

VICTORIAN HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

2011–2015

STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER



In our *2011 Victorian Families Statement*, the Baillieu Government began a conversation about what matters to families and made a commitment to helping families achieve their aspirations.

Through the Families Statement, the Government acknowledged that one of the fundamental things every person needs is a roof over their head; a stable home where they can be safe and which enables them and their children to participate in the community.

However, there are people in our community who are experiencing events and circumstances which make them vulnerable. The rising cost of living, the pressure on affordable housing and demands on families are making it difficult for some Victorians to lead healthy, productive and safe lives within their communities. Family violence has a significant impact on women, children, families and the community.

Right now, thousands of Victorians are homeless including children, young people and adults. Whole families are unable to access safe and stable housing and support services that assist them to build a foundation for social and economic participation.

If these circumstances are allowed to continue, people can become trapped in a cycle of homelessness that can extend from one generation to the next.

We need to do more to prevent this from happening in our community.

The challenge facing us today is to tackle homelessness by creating new, innovative approaches, and reform of the homelessness service system. The Baillieu Government is determined to deliver a fresh approach that addresses homelessness and responds to the challenges people face, now and for the next generation and beyond.

The important work and contribution of the specialist homelessness services and family violence sectors is vital and their commitment to making positive impacts on people's lives is valued.

However, despite our efforts, many people are not receiving the range and level of support they need to move out of homelessness to independent living where they can access educational, training and work opportunities and participate in their local communities.

We need to refresh our approach and we need to do it together. People who are homeless should be able to get help and assistance wherever they are and whatever their age or circumstances.

Action and setting the foundation for reform, with a focus on prevention and early intervention, innovation and partnerships, is required to break the cycle of homelessness.

The Government has already announced several initiatives that will encourage people to increase their skills and participation in employment and community life. These include:

- the development of three **40-bed Youth Foyers** targeted at young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- **five Work and Learning Centres** to be established on public housing estates to assist tenants to access education and training, and transition into the workforce.

The Government is also investing in targeted services that effectively respond to crisis and housing instability.

In addition the Government is continuing to address family violence through a whole of Government approach.

Building on the work that is already underway, I am pleased to announce the Government's **Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 to 2015**.

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan is focused on **three** key areas which are to:

- support innovative approaches to homelessness
- investigate models that focus specifically on early intervention and prevention
- better target resources when and where they are most needed and where they will make the biggest difference.

This is an ambitious task and the Government cannot do it alone. The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan is a first step in tackling homelessness. It will complement the development of a strategic Housing Framework for Victoria that will address current and future housing challenges for low income Victorians, and provide a vision for a vibrant housing system which builds human capital and contributes to the productivity of the Victorian economy.

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan will be informed by local, national and international evidence and advice that supports innovative approaches and reforms to the service system, drawing on local knowledge and expertise about what works.

The **Innovation Action Projects** will harness local knowledge and provide opportunities for the most effective approaches to be tested across different settings.

Through the establishment of a **Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness**, this Government will work with valued partners from all sectors, as well as renowned experts, to identify a range of priorities to prevent and reduce homelessness in Victoria. This will enable the Government to provide a more cohesive, coordinated response to homelessness in the future.

An **Inter-Departmental Committee** will also be established across Government to provide advice on approaches that join housing and homelessness services up with mainstream services such as health, education and employment in order to respond to individual needs.

With lessons drawn from new innovative services, and advice from the Ministerial Advisory Council and Inter-Departmental Committee, we will begin to **rebuild our system** so that those who are experiencing homelessness get the assistance and support they need, when and where they need it.

I am pleased to publish the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 to 2015 and I look forward to working with all partners who are committed to addressing this important and challenging issue.

This is a vital first step in the Baillieu Government delivering significant improvements to the way that we support our most vulnerable citizens.

Together we will work towards building a strong, integrated and effective service response that supports early intervention and prevention, or breaks the cycle of homelessness, and leads people to independence and self reliance.



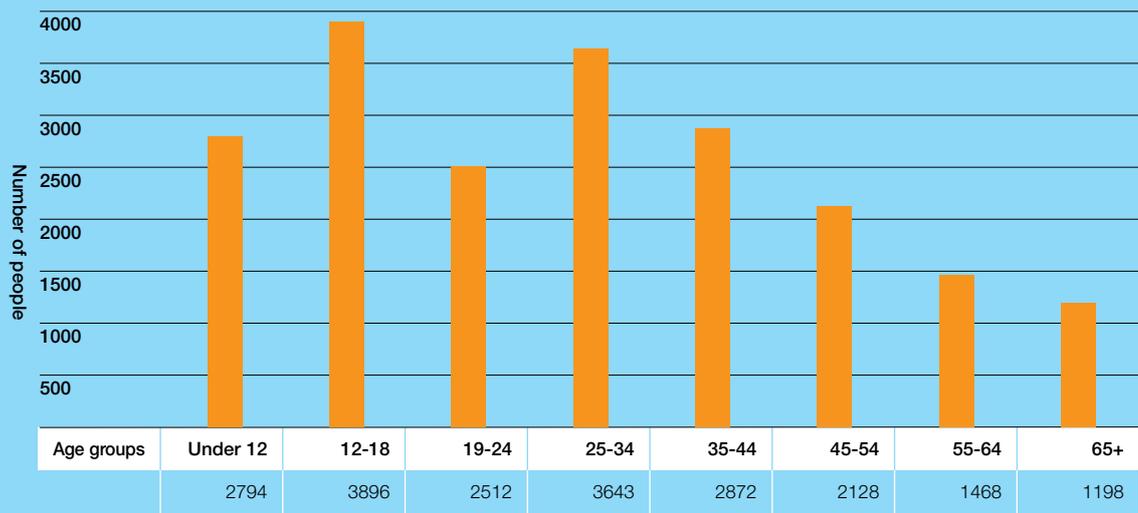
Hon Wendy Lovell MLC
Minister for Housing

