

**Homelessness Green
Paper Submission 2008**



**The Salvation Army
Australia Southern Territory**

The Salvation Army, Australia Southern Territory – Homelessness Green Paper Submission
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Territorial Social Policy and Resource Unit
95-99 Railway Road
Blackburn Vic 3130

Ph +61 3 8878 4778

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Introduction

The Salvation Army has provided social and community services to the Australian community for more than 120 years. In particular, The Salvation Army has supported people who are homeless through a range of practical services, accommodation options and programs.

After 120 years, and despite almost 17 years of economic prosperity in Australia, The Salvation Army continues to see the desperate need to support and advocate for those who are socially and economically excluded because of poverty and homelessness.

The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory includes over 300 centres that provide community services and social programs through networks of Salvation Army Churches, Community Centres and Social Service Networks in the states of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania. Each day The Salvation Army extends care to over 5000 homeless people in the territory. The Salvation Army youth services alone support more than 12,000 young people each year and accommodate more than 1,000 young people each night in its housing programs.

Our homeless response includes emergency relief; crisis accommodation and support; transitional and longer term accommodation and support; outreach support; generalist, financial, gambling, sexual assault and other specialist counselling services; specialist family violence interventions including outreach and refuge responses; as well as a whole suite of early intervention and post-vention programs. These programs range the full gamut of highly targeted and specific intensive interventions through to more generalist life stage responses including programs for families, young people, single men and women, and care for vulnerable older people. Targeted employment programs and family reunion programs are also a part of our homelessness response.

Government funding for these programs is significant, however funding derived from donations directly to The Salvation Army from the Australian people through the Red Shield Annual DoorKnock and Corporate Donor fundraising activities provide a significant contribution to our support to homeless people. Indeed, fundraised money enables The Salvation Army to be innovative and support people who do not easily fit within government funded program guidelines. It allows us to work where others cannot and to provide value added services that are co-ordinated and integrated and meet the needs of the whole person.

We are excited by the fact that the new government, within weeks of taking office in 2007, recognised that after so many years of economic prosperity and with unemployment levels at a 32 year low, homelessness in Australia continues to grow. As the Prime Minister put it, this is a "national obscenity"¹. Indeed we are aware that over the past five years we have seen, the number of families with children being assisted by homelessness services increase by 30%². The Salvation Army welcomes the Prime Minister's personal commitment to address this issue and the Australian Government's commitment to developing a new approach to homelessness in Australia.

¹ Rudd, K (2008) National Homeless Conference Speech, Adelaide 22/05/08

² AIHW (2007) Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2005-06 Australia, SAAP NDCA Report Series 11 Cat no. HOU 156, Canberra

Outline of the structure of our paper and key recommendations

This response, while covering many of the issues discussed in the Green Paper does not attempt to answer the set questions suggested. Nor does it address any of the options proposed for discussion by the green paper. This is because we feel that the options proposed by the Green Paper are both limiting and limited.

Our submission begins with a critique of the Green Paper and then moves to discuss how we believe homelessness should be discussed in the future as we all work together to reduce its impact. We discuss definitions of homelessness and the need to address homelessness broadly. We then outline the form that we think a new approach to homelessness should take. This section incorporates a call for a National Strategy Plan, discussion of funding and administration arrangements, data collection, research and evaluation, quality improvement and the use of targets.

The next section of our response looks at the key elements of an effective service system including a client centred approach, joined up responses and partnerships, and the components of good service delivery including early intervention, crisis and transitional support and accommodation and long term support. We also discuss the important role of the mainstream service system.

The final three sections describe the need for new legislation, provide a link to the excellent work of the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Australia's Homeless Youth; and discusses key workforce issues.

The following is a list of recommendations proposed in our submission:

1. That the broad cultural definition of homelessness be retained and embedded in a National Strategy Plan for Homelessness and any accompanying legislation.
2. That the Government commit to at least restore the level of per capita social and community housing to 1990 levels.
3. A National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should seek to tackle homelessness sustainably by addressing individual support needs, community inclusion, and the structural drivers of homelessness.
4. The Salvation Army proposes that that as much of the homeless response be administered, planned and deployed under a new National Strategy Plan for Homelessness that is administered in the state and territory jurisdictions.
5. The Salvation Army is concerned that the community agencies which have the greatest success in working with homeless people will not be able to effectively provide employment services support as part of an integrated package. JPET, PSP and new programs that aim to address employment and training access for homeless people should be able to delivered by homelessness service providers and must be considered within the National Homelessness Strategy Plan.
6. That the Coordination and Development (CAD) committee which currently oversees SAAP be replaced by a National Implementation Committee which

would involve the state and territory jurisdictions as well as some of the other NGO stakeholders and peak bodies.

7. The Salvation Army recognises the importance of evidence-based policy. Improvements in our current research program can be made by:
 - Expanding national data collection across all initiatives and programs for homeless people including employment services
 - Establishing a national pilot programs strategy to test out new models and initiatives and ensure that the best ideas become national best practice programs.
 - More investment in monitoring, review and evaluation.
8. That program data across any new homelessness platform should remain independent in the way that the NDC is, and be maintained according to the standards embodied in this data collection.

Data on homeless people being supported under any of the programs from targeted prevention, through early intervention, crisis support, transitional accommodation and post-vention support should be collected within an expanded NDC.

9. Develop a set of nationally applicable quality standards for the range of homelessness services types with partial application to key non-homelessness services working with homeless clients.
10. The Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should include targets that are robust, measurable and able to demonstrate an improving picture of homelessness in Australia.

Consideration of targets needs to ensure that they focus government and community effort and reduce homelessness in the long term.

Discrete targets relating to households with high level and/or complex support needs are vital so as to ensure that services proactively seek to engage and maintain engagement with those most marginalised of individuals.

11. Limited duration support periods that characterise SAAP crisis and transitional support and accommodation do not take into account the different situations of homeless people. The support and accommodation periods should be determined by the needs of the person rather than predicated by inflexible benchmarks or funding.
12. That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness includes strategies to improve the responsiveness of mainstream services as well as investment in homelessness specific services.

That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness outlines strategies and provide resources to improve partnerships between homeless services and mainstream services.

13. That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness has reference to the National Mental Health Strategy to encourage partnership

and improve the responsiveness of mental health services to homeless people.

14. That the Government implement a national audit of health services for people who are homeless to identify service gaps and improved partnerships with health services and homelessness services.
15. The Salvation Army supports the NCY call for a national roll out of the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice programs across Australia.
16. The Salvation Army supports the NCY call for a massive expansion of Reconnect programs across Australia.
17. That new legislation underpins Australia's new approach to homelessness by recognising the right of homeless people to accommodation and support and committing Australia to reduce homelessness.

The new legislation should describe the values and approaches of our response, serve to protect program integrity, establish and give mandate to a new National Implementation Committee, support the participation of states, and serve to demonstrate our long-term commitment to reducing homelessness.

18. That all 80 recommendations of the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness be implemented as part of the governments commitment to addressing national homelessness.
19. That the Government works with unions and industry representatives, as an integral part of its National Strategy Plan for Homelessness, to commit to funding a national workforce strategy that contains a significant increase in remuneration, recognises the skills and competencies of workers, addresses recruitment and retention issues and provides for professional career pathways.

Green Paper Critique

The purpose of the Government Green Paper is to stimulate discussion about homelessness in Australia including what should be done to end homelessness. The Rudd Government has signalled that the issue of homelessness is a priority and this is welcomed by The Salvation Army. On the other hand, welcoming the policy process does not at the same time require a suspension of critical thinking about the inadequacy of some elements of the Green Paper.

As far as The Salvation Army is concerned, we can report that amongst our workers and own key stakeholders, as well as a broader network of collaborators in other NGOs, there was a significant degree of disappointment in the narrow and negative discussion of the current response to homelessness in Australia contained in the Green Paper. This was particularly the case in the discussion of SAAP which did not examine history or context and which did not analyse SAAP within a broader schema of service systems that bear directly on homelessness. Many housing and homelessness workers involved in direct service felt that some of the unsubstantiated and negative comments about SAAP devalued and misconstrued their work with clients.

The Prime Minister has affirmed several times his own and his Government's commitment to evidence based policy and we agree that this is the benchmark that should underpin policy debate on homelessness in Australia. Unfortunately, the Green Paper fell short of this standard in some key areas.

