place to do laundry.



They can also give financial advice.

There are also different types of homelessness services that can provide a place to live:



- while someone looks for something long-term



- in an emergency.



Governments give **funding** for homelessness services.

Funding is money from the government to pay for services.



But other groups provide homelessness services too.

They include:

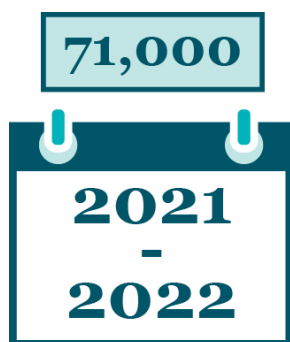


- charities



- community organisations.

Problems with homelessness services



On average, homelessness services helped 71,000 each day in 2021 and 2022.



But some people couldn't get the homelessness services they needed.



People also say they find these services hard to use.



All services need to improve the way they:

- share information
- support people to use their services.

This includes homelessness services.



They also need to find and keep staff that can support people who experience homelessness.

Supporting people at risk of becoming homeless



Homelessness services can also support people who are at risk of becoming homeless.



In 2021, young people were the most likely age group to be homeless.

This includes people aged 19 to 24 years old.



People who are homeless are also more likely to become homeless again in their life.



Supporting people at risk could stop them from becoming homeless in the first place.

Supporting people who are homeless for a long time



Some people are homeless for a long time.

This also includes people who are homeless again and again.



People who are homeless for a long time often need lots of support.

For example, they might need a mix of supports over a long time.



People might not ask for help because they don't trust homelessness services.

Or because they don't feel safe.



They might need programs that reach out and support them when they are at risk.

Questions to think about

How can governments and community organisations:



- reduce homelessness?



- support people who are at risk of becoming homeless?



What governments are doing now



All levels of government support housing and homelessness services in different ways.

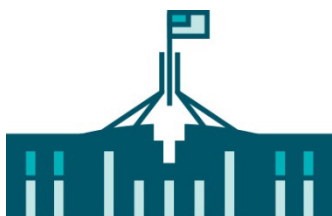
The levels of government include:



- state and territory governments



- local governments



- the Australian Government.

State and territory governments



State and territory governments work closely with housing and homelessness services.

They are in charge of planning:



- how many homes people can build

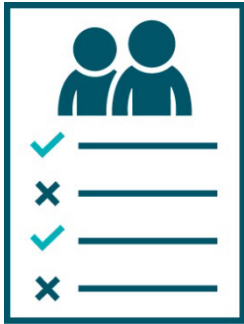


- what land people can use



- what people can use the land for.

They are also in charge of:



- rules for people who rent



- stamp duty – a one-off payment you make to the government when you buy property.



- **taxes** people pay for the land they own



Tax is money all Australians pay to the government.

The government uses tax to pay for things in the community, like roads and hospitals.



State and territory governments also build big projects, like roads and bridges.

And they help to provide funding for these projects.



They also work with local governments.

Local governments



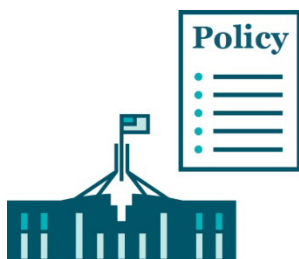
Local governments are in charge of planning how to use local land.



They also check plans people have about what they want to build.

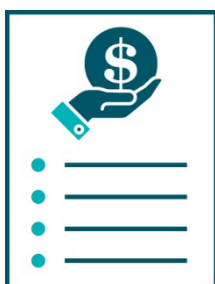
For example, new housing.

The Australian Government



The Australian Government delivers **policies** that can affect housing and homelessness services.

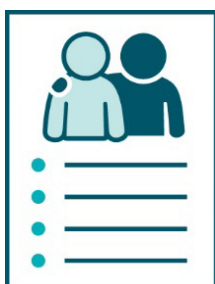
Policies are plans for how governments should do things.



This includes policies about how they manage and use money.



It also includes policies about when people move to Australia from overseas.



And it includes policies about support payments.



All of these policies can affect who needs housing and homelessness services.

How governments work together

\$16 billion



Together, all governments spend about \$16 billion each year on housing and homelessness support.



As part of this, the Australian Government agreed to give \$1.6 billion of funding each year.

They give this funding to state and territory governments to support housing and homelessness services.



State and territory governments work with local governments on rules for housing.

These rules make sure that housing works well.



There are many rules that people must meet to build the right kind of housing.

But all these rules can make building housing slow.



State and local governments are looking at ways to make these rules work better.



The Australian Government also asked a group of experts to check how governments could work together.



The experts shared that state and territory governments could:

- create housing goals
- work with local governments to reach these goals.



Governments could also change the rules so people can build:

- different types of housing
- housing that can support more people, like apartments.