WHAT WE KNOW

Homelessness is a persistent and growing problem in Victoria. Homelessness is not limited to a particular group of people; it can and does affect Victorians from all walks of life.

Census data gives us a point in time estimation of the number of Victorians who were homeless at the time of the 2006 Census.

Table 1: Counting the Homeless, ABS Census¹



Source: Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Counting the Homeless 2006 Victoria

As illustrated in **Table 1** above, a total of 20,511 Victorian homeless persons were identified in the 2006 Census. Persons most likely to be homeless were aged between 12 and 18 (19 per cent) or 25-34 (18 per cent). People aged 65+ were least likely to be homeless.

¹ The 2006 Homeless Census figures are currently under review by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Interim revised figures have been released through the *ABS Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless 2006*. A final figure is expected in May 2012. Data from the 2011 Census is not yet available.

‘The challenge facing us today is to tackle homelessness by creating new, innovative approaches, and to reform the homelessness service system.’



Given the most recent Census data is at 2006, the data from our specialist housing and homelessness services providers gives us a more detailed picture about the changing demands for services over the last five years, as well as a more current picture of Victorians experiencing homelessness. However the data is indicative rather than definitive due to the nature of its collection.

The number of clients and the percentage change by age group over the last five years are detailed in **Table 2** below.

A homelessness service client is defined as a person of any age who is not accompanied by a parent or guardian who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness².

Homelessness services also separately record information on children under 18 years of age who have a parent or guardian who is also a client.³ (See **Table 4** for information on accompanying children.)

The overall number of clients receiving homelessness services (**Table 2**) has increased by 6.8 per cent over the five year period, with particular age groups seeing significant increases. The number of children under 15 accessing homelessness services without a parent or guardian increased by 100 per cent between 2005-06 and 2009-10 and people aged 50-54 increased by 35.7 per cent over this period.

Table 2: Government-funded Specialist Homelessness Services, Number of Clients by Age, Victoria, 2005-06 to 2009-10

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2005-06 to 2009-10 % change
Under 15	350	600	600	700	700	+ 100.0
15-19	5700	6200	5500	5700	5800	+ 1.8
20-24	5650	5850	5600	5700	6000	+ 6.2
25-29	4950	4800	4800	4500	4900	- 1.0
30-34	5300	5050	4900	4400	4800	- 9.4
35-39	4850	5150	4900	4700	5300	+ 9.3
40-44	3400	3750	3800	3600	4100	+ 20.6
45-49	2350	2600	2500	2500	3000	+ 27.7
50-54	1400	1500	1500	1500	1900	+ 35.7
55-59	950	850	1000	900	1100	+ 15.8
60-64	550	600	600	600	700	+ 27.3
65+	1,150	900	800	800	900	- 21.7
Total⁴	36,600	37,900	36,600	35,500	39,100	+ 6.8

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Reports, 2005-06 to 2009-10 – Victoria

2 Source Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2011 Government funded specialist homelessness services Annual Report 2009-10 – Australia: appendix 5

3 ibid

4 Figures have been weighted to adjust for agency non-participation and client non-consent

‘Action and setting the foundation for reform, with a focus on prevention and early intervention, innovation and partnerships, is required to break the cycle of homelessness.’



However **Table 3** shows that as a percentage of total client numbers those under 15 accessing homelessness services without a parent or guardian and those aged 60-64 years remain the smallest age cohorts.

Youth aged 15-24 remain the largest cohort, making up 30.2 per cent of homelessness services users. There has been very little change in the distribution of clients by age group accessing homelessness services over the five year period.