In general, the analysis of SAAP contained in the Green Paper is poor, misunderstanding some of the available evidence on outcomes, and effectively suggesting that SAAP is a failed program. This is not correct and policy developed on this basis would be gravely distorted. In several places, the Green Paper quotes the SAAP IV Evaluation report out of context and in a way that suggests that the evaluation concluded that SAAP as a program was flawed and failing. Not so. The report expressly stated that 'this is not to say that SAAP has failed or is failing'. The evaluation report examined the limitations on SAAP and was generally very positive about what SAAP achieved under circumstances of constraint. Several options were laid out and in the discussion of these different options, the option of a broader homelessness program than SAAP was offered for further consideration.

Despite the fact that researchers and agencies have highlighted many times the problem of exit points from SAAP, we are disappointed that the issues of housing affordability has not been discussed in depth within the Green Paper. Criticism is directed to SAAP for achieving housing outcomes in private rental ('renting in the private market may have been the cause of their homelessness and for that reason, a return to the private rental market may not be sustainable for many homeless people leaving emergency accommodation', Green Paper; p.31) and public housing ('the public housing system may not deliver a suitable housing outcome for homeless young people or others of working age seeking flexibility to move to areas where there are work and training opportunities', Green Paper; p.31). The final criticism is that 'for housing outcomes to be sustainable and long-term, SAAP should deliver housing outcomes targeted to the needs of SAAP clients. While this may be the case for some SAAP clients it is not, overall a strong feature of the current SAAP system'. The policy of the Commonwealth and the states on housing is not criticised, but SAAP is. We find this extraordinary! On the evidence from the national SAAP data collection it might be concluded that agencies have achieved significant housing outcomes for people who have spent some time within SAAP despite declining

housing affordability³ and a public housing system which has seen stock decline in real terms of the past decade⁴.

The Green Paper argues that employment outcomes for SAAP clients are variable. On page 32, a SPRC study is quoted as concluding SAAP was ineffective on employment outcomes. Actually this report was highly positive about SAAP in terms of clients and in this context the comment about employment outcomes was highlighting a limitation of the program in its present form. The SAAP IV evaluation identified the need for SAAP services to seek employment outcomes for clients but no targeted funds were given for this purpose. A billion dollars or so per year was invested in the Howard Government's privatised Job Network services model. Job Network is not mentioned in the Green Paper section Employment Outcomes (p.32). We contend that the Job Network model seemed to work reasonably well for job ready people or unemployed people who could be brought to the point of job readiness by a short intervention. It has not been particularly successful for highly disadvantaged job seekers including homeless people. There have been papers and submissions from NGOs (including the Brotherhood of St Laurence) making these points and the changes to Job Network being foreshadowed in the Employment Services Review is an attempt to address some of these issues. However the Green Paper has no critique of the Job Network at all, only SAAP which not been able to access significant employment services funds.

Again, on education outcomes, it is stated that SAAP has achieved little. SAAP nevertheless seems to be able to support homeless students to remain at school. This is reflected in both the NDCA data as well as anecdotal feedback from services. The SAAP IV Evaluation is quoted as concluding that 'the ability of SAAP to achieve better long-term outcomes is questionable', but, no criticism of the Commonwealth department funding alternative education for homeless young people under 'Connections' which is operating in a limited number of community agencies. These programs seem to be successful but there are too few of them for the number of homeless young people who have dropped out of school and need an alternative pathway into education and training.

The significant number of misrepresentations in the Green Paper has created an anxiety in the homeless services sector and amongst many key stakeholders that the Green Paper is a sign of what will find its way into the White Paper. We trust that this will not be the case and that the Government will apply more vigorously its own evidence-based policy standard.

³ AMP NATSEM (2008) Going once, going twice – is the housing dream really over? AMP Financial Services: Sydney.

⁴ The South Australian Centre for Economic Studies (2008) Independent Audit of Government Contributions to Housing Assistance , Adelaide and Flinders Universities: Adelaide.

Addressing Homelessness looking forward

Unlike other countries that hold to narrow literal definitions of homelessness, for example defining 'homelessness' as living on the streets or in homeless shelters, in Australia the accepted understanding is that homelessness is typified by transience as homeless people move from one situation to another. Drawing on the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition, homeless people can be identified in the following categories using data from the 2006 Census.⁵

1. Absolute homeless: That is the primary homeless – people without accommodation including those living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, in parks and so on.
2. Relative homeless: That is the secondary homeless – people who are moving between various forms of temporary shelter, accommodated within the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and other comparable emergency accommodation services, or those people who have no secure accommodation staying temporarily with friends or relatives. According to the ABS relative homelessness also includes the tertiary homeless – those people living permanently in single rooms, hostels and boarding houses without their own bathrooms and without security of tenure.
3. Marginally housed: For example residents of caravan parks. This recognises that many people on low income or who have lost their secure accommodation have no other options available to them other than caravan parks.⁶

Of course such an operational definition does not fully capture the lived experience of the homeless including isolation from community and family, lack of financial support and no or limited and unstable accommodation. These experiences may have flow on effects of poor health, chaotic or unstable daily lives, poor mental health and increasing social isolation. Further, homelessness can have a cumulative affect on a person's life because of, for example, broken connection to school, interrupted employment histories, longer term damage to relationships, long term health complications, difficulty trusting and maintaining relationship, stigma and welfare dependency.

Indeed any discussion of homelessness definitions will not fully capture the complexity of an individual's life journey into homelessness. For example, we are aware that many women and children who use our homeless support and accommodation services have experienced family violence and that this experience is a contributing factor in their pathway into homelessness. Many children who grow up in the care and protection of the State 'graduate' to the homeless service system when the state is no longer required to support them. Many people who leave prison, who are old and isolated, who have been victims of abuse, assault or torture, who are vulnerable in employment, become homeless. Some people become homeless because they are ill. Others become homeless because their rental property is sold and they are unable to find alternative accommodation. We are aware of intergenerational homelessness in our services, children who's parents were young people accessing our homeless refuges in the 1980s. Many homeless clients of The Salvation Army have alcohol and other drug and/or mental health issues, however

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics; 2006 Census: Homeless People; online last updated 15 November 2007.

⁶ This group is not operationally specified in the Census.

we are also aware that many people develop their alcohol, drug and mental health issues as a result of their homelessness.⁷

While defining and talking about homelessness is complex and multi-layered, it is important to retain a broader perspective so that we can consider a full range of supports and policy drivers to achieve our overall goals and targets.

Although we recognise the methodological difficulties in counting and describing homeless people, The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory believes that it is essential that the broad ABS cultural definition of homelessness be retained and embedded in any national homelessness framework, agreement, and accompanying legislation to ensure that measures of homelessness in Australia capture the full extent of homelessness and the range of living circumstances experienced by homeless people.

1. Recommendation

[That the broad cultural definition of homelessness be retained and embedded in a National Strategy Plan for Homelessness and any accompanying legislation.](#)

Understanding Homelessness Sustainably

How do we make sense of this complex issue so that we can tackle once and for all the growing homeless population in Australia?

Although complex, homelessness and how people experience it is well understood. This understanding is based on a strong and growing body of evidence in the form of publicly available data, research and practice wisdom/best practice.

In order to make sense of all of this evidence we suggest that there are three broad areas that one should consider. They are interventions that support the individual, taking a community perspective and addressing the structural drivers and inequalities that cause and sustain homelessness.

Individual support refers to a range of interventions such as: case managed support and assistance with obtaining accommodation; primary health care including specialist supports such as mental health care; assistance addressing alcohol and drug abuse; assistance getting and retaining employment; support and planning for young people leaving care and people leaving prison, and; financial counselling. Legal advocacy and integrated family violence interventions would also constitute individual supports. These systems and programs focus on supporting the individual or household who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Community support refers to the ability to participate and feel a part of a community. For example participation in school, building relationship between neighbours, participating in work and recreation, connection to family and friends. It's about a sense of belonging to place or to a group of people. Community supports include access to affordable transport including public transport, access to community support services including general health supports, shops, sporting clubs or hobbies, cinemas etc. Communities of identity are also important for a person's sense of wellbeing. This may include a feeling of membership to a religious community, an ethnic community or a community with a common interest or hobby. There are many

⁷ Chamberlain C, Johnson G & Theobald J (2007); Homelessness in Melbourne: Confronting the Challenge; RMIT Publishing: Melbourne.

expressions of community and without some sense of belonging and participation a person can become at risk of homelessness and mental illness. The current discourse of social inclusion will be useful if defined in terms of connecting people within communities in a 'whole of life' perspective as opposed to a narrower 'human capital' approach that would effectively emphasise employment and jobs. While we agree that work is an important part of social citizenship, having a sustainable lifestyle in the community is the overarching goal in which employment is but one element, particularly for those who are most disadvantaged.