And government plans and funding could also aim to create more housing.

Question to think about



How could governments work with different services and organisations to improve housing?





You can take a break now if you'd like to.



You're about halfway through the paper.



Different types of housing support



There are different types of housing that can support people who are:

- homeless
- at risk of being homeless.



Social housing is one of the main types.

It provides homes for people who can't afford to **rent** or buy a home on their own.

When you rent a home, you pay to live in a home someone else owns.

Social housing might be:



- public housing – homes that state and territory governments own and manage



- community housing – homes that other organisations own and manage.



State and territory government funding also supports some community housing.



There is also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing that state and territory governments own and manage.

We explain this more in another section.

The section starts on page 42.

The amount of social housing



The amount of social housing hasn't kept up with the amount of people who need it.



There are now more people who need social housing.



Usually only people with the 'greatest need' get social housing.

These people often need more support than others.



The number of people who need social housing can also go up when issues affect people who rent.



For example, when the price of rent goes up.

Or there are less places for people.



People who manage social housing face problems with keeping it clean and safe.



The money they get from rent is low compared to how much it costs to:

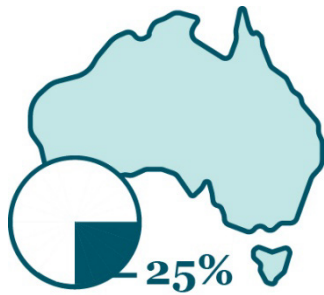
- keep the building in good condition
- manage the social housing.



This means there are people living in social housing that isn't:

- clean enough
- safe enough.

Community housing



The number of people who use community housing has gone up.

It makes up 25% of all social housing in Australia.



Part of this is because some public housing has become community housing.



There are over 500 organisations that deliver community housing across Australia.



These organisations can use a mix of funding from:

- governments
- donations – when people give money to support something
- charities.



They can:

- deliver different types of services to suit what people need
- help people find the housing services and supports they need.



There are some important issues for community housing organisations.



They must think about getting funding that will last a long time.



They also need to balance:

- supporting people
- making sure their organisation lasts.



Governments also need to make sure rules protect people who move between:

- public housing
- community housing.



Governments need to create a way to collect information about how people use community housing.

That will help them create better policies and programs.

Affordable housing



‘Affordable housing’ means homes you can rent or buy at a lower cost than normal.



This is often because other people support the cost of the home.

For example:

- governments
- community housing organisations.



There are less rules you have to meet to get affordable housing than social housing.



Affordable housing is for people on lower **incomes**.

Income is the money you earn by working.

Question to think about



How could governments work with different services and organisations to improve social housing?



This includes:

- public housing
- community housing.



For example, how could they work with:

- housing organisations
- people who pay for housing.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to face more issues with housing.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are less likely to own their home.



They are 9 times more likely to be homeless.



And 3 times more likely to experience overcrowding.



The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is a document that explains how governments can work better with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It includes goals to improve housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



It also includes a goal to reduce overcrowding.

Overcrowding has gone down for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



But governments need to do more work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so they can get good and safe housing.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to move homes to find and use services.

For example, health or education services.



They might also move for their **culture** and family.

Your culture is:



- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



This can make it hard for people who have their families stay at their home when they visit.



And some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can become homeless while moving.



For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, housing is more than just a shelter.

It's a link to traditional land and Country.

Policies about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing must understand this.



Governments are working to improve housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

They will do this under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.



Governments are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

They created the Housing Policy Partnership.



This is a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a say in their housing services.

This includes how people:

- create these services
- deliver them to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Housing organisations that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples run



There are organisations that provide housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

They're called **Indigenous Community Controlled Housing Organisations (ICCHOs)**.



ICCHOs are organisations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with housing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples run ICCHOs.



These organisations aim to create housing that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can also stay in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing that the state owns and manages.



The amount of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing has gone down over time.



It's hard for them to get as much funding as other housing services.



And the rules around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing makes it hard to manage.



But many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer it to other housing services.



The National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes the Housing Sector Strengthening Plan.

This is a 3-year plan that aims to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing.

Question to think about



How can governments work with communities to support housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?



Affording somewhere to live



The number of Australians who own a home has gone down over the last 20 years.



It's taking longer for Australians to save enough money to buy a home.



Housing is the biggest cost for many Australians.



The cost for all types of housing has gone up over the past 20 years.

This is partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The price of housing has gone up faster than people's level of income.



The number of people who rent is going up faster than any other type of housing.



But there's not enough homes to rent for everyone.



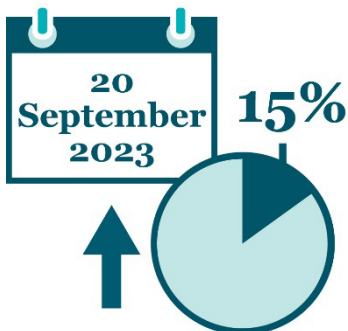
The number of people looking to rent has gone up.