Table 3: Clients Accessing Government-funded Specialist Homelessness Services, by Age, Victoria, 2005-06 to 2009-10

	2005-06 %	2006-07 %	2007-08 %	2008-09 %	2009-10 %
Under 15	1.0	1.6	1.7	1.9	1.7
15-19	15.6	16.4	15.0	16.2	14.8
20-24	15.5	15.5	15.4	15.9	15.4
25-29	13.5	12.7	13.1	12.6	12.4
30-34	14.5	13.4	13.4	12.5	12.4
35-39	13.2	13.6	13.5	13.2	13.5
40-44	9.3	9.9	10.3	10.2	10.6
45-49	6.4	6.8	7.0	6.9	7.6
50-54	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.8
55-59	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.5	2.8
60-64	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8
65+	3.1	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.4
Total⁵	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Reports, 2005-06 to 2009-10 – Victoria.

⁵ Figures have been weighted to adjust for agency non-participation and client non-consent

Table 4 below shows the change in numbers of accompanying children, that is children who access homelessness services with their parent or guardian who is a client. The overall number of accompanying children accessing homelessness services has increased by 56.2 per cent between 2005-6 and 2009-10, with the highest increase in young people aged 15-17 (83.3 per cent). An emerging trend is families with children aged 0-4 accessing homelessness services, making up 42 per cent of the total number for 2009-10.

The three most common reasons people seek assistance from specialist homeless services are:

1. Relationship issues such as domestic or family violence and the breakdown of a relationship with a family member, spouse or partner (44 per cent)
2. Accommodation-related issues such as being evicted or otherwise made to leave existing accommodation (21 per cent)

3. Financial issues such as having insufficient money to pay for accommodation, food, bills or other essentials (19 per cent).⁷

Understanding the reasons why people seek assistance helps identify the type of service they need. People who are homeless need a range of services that go beyond housing, such as financial assistance, family liaison and counselling and drug and alcohol support services.

Nearly half of those seeking homelessness services were experiencing family violence or the breakdown of a relationship.

As this was one of the key reasons for homelessness, it is particularly important to address the needs of women and children for safe accommodation, including ways of assisting them to remain in the family home when it is safe to do so.

Table 4: Accompanying Children by Age Accessing Government-funded Specialist Homelessness Services, Victoria, 2005-06 to 2009-10

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2005-06 to 2009-10 % change
0-4	6850	8700	8900	9800	10800	57.7
5-9	4700	5650	6000	6400	7000	48.9
10-14	3700	4650	4800	5000	5500	48.6
15-17	1200	1500	1700	1900	2200	83.3
Total⁶	16450	20500	21400	23100	25700	56.2

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Reports, 2005-06 to 2009-10 – Victoria.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report, 2009-10 p.4 – Victoria.

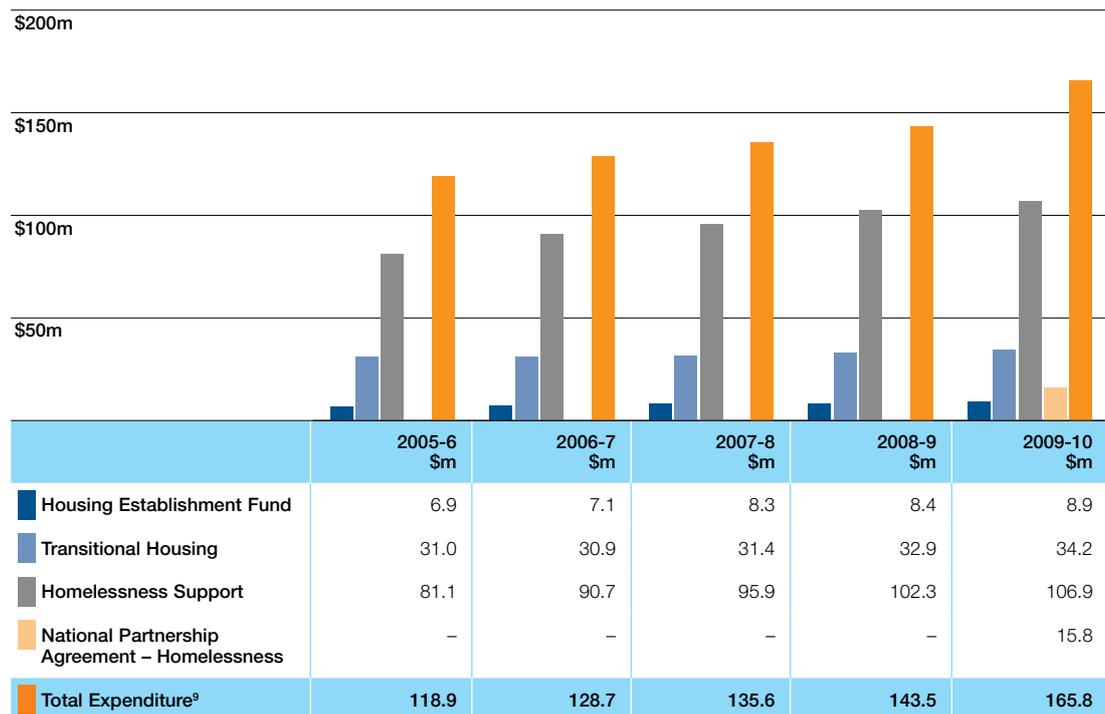
WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

The current service approach is designed to provide immediate and crisis assistance for those Victorians who have already become homeless. As illustrated in Table 5, Commonwealth and State Government funding for homelessness support services has increased significantly over the last five years, growing from \$119 million to almost \$166 million⁸.