Finally, if we were to focus on only these two categories and fail to address some of the structural drivers of homelessness then we could continue to fail to stem the tide of people entering homelessness.

The biggest and most obvious structural driver in Australia today is the lack of affordable long term housing for the low and middle-income households. This is acknowledged in the Green Paper, however we are concerned that to make a significant dent in the issue the government will need to invest monumentally in social and community housing.

2. Recommendation

That the Government commit to at least restore the level of per capita social and community housing to 1990 levels.

Another policy initiative that would affect structural drivers would be incentives to develop affordable and accessible rental housing and related tax system reform to ensure that distortions in the housing market are removed. The Salvation Army supports the Government's suggestions about what might be done in this area. Other tax system reforms may also assist people with low or fixed income who are severely disadvantaged by the current economic environment and who will be further disadvantaged as we tackle global warming.

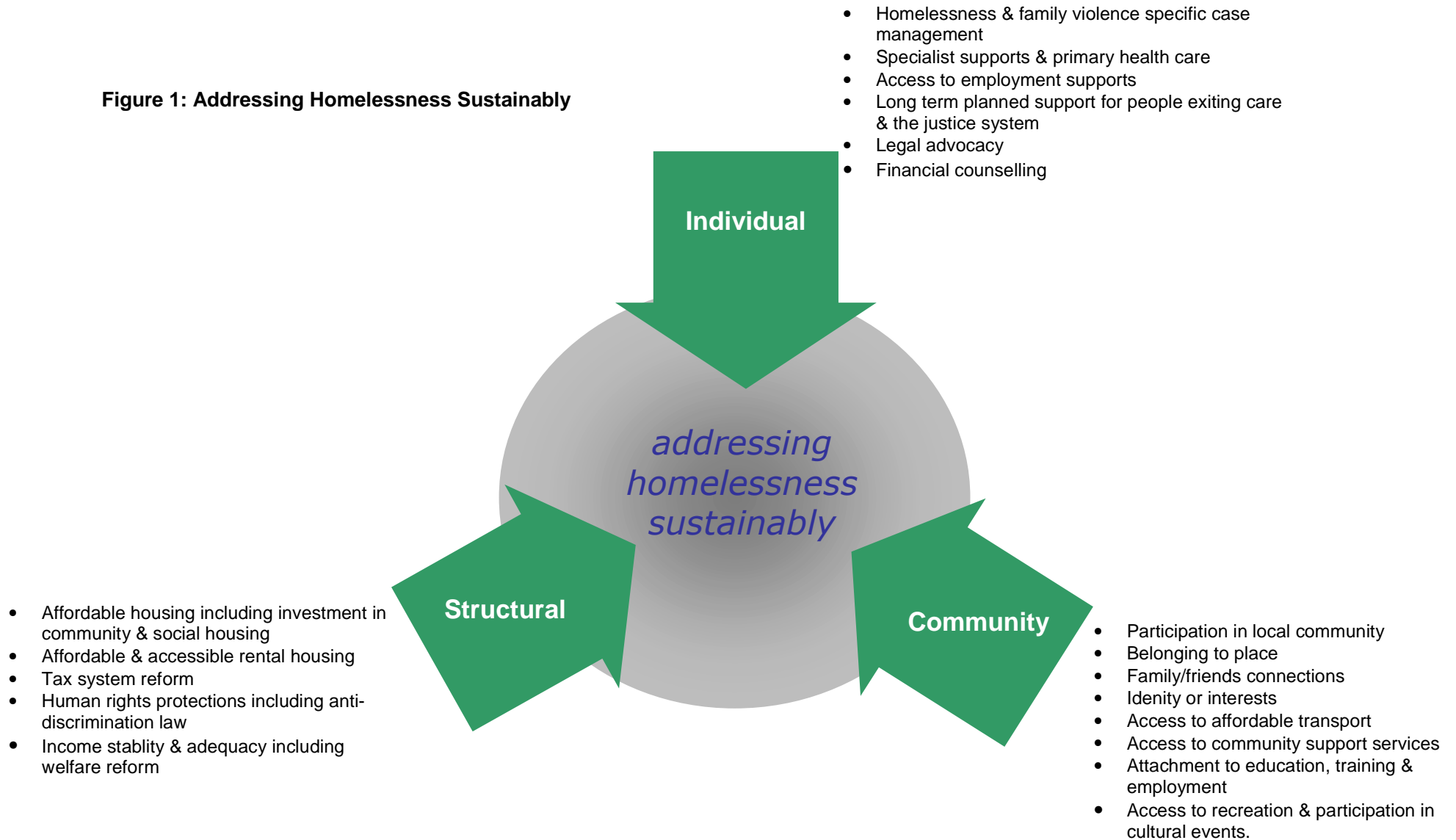
Always of concern will be whether homeless people have sufficient access to new more affordable housing stock. Low-income individuals and families are also seeking more affordable housing even though they are not homeless. The supply deficit is large and will take a long time to redress.

Human rights protections including anti-discrimination law are also necessary as is a need to consider income stability and adequacy for people who are on low incomes including reform of pensions and welfare payments. We are aware that the Rudd Government has already announced impending reviews in many of these areas and this is welcome. It is important that the homeless or those households at risk of homelessness are considered in these reviews.

3. Recommendation

A National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should seek to tackle homelessness sustainably by addressing individual support needs, community inclusion, and the structural drivers of homelessness.

Figure 1: Addressing Homelessness Sustainably



A New Approach – A National Homelessness Strategy Plan

Quite apart from the issue of resources, the white paper due in September 2008 is an opportunity for a number of key reforms in Australia's response to homelessness. The question is whether the right reforms will be pursued and whether the balance of policy settings will be right. There are some explicit and implicit naïve or overly simplistic ideas in the Green Paper, which will hopefully be addressed through the process of consultation and dialogue amongst key stakeholders.

A new Commonwealth/State relationship

The reform to the funding arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States/territories is about stream-lining the provision of funding and the way that specifications are drawn up while at the same time reducing the bureaucratic loading. This will result in fewer special purpose programs and a small number of agreements. Homelessness is affected by these changes because SAAP is possibly the oldest special purpose program in place. The proposed national Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) will include the funding for homelessness. The risk in this move is that homelessness could be subsumed as a problem of affordable housing. While this is true in part, there is a risk that if such a simplistic paradigm becomes dominant, Australia's homelessness response may slip backward as the contest for resources in the broader field becomes more intense.

On the other hand, under the NAHA it is possible to resolve some of the endemic issues of policy and program coordination between the Commonwealth programs such as Reconnect, HOME Advice and JPET and SAAP or other state initiatives. The Salvation Army prefers to see the NAHA changes as an opportunity for important reform rather than a problem as such.

To be fully consistent, The Salvation Army proposes that as much of the homeless response is administered, planned and deployed under a new homelessness platform administered in the state and territory jurisdictions. The roles of the Commonwealth and the state/territory jurisdictions need to be clearly and consistently delineated. This will potentially overcome coordination problems about where different components of the homelessness response ought to be placed. No longer would decisions about where early intervention services should be located be made independently of decisions about crisis services or other homelessness activities. The new strategy plan would go beyond SAAP but would incorporate the strengths of much of SAAP. More sophisticated planning will be required and with more program responsibility, jurisdictions will be able to bring together larger teams to work on supporting the new strategy plan.

Strong central government support to developing and managing a National Strategic Plan for Homelessness ought to be closer to the kind of planning envisaged for climate change (yet to be done in practice) than the sort of planning done in the past for homelessness. A more sophisticated process than a series of performance indicators on an agreement will be required. Jurisdictions ought to be openly reporting their implementation of the National Strategy Plan and this higher level of public accountability is likely to encourage better performance.

The National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should clarify the Commonwealth Government's role to those activities associated with the development and support. The move in this direction has been foreshadowed by several states in their homelessness strategies.

4. Recommendation

The Salvation Army proposes that that as much of the homeless response be administered, planned and deployed under a new National Strategy Plan for Homelessness that is administered in the state and territory jurisdictions.

Coordinating Government Reform

It is unfortunate that the reforms to employment services especially Job Network (JN) are being pursued separately from the Homelessness Green Paper process because amongst disadvantaged jobseekers will be homeless people. If the proposed changes remain within the province of the existing JN provider network as appears to be likely, and, the JN model remains largely intact (albeit that the services are now being described as universal employment services), The Salvation Army is concerned that it will not be possible for the community agencies which currently have the greatest success in working with homeless people to provide employment services support as part of an integrated package.

