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Introduction
In the 2017 Federal Budget the Federal Government announced the establishment of a National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) to replace the existing National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Prior to this announcement and since 2013 the development of a national homelessness policy has been in limbo with funding uncertainty and no clear national plan or direction.

As a result in this period the policy response to homelessness largely devolved to the states and territories with all these jurisdictions working in context of both funding uncertainty, diminishing federal funding and leadership.

According to the Federal Government with the new NHHA to be established:

“Funding (will be) maintained and ongoing:

- The NHHA will maintain the Commonwealth's current funding of over $1.3 billion a year provided under the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment.
- The new agreement will provide $375 million over three years from 2018-19: maintaining the current $115 million of annual homelessness funding provided under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). This funding will be ongoing and indexed, to maintain and provide certainty to front line services that help Australians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.”

The groundbreaking 2008 The Road Home: a national approach to reducing homelessness White Paper and the Green Paper consultations upon which it was based and developed, and the establishment of the NAHA and the NPAH, were preceded by an extremely limited acknowledgement of the need for a national homelessness policy through the Howard Government’s 1999 National Homelessness Strategy (NHS).

While the funding framework for the NHHA has apparently been set, the details of the agreement and in particular the bilateral agreements and schedules with the states and territories are still to be worked out.

There have been no Green or White Paper consultations or discussions with the wider homelessness, social housing or welfare sectors in the development of the NHHA or a discussion on goals or targets except in the most general terms. Similarly, there have not been consultations about principles, strategies, service models or responses to implement and deliver the funding requirements of the NHHA.

In this context, this edition of Parity asks: What is the future for national homelessness policy in Australia under a NHHA?
A Framework for Discussion

Chapter 1: Context, the bones of previous policies
On the basis of the premise that it is necessary to learn from the experience of the past in order to create for the future, the aim of this chapter is to provide an opportunity to assess and evaluate the successes and failings of previous national policy responses to homelessness.

- How successful were the various iterations of SAAP in responding to homelessness?
- How successful were The Road Home White Paper reforms in providing a national response to homelessness?
- What are the achievements of the NAHA? Did the NAHA succeed in making a significant contribution to the provision of more affordable housing?
- Was the NPAH an effective model for the provision of the funding necessary for the provision of homelessness services?
- How effective were the various state and territory homelessness strategies that were developed and implemented as part of the White Paper reforms?
- What lessons have we learned from the past?
- What can be learned from the national homelessness policies of other comparable countries?
- How can the public view of homelessness, its causes and possible solutions, influence government policy?

Chapter 2: An Effective National Homelessness Policy
The aim of this chapter is to provide an opportunity to discuss how the NHHA will and should be developed and implemented.

The Federal Government argues the NHHA will ensure better outcomes:

"Under the NHHA, funding to State and Territory governments will be linked to outcomes in priority areas including:

- aggregate supply targets, including targets for social and affordable housing;
- residential land planning and zoning reforms;
- inclusionary zoning arrangements (land use planning intervention requiring or incentivising affordable housing including dedicated first home buyer stock);
- renewal of public housing stock and transfer of public housing to community housing providers; and
- homelessness services.

Bilateral schedules with clear targets will help ensure that each State and Territory is accountable for better outcomes that recognise the different housing markets in each State. These agreements will be underpinned by improved transparency and reporting and will be negotiated between the Commonwealth and each State and Territory."
Prioritising homelessness funding

To ensure that funding for front line homelessness services is preserved, the NHHA will separately identify the indexed funding, to be matched by the States, that relates to the NPAH. This funding will continue to prioritise support for people affected by domestic violence and vulnerable young Australians.

- What programs and services, models and strategies should be employed to fulfil these very broad goals and objectives?
- What is the best process for defining determining what constitutes “clear targets” and “better outcomes”?
- Is the best approach a national homelessness policy or rather a series of state and territory homelessness policies?
- What should be the essential objectives and targets of a national homelessness policy? Previous policies have been based on maintaining an effective service response (SAAP) or setting targets for the reduction of levels of homelessness (The Road Home). Should the ending of homelessness be an objective of national homelessness policy?
- How important is homelessness prevention in the development of a national homelessness policy?
- Given the importance of affordable housing, how should housing policy connect with and relate to homelessness policy?
- What should be the interconnections between homelessness policy and other social and social welfare policies; for example, income support, health and mental health, employment and education, and other social and social welfare measures?

Chapter 3: Evidence Based Policy

The aim of this chapter is to provide an opportunity to identify the “evidence base” from which “evidence based policy” should be made. While this evidence will primarily consist of research based findings, there are other types and forms of knowledge, that arguably should play a meaningful role in developing a national homelessness policy.

- What are the most effective and successful homelessness policies, strategies and service responses identified in both recent and earlier research?
- What do the evaluations of different policy and service responses identify as the key elements of successful homelessness policies and programs?
- Apart from the evidence provided by researchers, what role should the “evidence” provided by those who have experienced homelessness play in developing homelessness policy?
- Homelessness service providers and their representative and advocacy bodies have accumulated a mountain of evidence for what works and what does not in homelessness policy and service delivery. How should this evidence be incorporated into the development of a national homelessness policy?
Chapter 4: Making a Case, Opinion Pages

The aim of this chapter is to provide opinion leaders in the wider homelessness and social housing sectors the opportunity to identify what they believe should be the key elements of a renewed national homelessness policy for Australia. This is an opportunity to set the agenda for the development of an effective national homelessness policy.


Deadline: All contributions need to be submitted by COB Friday August 11th 2017.

Submissions: All contributions should be submitted as Word attachments to an email addressed to parity@chp.org.au

Artwork: Contributors are invited to submit the artwork they would like to accompany their article. Inclusion is dependent on the space being available. If artwork is not provided and is required, it will be selected by the Parity Editor.

Word length: Contributions can be up to 1,600 words. This equates to a double page spread in Parity. Single page articles can be up to 800 words in length. Contributions of a greater length should be discussed with the Parity Editor.

Questions: If you have any questions at all about contributing to this edition please contact the Parity Editor by email parity@chp.org.au or ring 03 8415 6201

Referencing

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The Parity referencing protocol is very simple. All references cited in the article should be referenced by:

Author(s); surname, initial(s), Date (of publication), Title, Publisher (for journals, volume and Issue number), Location, Page(s)

For example:

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Assistance
Feedback, input and assistance can be provided with drafts if required. If prospective contributors have any questions at all they should contact the Parity Editor, parity@chp.org.au or ring 03 8415 6200 or 03 8415 6201.