The majority of additional funding has been directed to Homelessness Support, providing case management support for people who are homeless, women and children who experience family violence, and youth. These programs assist people to address living skills, access accommodation options, engage in education, employment and training and to access a range of other community based services.

Despite a 39 per cent increase in expenditure over the last five years, we have not seen a reduction in the number of clients accessing services and are therefore no longer homeless. This suggests the current service system is not getting to the root cause of homelessness.

Table 5: Homelessness Expenditure 2005-06 to 2009-10 (Commonwealth and State funding)



Source: Internal and unpublished Department of Human Services, Victoria.

⁸ Source: Internal and unpublished Department of Human Services Victoria.

⁹ Note totals may be different due to rounding

‘The important work and contribution of the specialist homelessness services and family violence sectors is vital and their commitment to making positive impacts on people’s lives is valued.’



ADDING NEW APPROACHES

The services we provide to people of all ages experiencing homelessness should set them on a pathway to a stable future where they can be safe and which enables them and their children to participate in the community. This pathway may be focused on a housing response, but may also be focused on an individual's health needs or developing their educational and/or life skills. The pathway should be one that people commit to because it enables them to see how they can take control of their lives. Support given should enable people to be self sufficient and build their resilience to respond to life shocks in the future.

If we are to tackle the root causes of homelessness, we need a service system that offers support to people who are already homeless, as well as offering early support for those Victorians who are at risk of homelessness.

We need to ensure our service system is one that responds to those in crisis, as well as focusing on prevention and early intervention. The service system must also respond to the intensive support requirements of those with complex needs who have experienced long-term homelessness. We need a joined up approach between specialist services such as housing and homelessness, and more mainstream services such as health, education and employment to provide an integrated package of support that responds to individual needs and circumstances.

Our future service system should be one that places the client at the centre and considers their individual needs, resulting in the majority of clients getting the assistance they need the first time they ask for help.

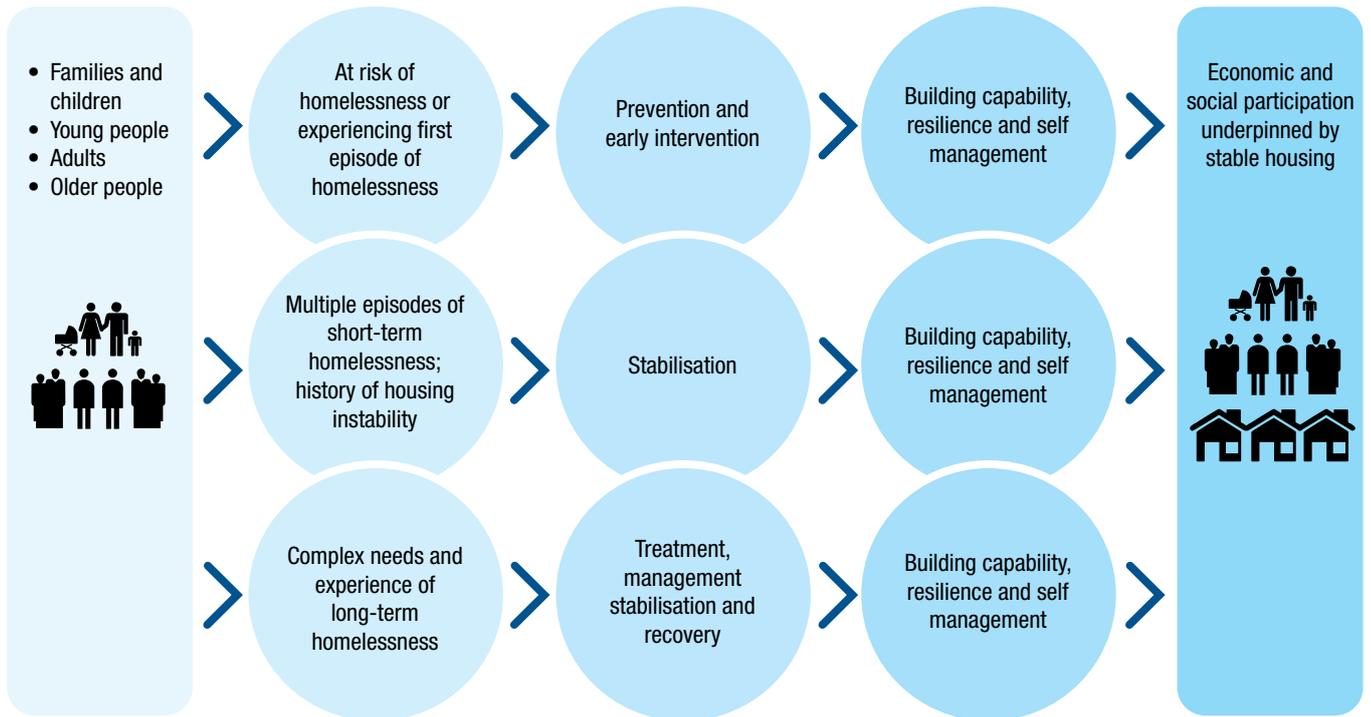
The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 to 2015 recognises that new approaches are needed to deepen our understanding of what works when dealing with homelessness.