The changes to JPET (Job Placement, Employment and Training program) when the program moved to DEWR are not seen in the sector to have been progressive and a subsuming of JPET into Job Network would be a further degradation. Despite the positive work of JPET, each of The Salvation Army youth homeless services has expressed a note of caution in respect to the changing orientation of JPET. Its focus has been altered and the program now gives primacy to employment outcomes at the expense sometimes of addressing entrenched and endemic problems that young people must be able to overcome. This discourages homeless young people in a state of crisis from accessing JPET services. Additionally, the minimalist program funding, under current contracts, limits the depth of interventions and restricts the ability to provide the type of holistic supports needed to achieve sustainable outcomes.

5. Recommendation

The Salvation Army is concerned that the community agencies which have the greatest success in working with homeless people will not be able to effectively provide employment services support as part of an integrated package. JPET, PSP and new programs that aim to address employment and training access for homeless people should be able to delivered by homelessness service providers and must be considered within the National Strategy Plan for Homelessness.

A New National Implementation Committee

Rather than the Coordination and Development (CAD) committee which currently oversees SAAP, and rather than simply letting jurisdictions go off on their own with only performance indicators as their point of reference, there should be a National Implementation Committee which would involve the state and territory jurisdictions as well as some of the other NGO stakeholders. The main point of reference for the discussions and reportage on this group would be how each jurisdiction is implementing the National Strategy Plan in its own jurisdiction, a different discussion to the CAD under SAAP. This National Implementation Committee could have a legislative basis and mandate to give it more strength to hold together a national approach.

6. Recommendation

That the Coordination and Development (CAD) committee which currently oversees SAAP be replaced by a National Implementation Committee which would involve the

state and territory jurisdictions as well as some of the other NGO stakeholders and peak bodies.

National Research and Development Program

The Salvation Army welcomes the Australian government's call for evidence-based policy and program development. There has been a national research program operated through the DRAC/ISC over many years where projects have been framed to address identified issues for SAAP and homelessness. Some important work has been accomplished but often on long lead times. A lot of new research directly linked to what needs to be done in the first five years will need to be initiated and done in a different way from the past.

Some ideas for the future include:

- National data collection across all initiatives and programs for homeless people including employment services – independent data collection by a body such as the AIHW not a government department.
- National Pilots Program to test out new models and initiatives. The Commonwealth HOME Advice program is an example of an important new initiative trialled in each jurisdiction that should lead to a significant component of the service system in the future. As a pilot program, it should be implemented by the Commonwealth, but as a component of the national platform it should be incorporated in the new platform under the NAHA agreement.
- Monitoring and review needs to be more regular and will require additional resources for a broader homelessness data collection. Significantly more resources will need to be invested here.
- Evaluation has been undertaken as an end of program cycle activity, however, a range of activities during NAHA agreement cycles (formative) as well as an end of cycle evaluation (summative) is needed. To do this properly, at least a designated percentage of funds need to be reserved for evaluation.

7. Recommendation

The Salvation Army recognises the importance of evidence-based policy.

Improvements in our current research program can be made by:

- Expanding national data collection across all initiatives and programs for homeless people including employment services
- Establishing a national pilot programs strategy to test out new models and initiatives and ensure that the best ideas become national best practice programs.
- More investment in monitoring, review and evaluation.

Evaluation & Data collection

The SAAP National Data Collection is an outstanding example of service usage data collected from all funded services throughout Australia. No other western country has managed to develop anything close to what has been achieved in this data collection. An important feature has been the independence of the collection and analysis done

by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. This data is open to ad hoc requests from stakeholders and safeguarded from political influences. By contrast, the data collection in Reconnect has been done in-house, is problematic and has not been available for more open scrutiny. The data collection for Job Network similarly does not operate at the same standard as the NDC and it is not possible at present to track homeless clients of Job Network against the outcome of their support through Job Network. The Salvation Army and other sector organisations regard the SAAP NDC as an exemplary achievement that should be extended and further developed.

As a general proposition, we would assert that program data across any new homelessness platform should remain independent in the way that the NDC is, and be maintained according to the standards embodied in this data collection. This proposal is entirely consistent with the Government's commitment to evidence based policy development.

Data on homeless people being supported under any of the programs from targeted prevention, through early intervention, crisis support, transitional accommodation and post-vention support should be collected within an expanded NDC.

8. Recommendation

That program data across any new homelessness platform should remain independent in the way that the NDC is, and be maintained according to the standards embodied in this data collection.

Data on homeless people being supported under any of the programs from targeted prevention, through early intervention, crisis support, transitional accommodation and post-vention support should be collected within an expanded NDC.

Continuous Quality Improvement – National Standards of Service Delivery

Several jurisdictions have developed service standards (Victoria's Homelessness Assistance Service Standards, South Australia's SAAP Performance Management Framework) and there is also the example of the UK Supporting People – Quality Assessment Framework. It is time to consolidate these jurisdictional efforts into one nationally consistent set of service standards and to work towards quality assurance processes that support continuous improvement. This type of initiative builds on what has been done to date and would represent a component of sector infrastructure development.

9. Recommendation

Develop a set of nationally applicable quality standards for the range of homelessness services types with partial application to key non-homelessness services working with homeless clients.

Targets – robust & measurable and able to demonstrate an improving picture

The Salvation Army welcomes the Green Paper discussion of goals and targets and the acknowledgement that clear goals and targets set by governments can focus government and community effort and reduce homelessness in the long term.

Targets should be devised fundamentally in relation to need of clients and not only in relation to particular interventions and outcomes with programs or sub-programs.

Unless this is done, national strategy plan targets will not seriously address what needs to be done to reduce homelessness in Australia.

We caution that discussion of targets needs to move away from short term output monitoring and rather develop a range of targets that track performance in areas of support and impact. Targets must support central policy objectives of joined-up interventions delivering long-term sustainable outcomes that reduce homelessness.

However, the design of targets must take account of the length of time necessary to achieve certain outcomes and the difficulty in attributing particular outcomes to particular interventions when a range of agencies or interventions are involved - and should be involved - in the delivery of holistic case plans. This may mean accepting 'interim' or 'indicative' outcomes – that may look more like outputs (though relating to an evidence base that such outputs can be expected to impact positively).

High level targets need to capture the overarching long-term objective of reducing homelessness and improving the lives of homeless people. The reportage of data on targets needs to address the diversity of needs across the homeless population to ensure that when services support households with high level and/or complex support needs there are incentives for services to proactively seek to engage and maintain engagement with those most marginalised of individuals. Impact targets should include reference to sustainable outcomes such as how long previously homeless or at risk households sustain their long-term housing.

10. Recommendation

The Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should include targets that are robust, measurable and able to demonstrate an improving picture of homelessness in Australia.

Consideration of targets needs to ensure that they focus government and community effort and reduce homelessness in the long term.

Discrete targets relating to households with high level and/or complex support needs are vital so as to ensure that services proactively seek to engage and maintain engagement with those most marginalised of individuals.

Examples of targets that may be considered include:

- Proportion of people able to move into community housing or private rental in 6 months
- Proportion of people who stay in community housing or private rental for more than 12 months
- Proportion of children who are in crisis or transitional or temporary accommodation (including children accompanying their parents) for less than 3 months
- Proportion of young people leaving care who sustain community housing or private accommodation for more than 18 months.
- Proportion of people leaving prison who sustain community housing or private accommodation for more than 18 months.

Elements of Service System

There are three essential elements of the service system, each with various component parts

1. Case Management Approach
2. Client Centred System
3. Joined up or Integrated

Case Management

A case management approach enables accurate assessment of client needs and the development of a personalised plan which should include a range of interventions focussed on the achievement of short and long term goals. This is most effective when it is provided in the context of a multi-disciplinary team.

We understand that Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI Ltd) and Hanover Welfare Services are undertaking a synthesis of case management research as it relates to homeless service systems. The Salvation Army is a member of this research reference committee. Although this research is not yet published early indications suggest that good case management includes development of an intimate client relationship that is built on trust and respect and relies on a specialist level of understanding of homelessness, and excellent communication skills. Good case management delivers outcomes to the client and therefore involves practical and comprehensive support. Building relationships of this nature with clients however requires persistence and perseverance. It is clear that a case management approach that is part of an integrated client-focused service system can and does work.⁸

Client Centred system

The Green Paper recognised that "effective programs wrap services around an individual with high needs."⁹ The Salvation Army also recognises this as the best approach to working with this client group and would advocate strongly for the development of client centred systems. Essentially this means that the system works around the client and not the client being forced to move from one service to the next. Client-centred services are driven by the needs of the individuals and not by the needs of the system or service providers. Services should not be constrained by rigid timeframes and narrowly defined service parameters. We need to encourage service providers to work with individuals to deal with issues and problem solve in creative ways which may not always conform to a constricted set of guidelines but which do in fact enable the client to progress and achieve their ultimate goals.

