



Homelessness Week 2018

Ending homelessness together

#HW2018



Media release

5 August 2018

How Finland ended homelessness... and why Australia hasn't

Delegates at the [National Homelessness Conference](#) in Melbourne this week will hear how Finland has eradicated rough sleeping by replacing shelters with permanent homes paired with intensive support.

The national peak body for homelessness says Australian governments can learn from countries that have invested in affordable housing as a response to homelessness. In Finland, social housing is up to 20 per cent of all housing stock (in Australia it's 4.7%).

The homelessness crisis has been growing in Australia, driven by a population boom and the worsening housing crisis. Homelessness rose 14 per cent over five years to 2016 (ABS) while Federal spending on housing and homelessness declined 16 per cent over the same period.

'All over Australia, people are sleeping on the street, in their cars, or finding shelter on friend's sofas because they can't find a home they can afford,' says Jenny Smith, Chair of Homelessness Australia, which is jointly hosting the Homelessness Conference.

'Despite record numbers of people needing help, investment in homelessness and housing is lower than ever.'

'On the 1 July, a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement came into effect which delivers not a single extra dollar of funding in real terms to homelessness and housing services despite rising demand.'

Waitlists for social housing in Australia remain long, with 189,400 households awaiting allocation (Source: AIHW).

'Trying to solve homelessness without housing is like trying to bake a cake without an oven,' said Ms Smith.

'Homelessness is not a personal choice; it's a reflection that broader social supports and service systems are failing. After years of neglect, it's time our leaders turned their attention to solving this humanitarian crisis,' she said.

Topics & speakers at the National Homelessness Conference include:

- *Professor Marah Curtis, University of Wisconsin-Madison exploring how poverty and race discrimination impact housing security and homelessness*
- *Professor Juha Kaakinen, CEO, Y-Foundations (Finland)*
- *Professor Nicholas Pleace, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (UK)*
- *Leaving a psych unit, prison or foster care and becoming homeless*
- *The role of housing in ending family violence*
- *How Government and the private sector can partner to respond to homelessness*
- *Aboriginal homelessness*
- *Changing attitudes to homelessness through the media*



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