The Government, through the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan, will:

- support innovative approaches to homelessness
- investigate models that focus specifically on early intervention and prevention
- better target resources when and where they are most needed and where they will make the biggest difference.

We will build a service system that meets a range of needs where people are able to access help, advice and assistance where and when they need it.

New Service Approach to Break the Cycle of Homelessness in Victoria



The *New Service Approach to Break the Cycle of Homelessness in Victoria* (see above) outlines our new approach to break the cycle of homelessness in Victoria. The overall goal of the new approach is to assist all people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to access and maintain stable housing, to find work and to participate in the life of the community.

Homelessness affects people from different age groups, backgrounds and circumstances including families with children, young people, adults and older people.

People **at risk of homelessness, or who are experiencing homelessness for the first time**, should be able to access effective and timely assistance to help them get back on their feet quickly. For families with children, it is important that children stay connected with their school, child care and other services so that they remain engaged in their communities.

For those who have a **history of housing instability and/or multiple episodes of short term homelessness**, the service response should focus more on helping to stabilise people's lives, addressing individual needs, connecting people with support services and building capabilities that break the cycle of homelessness.

A small but significant proportion of people have experienced **long-term homelessness**. This group is more likely to require intensive and longer-term personal support and health support, combined with supportive housing. While individual circumstances vary, the road to recovery from the trauma of homelessness to self-reliance and social and community participation is more likely to be longer with this group than with others.

The issues experienced by people in all of these groups may be varied. However many may be facing complex issues such as experiencing family violence, an intellectual or physical disability, a history of mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse or chronic ill health. Therefore a more integrated approach between specialist services such as housing and homelessness and mainstream services such as health, education, training and employment, and legal and financial advice services, is critical to meet client needs and allow people to transition out of homelessness. An Inter-Departmental Committee will be established to provide advice on more integrated approaches to meeting client needs.

People who are making the transition from state care to living in the community are also an important group requiring consideration. This includes young people leaving care, people discharged from mental health services and people released from prison.

The New Housing Framework for Victoria

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan is a first step in addressing homelessness. The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan will complement the development of a strategic Housing Framework for Victoria.

On 6 April 2011, the Victorian Government announced its intention to develop a housing strategy in response to the Victorian Parliament's *Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Public Housing in Victoria* (October 2010).

The Housing Framework will address current and future housing challenges for low income Victorians and provide a vision for a vibrant housing system which builds human capital and contributes to the productivity of the Victorian economy.

Under the Framework, the Victorian Government will renew its response to providing housing assistance, including:

- understanding the diversity of housing needs and what is required to help Victorians address those needs
- providing the right assistance at the right time to help Victorians get better housing outcomes, and in a way that meets the needs of individuals and families
- defining a clearer role for Victoria's homelessness system and the public and community housing system.

The Government will also identify how to ensure that the social housing system is as efficient and effective as possible in delivering client outcomes.

Initiatives developed under the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan will inform new housing approaches to be included as part of the Housing Framework.

WORK HAS ALREADY BEGUN

The Baillieu Government has already started to focus on assisting people so they are able to build their capability, resilience and self management. Emerging evidence suggests that assistance linking housing, education and employment is particularly effective in reducing the risk of homelessness in the future.

Using our knowledge of effective programs as a foundation, work has already begun on Youth Foyers, Work and Learning Centres and a range of other projects that we know make a difference for vulnerable people, especially young people. These projects will help improve outcomes for young people, adults and families who are at risk of becoming homeless and will build individuals' long-term capacity and self-reliance.

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan also provides immediate funding on the ground of \$14 million. This funding is supporting people who are in need now and will:

- provide intensive case management services to assist up to 500 families, young people and adults who have complex needs and require additional support to get access to the services they need
- assist over 400 families and young people to take up tenancies in Transitional Housing and new accommodation facilities
- increase the private rental brokerage pool to assist up to 440 additional young people and households to access and maintain private rental accommodation
- support agencies to improve service delivery through enhanced knowledge of need.

Audit of Access to Social Housing for People with a Mental Illness or Disability

The Government is undertaking an audit of access to new and existing social housing for people with a mental illness or disability.

The Audit will assist Government to have a better understanding of access issues for people with a mental illness or disability and provide a range of practical recommendations aimed at addressing identified barriers or shortcomings resulting from policies or practices.



Work and Learning Centres

One of the fundamental principles of our approach is to cement a connection between stable housing and education, training and work.

