



This is a communique from the co-chairs of the Ministerial Homelessness Reform and Advisory Group.

Workshop to explore reform priorities

In early February 2025, Advisory Group members participated in a one-day facilitated workshop to discuss potential reform directions for the homelessness service system.

The workshop progressed discussions that began at the Advisory Group's December 2024 meeting. It was informed by 12-months of consultation with Advisory Group members, people with lived experience of homelessness and Advisory Group-commissioned Action Groups. The reform directions were grouped across four domains:

- A self-determined Aboriginal homelessness service system
- Modern and effective service models
- Prioritisation to different needs
- System leadership and coordination.

The Advisory Group presented the outcomes of the workshop to the Minister for Housing and Building at the 28 February 2025 meeting. The Advisory Group recognised that self-determination and the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness must inform progress of any reform priorities across all four domains.

Members also reiterated the importance of continuing current investment, noting that funding for several programs is due to lapse this year.

A self-determined Aboriginal homelessness service system

Ending Aboriginal homelessness is a priority for homelessness services reform. The Advisory Group affirmed its commitment to the directions set out in *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* and the *Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system in Victoria*. In doing so, the Advisory Group recognises that an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system cannot operate in isolation.

There is much to learn from the work to implement the Blueprint. This includes the importance of Aboriginal homelessness service providers and non-Aboriginal homelessness service providers:

- working together in partnership and having voices at the right tables to influence service reforms and sharing resources.
- working to build service capacity of Aboriginal homelessness service providers to deliver self-determined homelessness services.
- working to ensure non-Aboriginal service providers embed cultural safety across all aspects of their service delivery to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples.

Modern and effective service models

Since it first met in December 2023, the Advisory Group has highlighted the system should respond to people across three streams of need:

1. People at risk of homelessness
2. People experiencing homelessness with increased support needs
3. People have experienced chronic homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Advisory Group highlighted the need to ensure funded services are well-designed to meet people's needs, culturally safe and effective. This means prioritising proven, evidence-based housing and support models.

There should also be a focus on allocation and prioritisation processes that help people get services suited to their level of need. There should be systems in place, so people receive well-coordinated homelessness, tenancy and other health and social services supports to meet their unique needs. This requires strong place-

based service allocation, collaboration and governance frameworks.

Prioritising to need

The Advisory Group emphasised the importance of a consistent and streamlined approach to triage and assessment across the homelessness system. The current *Opening Doors Framework* has served Victoria's homelessness service system but needs to be updated.

The Advisory Group highlighted the need to modernise triage, assessment, resource coordination and allocation processes. This includes looking at processes that empower people who are seeking services, as well as looking at how technology can be used to help people seeking services and staff at homelessness entry points to manage demand efficiently.

The Advisory Group acknowledges the significant demands on staff at entry points. It has recognised a combination of actions across all four reform domains are needed to address challenges.

System leadership and co-ordination

The Advisory Group highlighted that effective local and statewide governance structures are vital to a contemporary homelessness service system. The priority should be on strong local governance that gives homelessness agencies (and agencies across broader health and social service systems) authority and accountability to tailor services to meet local needs. This could be complemented by strong statewide governance systems to oversee coordinated and accountable service delivery and identify systemic issues as they arise.

A priority will be aligning the governance structures with Aboriginal system stewardship and governance as well as embedding lived experience.

Next steps

The Minister for Housing and Building has welcomed the Advisory Group's work on reform priorities. The Minister will now consider the advice provided and next steps,

including broader sector consultation in partnership with the Advisory Group.

Acknowledgment of a retiring member

The Advisory Group recognised Christine Thirkell's contributions to the Advisory Group as a member of the Homelessness Lived Experience Expert Advisory Panel (HLEEAP).

Christine advised the co-chairs of her decision to step down from the Advisory Group from 12 February 2025. The Advisory Group thanked Christine for her valuable contributions since joining the Advisory Group in June 2024. They reiterated their ongoing commitment to ensuring lived experience continues to shape homelessness system reform.

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