Responsive services

Given that the individual circumstances of most homeless people are different, it is a truism to state that a 'one size fits all' approach will not effectively address the issues encountered by individuals. Furthermore, we live in the context of a diverse and changing society and within specific local communities which each have their own peculiarities. Consequently services need to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of individuals in a place-based approach, which will vary across Australia. Rural and regional services need to be able to respond in environments often where there are limited complimentary and/or mainstream services.

⁸ Gronda, Hellene (2008) Case Management Research Green Paper Submission

⁹ Green Paper pp50

Relationships

"When asked about their engagement with and perception of services young people consistently indicated that:

- the quality of the relationship with a worker is more important than the actual service received.
- they want workers to treat them like human beings.
- continuity of care with a worker is more important than diverse forms of care from multiple workers.
- there are insufficient housing services to meet their needs.
- short tenure in crisis accommodation is highly destabilising.
- the current rates of income support are inadequate to maintain stable accommodation.
- their experience of community care placements and foster care is overwhelmingly negative. In these contexts some have experienced physical or sexual abuse and/or have commenced drug use in these settings.
- their experience of inpatient mental health services is generally positive compared with more mixed, if not negative, experiences of outpatient mental health care."¹⁰

The Salvation Army youth services have identified that some young people and young offenders in particular, take considerable time to develop trust and to adjust to a non-adversarial setting. The most powerful contribution we can make in supporting these young people is the experience of a 'belonging community', with long-term unconditional acceptance, intensive support and access to programs that focus on positive interactions, education, vocational training and employment are essential for both preventative and post-incarceration work to be effective.

Salvation Army services understand the need to create a sense of community and activities that will build the self-esteem and a sense of belonging for people. In many of our services, this is achieved by involving people in activities and outings they would not otherwise have the chance to experience. Often a bond is formed between the worker and client that has a profound impact on the client. Just knowing someone cares about them, is interested in their achievements, and is willing to put time and energy into helping them to overcome their issues, produces an incredible boost to their sense of self-worth. A strong bond is forged through working together to overcome adversity. This bond takes time.

Case Study - Peter

Referred to a Salvation Army youth refuge by a sympathetic lawyer, Peter was 21 years old with an intellectual disability, a diagnosed mental illness (requiring regular, mandated medication) and a long estrangement from his family. Staying a lot longer than the six weeks indicated by the funding body, it was at least three months before Peter even called refuge workers by their names. He moved to specialised supported housing, but with absences, substance use and an unrealised reputation for violence this broke down quickly. For two years (now being too old for a "youth" refuge) he has spent more time "on the streets" than in any type of accommodation. He regularly and often visits the refuge for a feed, a shower, a sleep on the couch –

¹⁰ Key, D., Mallett, S., Edward, J. and Rosenthal, D. (2004), Who Can Help Me? Homeless young people's perception of services.' Project I, Department of Public Health, University of Melbourne.

refuge workers continually advocate on his behalf with appropriate services but only to short-term effect. Any movement is slow but the refuge's support is aimed at not letting Peter becoming forgotten.

"It's easy to rattle off a lot of reasons why young people might be homeless, but what we universally see are young people who have experienced the erosion of a significant relationship, most commonly with an adult who had a very important role in their lives."

[A Salvation Army youth refuge worker]

Case Study – The importance of relationships

A young man was brought to a Salvation Army program by the Youth Advocacy Centre worker who had met him in court. Having received a caution, the magistrate instructed the young man to seek out positive community interactions and "get his life on track." He had no stable accommodation; a 24 hours internet café was "home." He had limited family contact due to a poor/volatile relationship with his stepfather. In addition he had contact with Youth Justice, limited education and work skills.

Over the course of the next 14 months, with intensive support this young man was able to "get on track."

Firstly he moved into supported accommodation where he developed life skills such as budgeting, cooking, cleaning, laundry etc and had somewhere to call home. He developed positive interpersonal skills by participating in various Salvation Army youth programs including Beat the Streets Drumming and Healthy Lifestyles Boxing Program and becoming part of an accepting community.

The drumming program helped him to develop a great sense of personal confidence and gave him a positive experience with the local police who support the program. Boxing became something that the young man pursued beyond the scope of the program. He developed a relationship with the gym and trainers who agreed that, if he assisted with cleaning one afternoon a week he could train for free at the gym anytime.

This physical activity not only improved his fitness and health levels, it also encouraged the young man to reduce his alcohol and drug use and was a positive outlet of any aggression. He also completed a vocational training program and succeeded in gaining an apprenticeship.

At the end of 14 months, this young man had managed to get his life well and truly back on track through the support and encouragement he received and through his own determination.

He had re-connected with family, improved his education and developed vocational skills, moved into private rental, improved his health and reduced his alcohol intake, had not had any youth justice involvement and had maintained fulltime work for an extended period.

11. Recommendation

Limited duration support periods that characterise SAAP crisis and transitional support and accommodation do not take into account the different situations of homeless people. The support and accommodation periods should be determined

by the needs of the person rather than predicated by inflexible benchmarks or funding.

Joined up

We welcome the Green Papers recognition that "mainstream health, welfare and employment programs do not routinely support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (and that) policies, procedures and systems may inadvertently contribute to or increase homelessness."¹¹ We agree that homeless people are also big users of mainstream services which could do more to make their services and systems more accessible to homeless people. However, The Salvation Army recognises that mainstream services are just that – mainstream. For mainstream services homelessness is generally a small issue when compared with their core business. Raising awareness about homelessness is possible and focusing on the transition points when homeless people leave a mainstream service can achieve viable opportunities for effective early intervention.

Our services have achieved the greatest success in supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by developing strong partnerships with mainstream providers.

We believe that it is unrealistic to expect already over-stretched mainstream services such as hospital emergency departments to take primary responsibility for homeless people. Good service delivery to homeless people through mainstream services is best achieved by partnership with specialist homeless services.

The Green Paper's discussion of improving mainstream services seems rather naïve and does not reflect usefully on the difficulties of doing this, nor on the examples of where gains have been made. Mainstream services doing 'prevention' should be acknowledged on the national homelessness plan but funding would come through their own departments and outside the national homelessness platform. Typically funding for partnership at transition points where early intervention can happen should be done in a way that ensures the highest level of functionality for the partnership.

In order to create effective pathways for people experiencing homelessness it is critical that specialist services and mainstream services work more effectively in partnership to address the whole needs of homeless people. The notion of joined up services is encapsulated in the statement, 'One Door – No Wrong Door'¹² and is essential if we are to create an environment that fosters social inclusion. Some of the service systems that directly impact upon people experiencing homelessness include, Mental Health Services, General Health Services, Family Violence Services, Corrections and Justice, Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation and support services, Employment Services and the education system.

There is no doubt that mainstream services can improve their service to homeless people. The Salvation Army is concerned however, that this improvement not be at the expense of funding for homeless services.

12. Recommendation

¹¹ Australian Government (2008) Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness; Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra

¹² ALP Social Inclusion Policy p 5

That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness includes strategies to improve the responsiveness of mainstream services as well as investment in homelessness specific services.

That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness outlines strategies and provide resources to improve partnerships between homeless services and mainstream services.

Mental Health

Depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide ideation are major health issues for homeless people. The ability to easily access mental health services is a high priority and requires urgent attention, particularly 'after-hours' crisis services for young people. Often our workers are forced to watch a client's mental health deteriorate because they are not able to access timely mental health support until their mental health issue is acute. This not only puts at risk a person's ability to maintain their independent accommodation, it adds to the issue identified by the Green Paper known as 'churning'.

Case study

A Salvation Army service in Melbourne reported the experience of a young woman who was staying in a Salvation Army youth refuge. She had a significant history of self-harm and was a client of a mental health service in a nearby region. She called them one evening in a crisis situation, however despite knowing her history and situation, the after hours care givers could not come to the refuge as it was out of their area. She was advised to meet them 100 metres up the road as this was the boundary for their particular geographic region. We are extremely concerned about the fact that this young woman could not be treated at our centre and was put at greater risk, simply because she did not fit within a line drawn on a map. The system should put the person first and have sufficient flexibility to respond to their urgent needs.¹³

13. Recommendation

That the Governments National Strategy Plan for Homelessness has reference to the National Mental Health Strategy to encourage partnership and improve the responsiveness of mental health services to homeless people.