We are establishing five Work and Learning Centres on public housing estates. These Centres will assist tenants to take up education and training opportunities so that they can overcome barriers to employment and can go on to get jobs and provide for themselves and their families.

Funding of \$4.6 million will be provided over the next four years to establish the Work and Learning Centres.

The Centres are based on a model that has already been successfully trialled by The Brotherhood of St Laurence in the City of Yarra over the past 18 months. The Brotherhood will partner with the Victorian Government to establish similar Work and Learning Centres over the next four years at five public housing sites.

A partnership between Government, job providers, employers, industry groups, registered training organisations and other support services will provide tailored individual assistance to identify employment and/or training opportunities. This innovative approach to helping public housing tenants take control of – and make the most of – their lives through education, training and work is how the Government intends to work across all sectors to help Victorians be successful.



Youth Foyers

Planning and development of three 40-bed Youth Foyers has commenced, targeted at young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Youth Foyers Program will work with and focus on the strengths of each young person and connect them to the supports they need to achieve their goals and realise their full potential to contribute and participate both socially and economically.

The Youth Foyer Model was developed in France over 40 years ago and in the early 1990s was adapted by providers in the United Kingdom. The Model is based on early intervention and prevention; assisting young people who are at risk of homelessness to achieve their education and employment goals through the provision of stable accommodation.

The Victorian Government is building on this successful model by creating stronger linkages with education through co-location, and providing accommodation on a larger scale.

The three new Victorian 40-bed Youth Foyers will provide a foundation that enables young people to achieve their education and employment goals, meet their health and wellbeing needs, help them participate in their communities and, if appropriate, achieve reconciliation with their families. The Victorian Government is partnering with The Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Welfare Services to deliver the first Youth Foyer.

“The development of the Youth Foyer model presents an affordable secure housing option for young people, providing them with the confidence and security to seek employment and build their life skills and social networks.” (Press release 3 May 2011: *Coalition Government to help young people secure housing and jobs*; Minister Lovell).

The Government has committed \$30.1 million for the development of the Youth Foyers.

OUR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

In addition to the work already begun, the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 to 2015 will be delivered through three action areas:

Action	Description
1. Innovation Action Projects	Invest in key innovation projects across Victoria to apply new prevention and early intervention approaches
2. Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness	Provide options for Government for future service design
3. System Reform	Develop the system reform package

1. Innovation Action Projects

Over the next two years the Government will provide \$15 million new funding for around eight Innovation Action Projects.

The remaining \$10 million will fund the scaling up of approaches that prove successful. Additionally the outcomes of review findings will be used to inform the reform of homelessness funding.

Service providers across specialist and mainstream services will be able to submit for an Innovation Action Project.

The Innovation Action Projects will support new approaches that reflect an understanding of specific types of support that people need at key transition points in their lives. Targeting the right kinds of support at the right time will be a critical feature of the selected Innovation Action Projects.

To encourage new approaches, the Government will fund outcomes rather than programs, and allow providers flexibility in how they package funding under the Innovation Action Projects. For example, providers will be expected to achieve outcomes for youth where they have a regular income source, their health issues are managed, they are engaged in school, training or employment,

have relevant life skills, are in stable accommodation, are connected to family and/or friends and are committed to an integrated plan for their future.

An example of an Innovation Action Project proposal could be one where a homelessness service provider partners with a youth refuge, health provider and youth training provider to secure stable housing, do educational needs analyses and link the Victorian Training Guarantee, providing long-term education and training for young people in a particular location.

Another example of an Innovation Action Project proposal could be one that links crisis accommodation, Centrelink, the police, counselling services, local employment services, the kindergarten and Primary Welfare Officers at the school. Links could also be made with services that may assist a violent ex-partner to address his/her behavioural issues and perhaps find alternative long-term accommodation so the person experiencing family violence can stay in, or return to the family home. (See pages 21 and 22 for possible examples under the new approach.)

These Innovation Action Projects will focus on four high-risk cohorts:

- families, vulnerable women and children
- youth
- adults
- the elderly.

While some outcomes will apply across cohort groups, some are unique to the particular age cohort, such as children attending school regularly. The outcomes for each high risk cohort are listed below:

Outcomes for Families, Vulnerable Women and Children (including those experiencing family violence)

Family has a regular income source, including maximisation of government assistance

Family health issues are managed

Children attend school regularly

Children have current community health checks

Family is in stable and safe accommodation

Family is committed to their integrated plan.

Outcomes for Youth

Has a regular income source, including maximisation of government assistance

Health issues are managed

Engaged in school, training or employment

Has relevant life skills

Is in stable accommodation

Is connected to family and/or friends and/or the community

Committed to their integrated plan.

Outcomes for Adults

Has a regular income source, including maximisation of government assistance

Health issues are managed

Engaged in training or employment

Has relevant life skills

Is in stable accommodation

Is connected to family and/or friends and/or the community

Committed to their integrated plan.

