



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Time for a New National Homelessness Act

Homelessness Australia today welcomed the announcement of a wide ranging inquiry into the future of national legislation on homelessness. The Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek MP, has referred the matter to a House of Representatives Committee that will report by 14 August, 09.

“This is a critical opportunity for us to lock in place the distinctive aspects of how we respond to homelessness in Australia. We have led the world in having homelessness legislation that sets out the rights of people experiencing homelessness for decades”, said Homelessness Australia, Executive Officer, Simon Smith.

New legislation should set out a definition of homelessness. In Australia we don’t just include those people sleeping on park benches. We also include people couch surfing with family and friends and people living in marginal housing as part of the group of people who are homeless.

New legislation must refer to people at risk of homelessness. Current legislation refers to people whose housing is unsafe or unsuitable as part of the homeless response. This makes women, children and many young people experiencing domestic and family violence eligible for support from homeless services, even if they are not already homeless. Narelle Clay, Chairperson, Homelessness Australia, said “The current legislation was an outstanding piece of legislation with emphasis on social justice. To do the best we can in Australia for homeless people, it is essential that new legislation maintains important aspects of the current legislation”

Homelessness Australia is particularly encouraging people who have been homeless to make a submission. “The experience of people who have been homeless should form an important part of designing standards for homeless services”, said Mr Smith.

“Legislation will underpin our efforts over the next decade to meet the national target of halving homelessness by 2020”, said Mr Smith. “There is a wealth of information from earlier evaluations of homeless services done under existing legislation we can draw from”.

“Let’s make sure we build on and enhance the positive aspects of our response to homelessness.”

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