

MEDIA RELEASE

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Two thirds of homelessness services have inadequate funding to meet demand

Australia's homelessness services are overwhelmingly unable to meet client demand and immediate consideration of additional funding models is needed to address the critical unmet need for housing and homelessness services, according to new research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

The *AHURI Inquiry into funding and delivery of programs to reduce homelessness* report, undertaken by the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), Swinburne University of Technology and the University of New South Wales, found that government funding currently accounts for 85 per cent of funding received by specialist homelessness services.

The report finds that additional revenue sources, which include philanthropy, corporate sponsorship, donations and new forms such as social enterprises and social impact bonds (SIBs), are essential to supplement government funding in order to meet demand and implement innovative solutions for housing, co-ordinated support and employment.

Lead author Professor Paul Flatau, Director of CSI UWA said that greater stability of government funding of homelessness services is needed together with a positive environment for increased giving, own revenue income and impact investment in affordable housing and homelessness support including, but not only, through SIBs.

"As we would expect, there is a heavy reliance on government funding by homelessness services, and we know that this is considered essential to providing core services. However, with this reliance comes vulnerability to changes in government policy," Professor Flatau said.

"If we look at ways that the homelessness sector can diversify their funding sources, we can begin to shore up those gaps that exist, particularly in areas that government funding doesn't reach, such as a coordinated response to address the very high rates of Indigenous homelessness," said Professor Flatau.

The report recommends that more funding is required for capital projects to create a greater supply of accessible, affordable housing. This will help stem the inflow of people into homelessness, and assist people to exit homelessness. Also identified is the need for government funding into the community housing sector in order to allow it to have the confidence to scale up investment in affordable housing. Professor Flatau also called for a greater focus on funding for outcomes achieved with different pay for success structures.

The AHURI Report recommends renewed focus on early intervention strategies to reduce homelessness and cross-sectoral, inter-governmental and cross-departmental government funding packages for integrated service approaches.

Executive Director of AHURI, Dr Ian Winter said the Inquiry is the first comprehensive Australian evidence of the funding of homelessness services.

“By bringing together a cross-university research team and a panel of expert advisers from the government and housing and homelessness sectors, the Inquiry has focussed on developing evidence that can practically support policy development’

The research report is available to download from the AHURI website at <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/279>

Professor Flatau will present key findings from the Inquiry report at the AHURI Housing and homelessness solutions conference at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre today.

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