Outcomes for the Elderly

Has a regular income source, including maximisation of government assistance

Health issues are managed

Has relevant life skills

Is in stable accommodation

Is connected to family and/or friends and/or the community

Committed to their integrated plan.

Proposals for Innovation Action Projects will need to be able to demonstrate:

- the need for the service in the geographical location
- integration of service delivery across a minimum of two service sectors, and in the case of regional and rural locations integration across cohorts
- evidence of leveraging funding from other Government sources, including services delivered by the Commonwealth Government
- how an integrated plan will be developed for each client which supports their future health, education, employment and housing needs
- how the desired outcomes for clients will be achieved and demonstrated
- social and economic benefits
- opportunities for co-funding from philanthropic sources.

The evaluation methodology will be included in the request for submission for projects.

Table 6 below differentiates the Innovation Action Plan funding model from previous approaches.

Table 6: A New Funding Model

Current Approach		New Approach
Fund for specific programs	→	Funding for tangible outcomes
Time-limited support options	→	Flexible packaging to respond to client needs
Single provider	→	Partnering and integration
Report numbers of clients assisted	→	Report outcomes achieved
Crisis response	→	Crisis response and early intervention and prevention
Client has to fit into the service system	→	Services respond to client needs

Darren

Darren is 16 years old and in Year 10 at a high school in outer Melbourne. He rarely attends school and finds it hard to concentrate in class. When Darren was 15, he started drinking and then taking drugs on the weekends. He is behind on all his school work and failing most of his classes even though he used to be a good student, near the top of his class. Darren cannot live with his parents and sister any more. His relationship with his parents has become tense over the past year. Darren and his father recently had a physical confrontation and Darren now spends most nights sleeping on friends' couches.

Darren's options for the future are becoming increasingly limited and he is at great risk of not reaching his potential. If he does not get help soon to find a place to live and get back into his study or find secure employment, he knows he'll be setting himself up for long-term problems.

Potential Innovation Action Project Response

Under the new model, the school would refer Darren to a homelessness support service that will help him get a place in a youth refuge. He would be assigned a case worker who would do an initial assessment to determine his immediate needs and then work with him over a period of weeks to help him identify his future aspirations and goals. Darren would be given a temporary place at the refuge and the case worker would contact the Youth Foyer to secure him a place in the Youth Foyer. An integrated plan would be developed with Darren to ensure that a coordinated approach to addressing his needs is put in place. Darren would take part in the planning process and it would be 'his' plan.

A case worker would seek Darren's agreement to co-ordinate a meeting with his school, a youth counsellor and a relative who he has a strong relationship with. He starts to talk about what changes he would like see. At this meeting there is agreement about what Darren plans to do and what others will do to assist and support him. As part of the plan for Darren's return to school support would be negotiated with the school Principal and his teachers. Darren would be given assistance to choose subjects and receive counselling if required. He would be given support to resolve his drug and alcohol issues and to reconnect to his family. Darren would also be assisted to get a part time job that does not interfere with his studies and helps him to achieve his goals.

Linda

Linda is 35 years of age and has three children: Damian, 11, Jason, 9, and Taylor, 3. Linda's ex-husband has a history of violent, controlling behaviour which led to the breakdown of their relationship. Linda eventually left her husband when he threatened their children. Prior to separating, the family were paying off their own home which they bought 15 years ago in regional Victoria. After the separation, the family home was sold. Linda and her children are currently in a women's refuge. As a result of the family breakdown and leaving their home, Linda's children are not coping well. Damian is starting high school next year and seems to have become disengaged from his school work; Jason has been suspended twice this year for bullying younger children; Taylor suffers anxiety. Linda wants to find stable accommodation so she and the children can rebuild their lives and feel safe.

Potential Innovation Action Project Response

Linda would be assigned a case worker at the women's refuge. The case worker would spend time with Linda to assess her immediate needs and long-term goals and would assist her to develop an integrated plan to help her rebuild her life. The case worker would be equipped to provide a holistic approach and for Linda, this would mean only telling her story once, not many times to different service providers. To assess her financial needs Linda would be assisted to approach the Child Support Agency and the Family Assistance Office. The case worker would explain Linda's housing options and help her find suitable, secure longer term private accommodation and Linda would be given assistance to find a full time job or part time study opportunities. The case worker and Linda would meet with representatives of Damian and Jason's primary school and Taylor's kindergarten and maternal and child health nurse. They would work together through case conferencing to determine how best to support the children's emotional and social needs. Linda and her children would be offered trauma counselling. The case worker would help Linda until she was re-established and on a pathway to achieving all the goals in her integrated plan.

2. Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness

The Government will establish a Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness that will report to the Minister for Housing.

The Government, through the Ministerial Advisory Council, will engage key stakeholders and experts to advise on future system model options. The Council will comprise renowned experts who are leaders in their fields and will also include representatives from business, philanthropy, community services and peak bodies.

The responsibilities of the Council will include:

- providing information to the Minister on emerging issues
- considering approaches to specific target groups including children and families, young people, singles, older people and Indigenous people
- delivering an options paper for Government consideration by December 2012 on proposed models that will achieve outcomes for clients.