Primary Health Services

Salvation Army services report that the scarcity of general practitioners and bulk billing services is a huge barrier for homeless people to be able to access vital health interventions. Consequently, homeless people often do not seek appropriate health care for minor ailments, which left neglected, can escalate into serious health issues that ultimately might require hospitalisation. The health system and community based agencies needs to work in partnership to identify and address health concerns in settings that are accessible to and affordable for, homeless people. Negotiations with the AMA and other health providers to allow homeless clients to be bulk billed would be helpful.

The Salvation Army supports calls for a national audit of health services for people who are homeless to identify service gaps and improved partnerships with health services and homelessness services.

¹³ Finding My Place

14. Recommendation

That the Government implement a national audit of health services for people who are homeless to identify service gaps and improved partnerships with health services and homelessness services.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Many clients of Salvation Army homeless services also experience problematic alcohol and drug use. Working with people who are homeless with drug and alcohol issues can be complex and difficult. It can be a specific area of expertise. We are aware that because a person has complex support issues they can slip between various service systems and sometimes end up with many workers involved in their lives with little coordination, and limited long term intervention.

We are also aware that many people who experience homelessness develop alcohol or drug issues. This is not surprising when we consider the circumstances of homelessness.

Coordination between specialist alcohol and drug services and homeless services can be improved and the National Strategy Plan for Homelessness should give consideration to these issues and result in more flexible funding arrangements in both service systems so operational partnerships can develop and be supported.

Family Violence Services

Trust between agencies, their workers and those who turn to them for support is especially critical within the family violence services sector. It is the cornerstone upon which hope is built. Agencies within this sector understand the importance of working collaboratively to provide safety and protection for the people they work with and in so doing achieve positive outcomes for all concerned. The stories of Sophie, Annie and Clare illustrate what can be achieved when agencies work in partnership.

Case Study - Sophie

Sophie lived with her partner with whom she ran a business. They had an eight year old child and were in the process of buying a property together when Sophie decided to escape the emotional, economic and physical abuse to which her partner had been continually subjecting her.

Sophie went to the police for help. The police made immediate contact with the 24 hour a day and 7 day a week entry point for multi agency family violence support services of which The Salvation Army specialist family violence service is a partner. Key issues that Sophie needed to address included her complete economic dependence on her abusive partner and her complete lack of knowledge regarding the system of support and protection available to her. Whilst her case worker engaged with her intensively over a 48 hour period to help her to understand what services were available and to carefully consider her options, a partner agency provided Sophie and her eight year old child with safe accommodation.

Sophie then felt able to go to court to get an intervention order and to negotiate with one of her two older sons that she and her eight year old could go to live with him.

Sophie and her young child did not have to move out of their local area but rather kept their community supports, networks and knowledge; a sustainable outcome with no continuing dependence on crisis service system.

Case Study – Annie

Annie's first language was not English. Annie was kept virtual prisoner in her own home where she was subjected to extreme sexual and physical abuse. When Annie went to the police, she was very afraid and very confused. She arrived without safety, food or shelter and without any of the apparent means to have these most fundamental of needs met.

The police placed Annie in a motel and established contact with the entry point for family violence services. The Salvation Army as lead agency moved Annie to safer accommodation provided by a partner agency whilst their case worker provided intensive engagement for five whole days.

By the end of the week, despite Annie's fear, confusion and limited English her immediate and long term needs were being addressed, including safe accommodation, an intervention order secured, food, a mobile phone with a safe number, counselling for the abuse that Annie had survived and initiating police action against the perpetrator.

Annie had previously found herself unable to communicate to her Doctor that her ongoing mental and physical complaints were not work related. This had resulted in an ongoing work cover claim. The engagement that her case worker was able to establish with her meant that now Annie could have her real needs met and with the appropriate services.

Three community agencies and two police units had worked together to help Annie to begin to build her own foundation for a safe and affirming future.

Case Study – Clare

Clare's desperation arising from the physical abuse to which her husband subjected her found expression through her physically pulling out clumps of her own hair. However, Clare continued to exhibit significant resistance to the support which she herself had accessed. Clare was terrified that if she talked with the police and/or approached the courts for protection, her husband and his criminal contacts would feel sufficiently threatened that they would hunt her down. Fearing that Clare's fear and suspicions of the system with which she was engaging, would lead her to an imminent return to the abusive situation she had escaped, the service supporting Clare contacted their partner Salvation Army service for input. The Salvation Army provided 24 hours of additional intensive support to better understand the source of Clare's fears to provide appropriate reassurances as to the realities of the options open to her. Clare made the decision that she would speak with the police. She secured an intervention order and requested and secured access to a specialist refuge.

Referral pathways, units of accommodation and associated targets are one thing but without the kind of intensive support that was delivered to Clare, fear and suspicion will continually sabotage efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

Victoria is well advanced in its development of an integrated family violence system. This systems reform has included reform of legislation and courts; reform of police handling of family violence; partnership between the crisis family violence services and police interventions and partnership between family violence services, and family violence and the broader service system. Although this reform is continuing, and a significant evaluation is underway in partnership between a Melbourne University, the

Victorian Government and Victoria Police, feedback from our services actively engaged in this reform report that these reforms are very positive.

Corrections and Justice

The lack of co-ordination between various elements in the criminal justice system, results in inadequate or inappropriate supports for people leaving detention, either juvenile detention centres or adult correction centres, at the completion of their sentence or those who are on parole. Research confirms that recidivism is highest when people leaving the corrections system are not able to secure stable accommodation and employment. Appropriate supports prior to and on release from the corrections system in the form of vocational training and job search support, will help in equipping people in the task of finding employment on release.

The Salvation Army has been funded to run several post-release programs in different parts of Australia. However, each of these services comment that their work is under-funded and that this limits the level of support and interventions they can provide.

Leaving Care

It is a disgrace that so many children who are leaving care 'graduate' into the homelessness support system.

Salvation Army services provide a range of supports for young people leaving care, including the Transitional Supported Accommodation for Youth (TSAY) which is essentially a multi-disciplinary case management approach that works intensively with young people to help them make a successful transition to independent living.

Better case planning and long-term relationship based support for young people leaving care are essential to ensure that young people leaving care no longer enter the homeless service system.

Older People

Salvation Army services recognise a growing number of older people on fixed incomes entering the homeless system. There are some good examples where aged care funding has been used to establish hostels for older homeless individuals and this should be supported and expanded. The cost savings involved are obvious quite apart from the better and more stable and sustainable support setting achieved.

Employment Services

The Government's Discussion Paper on The Future of Employment Services, acknowledges that there is a need for change and that in the current system 'the most disadvantaged job seekers do not receive enough help.'¹⁴ As a consequence the system is being redesigned and the focus of service provision will be on those with complex needs who have been disadvantaged in the labour market. The challenge will be in developing the capacity of the provider network to effectively engage with people who are homeless and to work in partnership with specialist agencies to create client centred pathways to employment, that are driven by the needs of the individual and not the needs of the employment services system.

¹⁴ The Future of Employment Services in Australia – A Discussion Paper pp5

Recognising that for some people achievement of a sustainable and meaningful job placement may take considerable time.

Education

The impact of homelessness on children is significant. Schools can play a significant role in identifying young people who may be at risk of homelessness. All children have a fundamental right to education and we have a responsibility to ensure that those young people who are 'at risk' of early school leaving have access to supports which will keep them connected to a learning environment.

It is our experience that if a young person drops out of school early they are put at increased risk of homelessness. Consequently, young people who have learning difficulties or those who struggle at school need to be provided with higher levels of assistance and personalised approaches that aim to keep them at school or in education and reduce the risk of them becoming homeless. Furthermore we need to train and encourage teachers and schools to form partnerships with community agencies who can work with such young people to keep them connected to the education system. The following case study demonstrates the positive outcomes that can be achieved when schools work effectively with local community groups.

Case Study - Daniel

"Behaviours are formed over months and years, shaped by events that cannot be undone. It takes the kind of acceptance, perseverance and time that comes with 'relationship' to inspire and deliver change."

[A Salvation Army youth worker]

The Salvation Army was alerted by a referral from Daniel's school to the incredible pressures facing him and his family. The family comprising of five children, their mother and grandmother were living in public housing. The family was struggling to come to terms with the suicide at home of one of the younger children as well as the knowledge that two of the boys had been subjected to sexual abuse by an extended family member. Daniel was 17 years old and in difficulty at school and was facing suspension. Daniel was increasingly binge drinking and using marijuana. The family's need to move and to move to a safer locality was clear and a key component within any strategy to support Daniel.

