



MEDIA RELEASE

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UNDER-FUNDED SYSTEM FAILING HOMELESS PERSONS

The release today of new national data on homelessness services shows that no progress has been made to address the demand for help, according to affordable housing and homelessness peak body NT Shelter.

In its annual report on Specialist Homelessness Services for 2017-18, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has revealed the level of need per 10,000 in the Northern Territory is more than three times that of other states across Australia.

NT Shelter Executive Officer Peter McMillan said that the overall demand for homelessness services was increasing and remained disproportionately high in the Northern Territory. The AIHW report provides “compelling evidence” for a boost in resources, particularly in regional and remote areas of the NT where rates of homelessness were most acute.

“Unfortunately, most of the indicators suggest the problem is growing rather than reducing, particularly for disadvantaged women, those living in regional and remote areas, and Aboriginal people”, said Mr McMillan.

Mr McMillan said he was not surprised by the latest NT statistics given that the specialist homelessness sector remains chronically underfunded relative to other states.

“The Northern Territory receives funding from the Commonwealth for homelessness services based on its population size without any regard for the size of the housing and homelessness problems faced across the Territory. We receive around \$19 million out of \$1.4 billion, not within a bull’s roar of where it needs to be”, said Mr McMillan.

Mr McMillan said he was “surprised and disappointed” that the Northern Territory entered into a new five-year National Partnership Agreement on Housing and Homelessness (NHHHA) agreement with the Commonwealth (which came into effect from 1 July this year) that will see funding for homelessness services unchanged for the next 5 years. If this situation is not addressed, prospects for many in need of help will remain bleak.

“We’re failing too many people despite the tremendous efforts of front-line staff who are helping clients at a rate twice that of other states. We shouldn’t be turning away such high numbers of women fleeing domestic violence and failing to provide an accommodation option and other supports,” he said.

“While safe, affordable and appropriate housing is vital, and there is considerable activity in that space at the moment across the NT, so too are the services that people need to help get their lives back on track. Clearly, we’ve still got work to do for that to be better appreciated by all levels of Government,” Mr McMillan said.

“The NHHA deal is a hiccup, not the end of the story. We’re pleased with the support we’ve been building on all sides of politics, including former Treasurer Scott Morrison who’s given us a written undertaking that the method of allocating funding will be reviewed by the Productivity Commission”, said Mr McMillan.

-ENDS-

Media contact: Peter McMillan, Executive Officer
Phone: 0447 234 217

FAST FACTS

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) providers in the Northern Territory assist 377 clients per 10,000 persons compared to 117 nationally.

4,494 requests for assistance by persons who were homeless or at risk of homelessness went unmet across the Northern Territory in 2017-18, a rise of 7.7% on the prior year.

Female clients account for 78% of all unassisted requests.