3. System Reform

Commonwealth and State Governments invest almost \$166 million¹⁰ to support the work of over 150 organisations who deliver up to 500 activities across Victoria. These organisations are critical to the future reform of the system. Not all of these organisations will be involved in the delivery of innovation projects, but all funded organisations will be part of the move to a more efficient and effective system that achieves better long-term outcomes for people.

As part of this system reform process, the Government will:

- map the current distribution of services and funding
- identify opportunities for integration, coordination and improved service delivery.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the services it funds deliver real and sustainable outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

To inform policy program and service development into the future, the Government will consider the outcomes of the current audit (see page 15) into access for people with disabilities or mental illness to social housing.

These program reviews, along with the evaluation of projects funded through the Innovation Action Projects and the research, evidence and advice provided by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness, will all inform the redesign of the homelessness service sector in Victoria.

Inter-Departmental Committee

An Inter-Departmental Committee will also be established to provide advice to the Minister for Housing on whole of government approaches to meeting client needs. The Committee will include representation from a wide range of Government Departments including the Departments of Human Services, Health, Justice, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Planning and Community Development. Engagement with Commonwealth Government Departments will also occur where appropriate.

¹⁰ Homelessness expenditure 2009-10. Source: Internal and unpublished Department of Human Services, Victoria.

NEXT STEPS

In 2011-12, new Innovation Action Projects will be implemented. The work of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness and Inter-Departmental Committee will also begin. Work relating to service system reform will commence.

In 2012-13, the evidence being generated through the Innovation Action Projects will be used to help shape future homelessness services.

By 2013-14, Victoria will have made significant inroads towards implementing service system reform.

Table 7: Implementation of the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan

Phase	Action
Establishment (2011-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive submissions and provide funding for Innovation Action Projects • Establish the Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness • Establish the Inter-Departmental Committee • Commence reviews of homelessness programs as part of service system reform • Begin mapping and assessing the effectiveness of the current homelessness service system as part of service system reform
Monitoring (2012-13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and respond to the options paper produced by the Ministerial Advisory Council • Progress Innovation Action Projects evaluations • Complete reviews of homelessness programs as part of service system reform • Commence development of future service systems, funding approaches and models
Service Reform (2013-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete evaluation of Innovation Action Projects • Commence implementation of new service system innovation • Develop new funding approaches to homelessness service delivery
Implement New Service System (2014-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new approaches based on findings of Innovation Action Projects evaluation • Apply new funding models to homelessness service delivery • Undertake ongoing evaluation of new service system implementation (revised annually)

The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011 to 2015 is the first step in addressing homelessness and is part of a reform process. The Action Plan has a work program for the next four years.

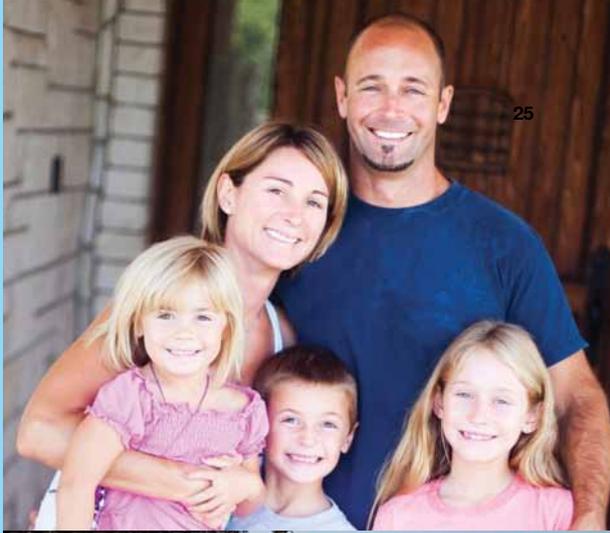


Table 8: Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011-2015

The Government has also committed \$30.1 million for the development of the Youth Foyers, which takes the Coalition Government's total funding commitment for the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan to \$76.7 million.

Actions	Description	Funding (\$m)
Immediate funding	Provide intensive case management Assist the take-up of tenancies in transitional housing and new accommodation facilities Increase the private rental brokerage pool Support agencies to improve service delivery through enhanced knowledge of need	14.0
Work and Learning Centres	Establish five Work and Learning Centres	4.6
Innovation Action Projects	Invest in key innovation projects across Victoria to apply new prevention and early intervention approaches	25.0
Ministerial Advisory Council on Homelessness	Provide options for Government for future service design	0.75
System Reform	Develop the long-term system reform package	2.25

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please email vhap@dhs.vic.gov.au or contact the National Relay Service 13 36 77.

This document is also available on the Internet at www.dhs.vic.gov.au

© *Copyright State of Victoria 2011.*

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

ISBN 978-07311-6356-4

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Printed by Razer Graphix, Factory 6/15 Stud Road, Bayswater, Victoria, 3153.