



Attn: Homelessness Strategy Team
Department of Communities
99 Plain Street
East Perth WA 6004

RE: Feedback on the *Directions Paper for the 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness Western Australia 2019-2029* from the WA Alliance to End Homelessness

The WA Alliance to End Homelessness (“WAAEH”), represented by the WAAEH Facilitating Group, supports the overall directions of the of the *Directions Paper for the 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness Western Australia 2019-2029* (“Directions Paper”).

In response to the Directions Paper, we have prepared some recommendations for some points of clarification and improvement. In addition to these, we ask that the State Government continues to support the WAAEH to ensure we achieve whole-of-community change.

Please see the recommendations below.

GENERAL FEEDBACK

Recommendation: Amend the language of “whole-of-community plan”.

We recommend that the language of “whole-of-community plan” is amended to reflect the fact that this will be a government strategy.

PROCESS

Recommendation: A more robust explanation of how the Homelessness Strategy will integrate with other strategies.

A more robust explanation of how the Homelessness Strategy will integrate with other strategies is required, in particular the Mental Health, AOD, Accommodation Support, and Housing strategies. These areas of policy are critical to responding to homelessness. The current content in the Directions Paper, including the graphic on page 10, does not adequately explain the connections or relationships.



OVERVIEW OF DATA AND EVIDENCE

Recommendation: Provide an explanation for the under-reporting of the scale of the issue of homelessness in Western Australia, as well as a strategy for improving data collection to better represent the scale and nature of homelessness in Western Australia be included in the Strategy on Homelessness.

Data collection does not cover large numbers of people seeking assistance through non-funded services or those who are not accessing specific homelessness services. As an example, the Vinnies Passages Youth Engagement Hubs assist a couple of thousand young people experiencing all types of homelessness, but as this work is not government-funded the data is not reported on. Additionally, many organisations provide emergency relief to people at imminent risk of being evicted, yet this data is not collected.

THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM IN WA

Recommendation: Provide a clear explanation of the system logic and architecture that we are moving towards, demonstrating clearly how the Housing First approach will impact on the system.

The system we currently have is very fragmented and lacks system logic. There may be an underlying assumption that we are moving towards a better, more effective system but the Directions Paper does not clearly explain or demonstrate the future state of the system logic and architecture. Whilst “Housing First” is articulated as a principle and there are other articulated principles, it is difficult to discern what logic or architecture will be applied to the broader aspects of the system; in other words, how will it ‘hang together’ as a system. There are underlying assumptions that will need to be identified and addressed, such as access to a supply of appropriate, safe and affordable housing. A clear explanation of what a cohesive, coherent and effective system looks like would help all parties in the system align in this way.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Recommendation: Increase the quantity of safe, appropriate and affordable housing, as well as trialling different types.

While it is important to trial different types of housing and accommodation to meet the diverse needs of different people as stated in Direction 1.1, it is critical that the amount of safe, appropriate and affordable housing is increased to the scale of 15,000+ new dwellings. People need long-term permanent housing with support, which is currently significantly limited in Western Australia. Low-cost private rentals are also in shortage and to address this,



we support the implementation of a private rental brokerage scheme and rental subsidy that would ensure affordability of a sufficient number of rental properties throughout WA.

Recommendation: Support the development and implementation of the ‘Advance to Zero’ approach including by-name lists.

Direction 1.3 seeks improved service delivery, which can be facilitated in part by the implementation of the ‘Advance to Zero’ approach including its critical component, the by-name list. Work has already begun to introduce this to Western Australia by a collaborative cross-sector team (including 50 Lives 50 Homes representatives), as well as there being a national campaign led by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness. We recommend this approach is supported, which may require changes to individual staff roles and contracts.

Recommendation: Clearly define the mechanism by which all the relevant government agencies are held accountable for the outcomes of the Homelessness Strategy they are responsible for.

We understand that multiple government agencies - not just one - must be responsible for various outcomes of the Homelessness Strategy, as represented in approaches such as Direction 2.3. We seek clarity on how these responsibilities will be delegated and how different agencies will be held accountable for achieving their designated outcomes.

Recommendation: Consider the Housing First approach as a significant sector transformation, as well as how it could be designed with cultural awareness and inclusion of real community integration.

The current service system in WA is far from being ready for a Housing First approach, and therefore this will require a significant shift in system architecture and culture across the whole sector. While there is evidence from around the world that this approach works, it will need to be designed in Western Australia with consideration of our special context including the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as our culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The Housing First approach will also not work unless social and community integration is seriously considered and resourced, from both the individual’s perspective and the community’s perspective. There are opportunities within our current sector to build on existing programs or models to reflect the Housing First approach.

Recommendation: Consider significant differences in needs from different cohorts in designing and implementing the ‘No Wrong Door’ approach, and focus on this approach as a priority.

Some cohorts such as older adults, people with disabilities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have particular needs and challenges in accessing information and services. Designing and implementing the ‘No Wrong Door’ approach will require knowledge of the needs of these cohorts, as well as those of different place-based



communities. Improving service delivery through implementing the ‘No Wrong Door’ approach will have significant positive impacts on vulnerable people, including increasing the rate at which they access the most appropriate services. This should be considered as a priority in the Strategy.

This submission is supported by the Facilitating Group of the WA Alliance to End Homelessness, comprising:

- John Berger (Chair, independent)
- AnglicareWA, represented by Mark Glasson (CEO)
- Centre for Social Impact, UWA, represented by Prof Paul Flatau (Director)
- Foundation Housing, represented by Kathleen Gregory (CEO)
- Ruah Community Services, represented by Debra Zanella (CEO)
- St Bartholomew’s House, represented by Joe Calleja (Interim CEO)
- St. Vincent de Paul Society, represented by Susan Rooney (CEO)
- UnitingCare West, represented by Amanda Hunt (CEO)
- Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, represented by Daniel Morrison (CEO)
- Shelter WA, represented by Michelle Mackenzie (CEO)
- Sam Knight, Ruah Community Services (ex-officio member)
- Katie Stublely, Centre for Social Impact UWA (ex-officio member)