And the cost of rent is going up.



Over 2023 and 2024, the Australian Government promised to increase Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA).

This is a government payment to support people with low incomes who rent.



CRA will increase by 15% from 20 September 2023.



On 28 April 2023, governments agreed to improve rules that protect people who rent in Australia.

Supply and demand of housing



Different things affect how easy it is for people to find housing to buy or rent.

This includes:



- supply – the amount of housing there is



- demand – how many people need housing.



Recent events in Australia have affected the supply and demand of housing.

This includes:



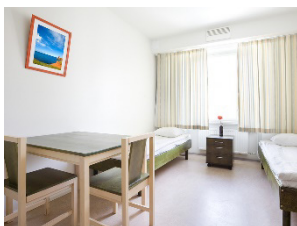
- the cost of building housing



- not enough land in the areas people want to live in



- not enough workers



- empty bedrooms and homes that no one is using.

Other things also affect the supply and demand of housing, like:



- policies about tax



- people staying in homes for a short time through an app, like Airbnb



- people having to leave their homes because of emergencies, like bushfires or floods.

Questions to think about



How can groups make housing affordable?



How can groups help people find housing they can rent or buy?



You can think about how different groups could support this to happen, including:



- governments
- businesses
- communities.



How climate change affects housing



Climate change is when weather patterns change over a long time.

It can happen when we don't look after our natural environment well.

Because of climate change, Australia will have bad weather events:



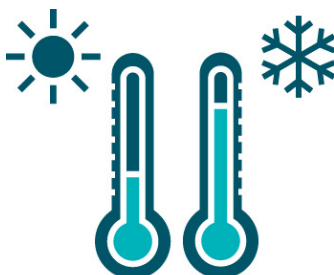
- now
- in the future.

For example, bushfires and flooding.



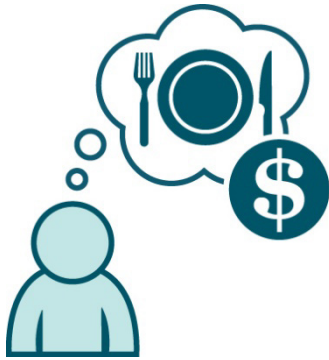
Weather events often affect whole communities.

Many people can lose their homes, and this can mean lots of people need housing and services.



As weather patterns change, it also means people need to spend more money on their homes.

For example, to keep their homes cool in the summer and warm in the winter.



This affects people with low income the most.

Because they need to use their money to pay for other things as well, like food.



Changing homes to protect them from climate change could make them last longer.

And make people more comfortable.



But many people find it hard to change their homes because:

- it costs too much money
- they don't own the property.



Research also shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live far away from cities and towns are most at risk of weather events.



And many homes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities don't have what they need to protect against changing weather.



Question to think about



How can governments work with communities to change homes to protect them from climate change?



Do you have other ideas you want to share?



Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?



Do you have any other ideas we haven't included in this paper?



Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Indigenous Community Controlled Housing Organisations (ICCHOs)

ICCHOs are organisations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with housing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples run ICCHOs.



Climate change

Climate change is when weather patterns change over a long time.

It can happen when we don't look after our natural environment well.



Culture

Your culture is:

- your way of life
- how you think or act now because of how you grew up
- your beliefs
- what is important to you.



Funding

Funding is the money from the government to pay for services.



Homelessness

People who are homeless do not have a home.

They must find a place to sleep each night, and these places are not always the same.

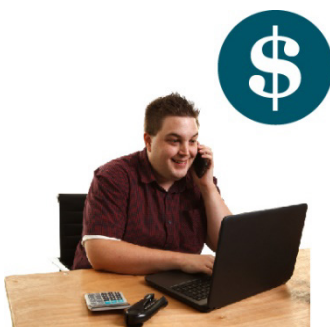
We say 'homelessness' when we talk about the experiences of these people.



Homelessness services

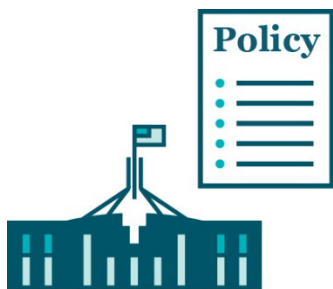
Homelessness services help people who:

- don't have a home
- must find a place to sleep each night.



Income

Income is the money you earn by working.



Policy

Policies are plans for how governments should do things.



Rent

When you rent a home, you pay to live in a home someone else owns.



Social housing

Social housing provides homes for people who can't afford to rent or buy a home on their own.



Tax

Tax is money all Australians pay to the government.

The government uses tax to pay for things in the community, like roads and hospitals.



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