The Salvation Army helped address the lack of an available and appropriate Office of Housing property by housing the family in one of its own suitably sized and located properties for as long as the family required.

In the meantime, a Salvation Army case worker engaged with Daniel and set about building a relationship with him. Working together, Daniel secured a work experience in a mechanics workshop. Daniel began reducing and managing his alcohol and drug use, supported through accessing a sexual assault counsellor through The Salvation Army. Daniel impressed the owner of the workshop and was able to negotiate an apprenticeship.

Today Daniel is still engaged with his apprenticeship and is doing well. His family is still housed by The Salvation Army.

The relationship that the caseworker was able to build with Daniel was key for Daniel to begin to turn things around. Without this intervention, at this point, it is difficult to imagine how Daniel, instead of building hope and securing and maintaining his apprenticeship, would not have fallen into street homelessness.

Salvation Army services provide a range of accredited educational programs that operate in a supportive environment where the participants learn practical vocational skills, how to work in teams, workplace behaviours and communication skills. At the same time they receive intensive support to deal with life issues.

System Framework

While homeless services should be diverse, flexible and expert, The Salvation Army recognises there are logically three basic service functions that can describe them. A client should experience these service functions seamlessly.

These are:

1. Early intervention
2. Crisis and transitional support & accommodation
3. Long-term support & accommodation

Early Intervention

Most Salvation Army networks and centres have capacity to work with people and their families to prevent them from becoming homeless. This includes providing access to mediation and counselling, linking people into mental health or alcohol and other drug facilities, better access to integrated family violence services including legal advice and police responses, facilitating workshops and providing information to parents who need help in dealing with the challenging or aggressive behaviour of their adolescent children.

The NYC report focuses on a small pilot program HOME Advice. This program is also recognised in the Green Paper. Our work with homeless families strongly supports the notion that a program such as Home advice would greatly assist families BEFORE they became homeless. By assisting people while they retain accommodation, we will greatly diminish the damage that is the effect of homelessness.

Case Study

Two months ago Angela a mother with 9 children (8 living with her and under the age of 12) approached The Salvation Army because she had to leave her private rental accommodation on the northern fringe of a major capital city. The owners of the house were selling it. Angela had been in this accommodation for six years and had been a reliable tenant, keeping up with rent and keeping the premises in good order. She has had stable part time employment as a contract worker and was able to maintain employment because she had good support from family and friends in her local community, and had a friend who shared her home who would assist with babysitting. Indeed, the real estate agent who acted as property manager for the owner and who was contracted to sell the property was prepared to act as referee for the tenant and later, when approached during the search for accommodation spoke glowingly of her tenancy.

As the sale of the property neared Angela approached homeless services, however she was not assisted because there were many other families in greater crisis than she was. When she finally left her home, Angela was given three nights accommodation in two adjoining hotel rooms paid for by HEF crisis brokerage. When this support ended, Angela was told that the homeless service could do no more for her as there were no support vacancies and so she approached The Salvation Army

directly for emergency relief. A Salvation Army Homeless Service was contacted and able to provide several more days accommodation from donated funds in the hotel while the housing outreach support workers looked for more appropriate and safe accommodation. There were no transitional or crisis options available for Angela because of the size of her family in three local service areas. Public housing was also not an option because her part time work made her ineligible. A search of real-estate agents in a gradually expanding circle from her local area was also unsuccessful. It appeared that no suitable accommodation existed for this large family or if it did no one wanted to rent to a family with this many kids.

Eventually, The Salvation Army was able to accommodate Angela and her children in a Salvation Army owned property while the search for appropriate and affordable accommodation continued. This move was in some ways a disadvantage to Angela and her children because she was no longer experiencing primary homelessness and so became a less urgent case for chronically over stretched homeless services that is forced to focus on those in greatest crisis. Further, The Salvation Army accommodation was a two-hour car journey from the children's school and her support networks and was in a fringe suburb of the city that is poorly serviced by public transport. Angela does not have a car and in any case would need a nine seater to transport her children and babies to school. Five of Angela's children attend school. If Angela's homelessness continues, she will be forced to move the children's school, a move she is very reluctant to make because they are achieving success where they are. At the time of writing The Salvation Army service is exploring arrangements using chaplains to help Angela keep the children connected to their school until a more permanent accommodation solution can be found. The Salvation Army continues to provide intensive support and advocacy in her search for permanent accommodation. Angela remains homeless, as do her children.

Families such as Angela's should never become homeless. Had she received intensive support when she was first notified of the landlord's intention to sell, she may have been able to delay her eviction and been better supported to find alternative accommodation before her housing crisis became acute. An early intervention program such as HOME Advice, because of its phone support and partnership with local homeless outreach support services, may have been able to assist or at least plan better for her eviction. Now that Angela is homeless, her children risk disconnection from school and community and Angela is under enormous personal strain. Even Angela's employment is under threat because she is no longer near her childcare supports.

15. Recommendation

[The Salvation Army supports the NCY call for a national roll out of the Household Organisational Management Expenses \(HOME\) Advice programs across Australia.](#)

The Salvation Army delivers early intervention services through the Commonwealth Government's Reconnect Program. These services provide quick responses, flexible service delivery and a range of interventions to prevent escalation of family conflict and stress, and reconnect young people who have left home with their families as quickly as possible. The Green Paper recognised the success of this program.

Case Study - Jenny

"It's not just that good case work interventions can help people avoid inappropriate entry into an ever deepening involvement with the homelessness system, more importantly good case work can keep families together, to find sustainability founded

on the strength of their own relationships and all those resources that money cannot buy."

Jenny was in Year 12 when the student welfare coordinator contacted the Salvation Army – Reconnect service. Jenny was the eldest of nine children. Two of her siblings had pronounced intellectual difficulties. The family home was far too small. Jenny's parents had tried to address this by beginning to build an extension. However, the pressures of day-to-day living meant this remained far from completion. Jenny's study was suffering terribly and the only option seemed for Jenny to move out.

Rather than plan for Jenny to leave her family, The Salvation Army established contact with the not-for-profit organisation 'Kids Under Cover'. Four months later, Kids Under Cover had project managed the construction of a two bedroom bungalow in the family's back yard. The project had been fully funded through the corporate sponsorship of BP. The new lease of life this had given the family spurred on Jenny's parents to finish the extension. The icing on the cake was Kids Under Cover providing Jenny and her brother in Year 11 with an educational scholarship and mentor.

The Salvation Army continue to stay in touch with the family whose immediate and future needs were met through individual, family, community and corporate partnership.

16. Recommendation

The Salvation Army supports the NCY call for a massive expansion of Reconnect programs across Australia.

Crisis & transitional support and accommodation

Supported accommodation and housing is an essential element to Australia's current response and is recognised internationally as a successful.

Supported accommodation and housing should provide for an immediate crisis response; a transitional role in moving people who have experienced homelessness to a long term outcome; and long term support and housing. The system should not be structured as crisis-driven – a client should be able to move into long term or transitional support without first experiencing a crisis. Likewise, people who have become at risk of homelessness should not have to experience primary homelessness before accommodation and/or support can be obtained. Unfortunately, this is not very often the case because homeless services are stretched and so scarce resources have been targeted to those in immediate need.

Crisis accommodation forms a critical element in any homelessness response. People in crisis situations need to be assisted in finding emergency accommodation to address their immediate need for shelter.

As individuals and families transition into more stable long term accommodation, they need to be provided with ongoing support in the form of outreach services, which help them to stay connected to supportive communities and where required help them to develop the relevant life skills such as budgeting, managing household expenses, shopping, cooking and general household maintenance tasks.

Long-term support and accommodation

Long-term support should be available to a small number of very complex clients. Further, life isn't simple and so some people re-enter the homelessness system despite obtaining long-term stable and affordable accommodation because a new crisis has entered their lives. Presently, there is very little long-term support available.

The Salvation Army supports calls to provide more long-term support for people who are at risk of re-entering homelessness or who have complex support needs, however, this should not be at the expense of crisis responses. Ideally we would see services that would be able to provide more transitional and long term housing and support responses that are determined by the client and not by artificial funding formulas. Clients who are exited from a homeless support service, should be able to reconnect with that same service or another service of their choice, if they experience another crisis or if their accommodation becomes 'at risk'. This is both an early intervention and post-vention response.

