

# A National Homelessness Research Network

The National Homelessness Research Network is a unique venture to develop the quality of homelessness research and its application to policy and practice.

The Network exists to deliver high quality research on the fundamental issues and challenges associated with homelessness. This evidence-base will underpin constructive engagement, improve policy and practice, and produce better outcomes for the community.

The Network is supported through the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

## Background

The National Homelessness Research Network was created in December 2009 in response to the need for national (and increasingly international) collaboration between homelessness researchers and the policy and practice communities. The idea of a Network was initiated in response to a demonstrable need for an independent research broker, such as AHURI Limited, to help coordinate the disparate activities of a homelessness research network, to build on existing research and to facilitate the peer-to-peer critique of the evidence-base and the transfer of research knowledge into policy development and practice.

## How the Network works

### Coordination

The National Homelessness Research Network was created to develop a coordinated approach to homelessness research and to foster a dialogue between academic and practitioner-based researchers, as well as the broader policy and practice communities.

AHURI, in collaboration with Network partners, will support and coordinate an expert dialogue between key academic researchers and practitioner-based researchers with an interest in homelessness and allied research areas such as health (including mental health), justice and employment.

This will overcome the current lack of coordinated effort between different homelessness researchers (academic and practitioner) and also provide the opportunity to enhance collaborations with international researchers, where relevant.

### Critique

While a body of research on different facets of homelessness has grown over the past decade, the cumulative evidence-base is of variable quality and scope. The Network is designed to critique existing research and the evidence-base by coordinating peer review activities of prominent researchers (academic and practitioner based), in terms of:

- Research methods and quality of research (i.e. how we know).
- Research content, the framing, scope and underpinning ideas informing research (i.e. what we know).

It is a strength of the National Homelessness Research Network that it can draw on the collective insight and peer review capabilities of Network partners. This will help overcome the variable quality and scope of current homelessness.

### Application

More can be done to improve the transfer of knowledge from research to policy and practice. This issue has been repeatedly identified by Network partners as a priority. The Network can play a valuable role in fostering engagement with policy and practice in a way that is critical and mutually respectful.

The Network will undertake activities to enable the transfer of the best available evidence into policy and practice by coordinating the transfer of research knowledge from researchers (academic and practitioner based) to policy-makers and practitioners.

- Includes the issue of policy and practice application vis-a-vis current policy and practice issues and future options.
- The contribution to research methodology, scope and cumulative evidence-base.

This will help overcome the poor translation and transfer of the current evidence-base into policy and practice.

### International collaboration

The National Homelessness Research Network has sought to have meaningful international collaboration. Current international research partners include the European Observatory on Homelessness and the Homelessness

Research Institute (USA). The benefits of international collaborations are many-fold and include cross country comparison and insights into programs and service initiatives.

The international conference on homelessness research, held in Washington D.C. in March 2011, provided a further platform to actively engage researchers, practitioners and some policy-makers with the work of the National Homelessness Research Network.

## Benefits for Network partners

The Network is open to researchers with an active interest in homelessness research and who bring a range of skills in quantitative and qualitative research, policy and practice advice and research dissemination.

- Participation in a coordinated discussion about the homelessness evidence-base nationally.
- Access to discussions with international researchers and insights into cross country comparison and insights into programs and service initiatives.
- Active involvement in the peer-to-peer critique of the homelessness research evidence so to improve the quality of the homelessness evidence-base.
- Collaboration with researchers to policy-makers and practitioners in the transfer of the best available evidence into policy and practice.
- Leveraging links to their respective research and policy communities, and locally based practitioners.
- Increase the strength of mutual skills and expertise between Network partners.

## For further details

If you would like to know more about the National Homelessness Research Network please contact:

Dr Andrew Hollows  
Deputy Executive Director

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute  
Level 1, 114 Flinders Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Phone +61 3 9660 2300  
Fax +61 3 9663 5488

Email [andrew.hollows@ahuri.edu.au](mailto:andrew.hollows@ahuri.edu.au)

Web [www.ahuri.edu.au](http://www.ahuri.edu.au)

View current activities of the Network on the [AHURI website](http://www.ahuri.edu.au).