As housing affordability has diminished, The Salvation Army has seen the homeless service system become more crisis focussed. Further, people have stayed in crisis facilities for longer periods because there are fewer exit options. This is a particular problem reported by our refuge services. A significant investment in social and community housing together with measures to address the supply of rental properties is urgently needed to address this issue.

Legislation – a case for it

Australia's homelessness response currently enjoys the protection of legislation in the form of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Act (1994). This legislation is unique because it recognises Australia's commitment to human rights and frames our response to homelessness as a justice issue that must acknowledge and address the powerlessness of homeless people, respect their dignity, enhance their self esteem, address their economic and social disadvantage and recognise the importance of their community and cultural beliefs and backgrounds.

These notions about how we respond to homelessness continue to resonate in the way that we speak about homelessness and the way that we conduct our services. Indeed, the values that underpin the SAAP Act resonated throughout the Prime Ministers speech that launched the Green Paper and the way that he has spoken about homelessness since he came into office.

The SAAP Act (1994) represents Australia's long term and significant commitment to addressing homelessness. However, the Act is now old and can be improved upon. We believe that a new legislative frame for a new approach to homelessness is timely and necessary. A new legislative frame for our National Strategy Plan for Homelessness must at least do the same as the SAAP Act, although it could also do more. New legislation should, as well as setting a human rights basis, address homelessness sustainably and broadly acknowledging comprehensively, as we do in 2008, all of the drivers of homelessness. This would serve to broaden the focus of homelessness by acknowledging that one program response will not prevent homelessness from growing. The SAAP Act because it is about only one program area narrows our thinking and therefore risks narrowing our response.

Legislation can also work to protect the service system response and in particular ensure that funds released under the Act are spent as intended. An example of this may be legislation that enshrines key goals and targets such as a commitment to reduce homelessness by a measurable target by a specific year, and enshrines the right to crisis accommodation and support within an acceptable time frame. Legislation may also require States or regions to have housing and homelessness strategies that support the National Homelessness Agreement thus protecting the whole of government and whole of nation response.

Legislation could also create and give mandate to a new National Implementation committee that would involve the state and territory jurisdictions as well as some of the other NGO stakeholders.

17. Recommendation

That new legislation underpins Australia's new approach to homelessness by recognising the right of homeless people to accommodation and support and committing Australia to reduce homelessness.

The new legislation should describe the values and approaches of our response, serve to protect program integrity, establish and give mandate to a new National Implementation Committee, support the participation of states, and serve to demonstrate our long-term commitment to reducing homelessness.

National Youth Commission

The Salvation Army supports the recommendations of the National Youth Commission inquiry into youth homelessness. This inquiry held 21 hearings, took evidence from 319 individuals, received 91 written submissions and produced a 400-page report.

The NYC process adopted the rigorous methodology of the original Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission headed by Brian Burdekin. The NYC report details 80 recommendations and The Salvation Army urges that attention be given to how these recommendations might be implemented.

The Salvation Army benefited from the experience of participation in the film *The Oasis* which has done much to raise community awareness about homelessness throughout Australia and also from the involvement of Major David Eldridge on the National Youth Commission.

A detailed response, *Finding My Place: The Salvation Army's response to youth homelessness* has been prepared which sets out The Salvation Army's position on the various issues raised in Australia's Homeless Youth and this is attached as part of this submission.

18. Recommendation

That all 80 recommendations of the National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness be implemented as part of the governments commitment to addressing national homelessness.

Building Workforce Capacity

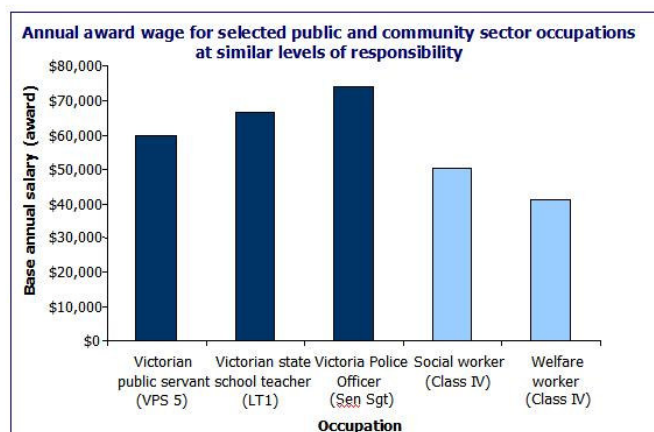
In recent years, limited funding levels have seen a considerable decline in the wages and conditions of people working in the homelessness sector, compared to other sectors.

Our experience in The Salvation Army is that people who work in health and human services are motivated to undertake this type of work because of a desire to make a difference. They are making a significant contribution to the health of the community through the work they do, yet society doesn't value this work sufficiently to provide remuneration equivalent to those in other sectors.

Currently Victorian housing and homelessness workers are paid according to the Social and Community Services Award 2000 (Vic) funded at level 1 year 7 which equates to \$42,819.92 per annum before tax under their Award. This is a staggering \$14,040.48, below the average Australian salary. It is also significantly below what their equivalents in the health and public sectors are being paid. In most instances, these workers have a university qualification, increasing the discrepancy between their true value and what their salary represents.

In comparison, child protection workers can have starting salaries as high as \$55,000, while Community Mental Health Nurses can earn in the order of \$80,000pa for a senior practitioner.

This disparity continues as a person's career progresses as the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet Policy and Strategy Unit demonstrates below.¹⁵



A Class IV social worker:

- Has a four-year Bachelor of Social Work degree
- Has senior administrative responsibilities
- Is in charge of an agency or department with a staff of eight or more social workers, or with a staff of social workers plus other employees totalling at least fourteen in number; or equivalent duties.
- Performs social work tasks including the assisting of an individual to achieve the best possible personal, family and social adjustment, the treatment of social problems by group techniques, research into social needs and anomalies and action undertaken to correct such needs and anomalies and community organisation.

Unlike the other occupations shown, a social or welfare worker at Class IV is at the highest grade in their award. They have no further career progression pathway without moving off the award (executive level positions) or leaving the field.

As a consequence, over 50% of workers have indicated that they do not intend to be working in the industry in 5 years time.

¹⁵ Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria (2006) Building Community Sector Capacity for Victoria's Future; Policy & Strategy Projects; Victorian Government: Melbourne.

In 2007, the Office of Housing in Victoria engaged KPMG to conduct a work-force survey of the community-managed housing and support sector. The key themes that emerged from the survey included:

- The lack of articulated career pathways
- The need for an improved professional learning and development strategy
- The issue of remuneration levels across the sector and different sub sectors
- The managed housing and support workforce is highly qualified, with the majority holding qualifications in fields that were highly related to the community-managed housing and support sector
- The challenges of recruiting and retaining high quality staff, include wage disparity with newly qualified youth, welfare or social workers who are remunerated at higher levels within the community health centre or alcohol and drug treatment service environments
- A deteriorating workforce situation because of an older workforce and generational change¹⁶

Indeed, KPMG found that of all the sub-sectors, youth homelessness staff are most likely to leave their sub-sector within two years (30 per cent), followed by homelessness generalist staff (27 per cent) and family violence staff (26 per cent). The general two-year expectation rates greatly exceed the ABS benchmarks.¹⁷

Over the longer term this will create a workforce crisis and presents a significant threat to the effective delivery of services in the homelessness sector. As mentioned earlier, relationships between clients and staff are essential for success in this industry and therefore continuity of staffing is a critical factor in providing ongoing, consistent care and support to homeless people.

Failure to address workforce issues will undermine any investment in homelessness into the future.

If the Government is serious about tackling the issue of homelessness, it must develop the capacity of the workforce and value the contribution that our people make in working with people who are most disadvantaged in our community. This will involve a significant injection of funds.

Therefore, The Salvation Army encourages the Government to work with unions and industry representatives, as an integral part of its homelessness strategy, to commit to funding a national workforce strategy that contains a significant increase in remuneration so that housing and homelessness workers are given pay and condition parity with professional government, human service and allied health workers who perform equally complex and challenging work. It is essential that this investment flows through to improved award conditions and pay. This is a critical underpinning foundation of any proposed future enhancements to the sector.

19. Recommendation

That the Government works with unions and industry representatives, as an integral part of its National Strategy Plan for Homelessness, to commit to funding a national workforce strategy that contains a significant increase in remuneration, recognises the skills and competencies of workers, addresses recruitment and retention issues and provides for professional career pathways.

¹⁶ KPMG (2008) Victorian Department of Human Services, Survey of the Community-managed housing and support workforce Summary Report, DHS: Melbourne.

¹⁷ KPMG (2008) *ibid*