# Beyond Crisis

## Reimagining homelessness systems that actually work

**Australian Homelessness Conference 2026**
*Disrupting the narrative*

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# A sevenfold uplift — and a system rethink

Annie Taylor, CEO, NT Shelter — the Territory's peak body for homelessness, social and affordable housing.

## What changed

**7x** increase in Commonwealth homelessness funding to the NT under NASHH

**10.7%** of national homelessness funding — up from under 2%, in line with our share of homelessness

**0.93%** of general NASHH funding, despite unmet housing need of around 11% of our population

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# Don't design around housing that doesn't exist

## The constraint




We cannot design around an exit that isn't there.

**Funded for A, delivering B**
Services funded for crisis work end up housing people for years.

## The evidence and examples

A lack of housing makes NT homelessness services less efficient and harder to scale.

**Cost of tenancy sustainability services**




Longer support periods, driven by limited social housing vacancies.

**Rising private rents**



fewer properties
for the same budget

Rising rents mean head-leasing programs house a smaller cohort.

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# Three things other jurisdictions can learn

Better intake, outreach, coordination and accountability matter — but without housing we manage homelessness rather than end it.

1

**Design honestly for the operating environment**

2

**Don't confuse a housing blockage with a service failure**

3

**Follow the costs across government**

**NT is projected to meet only 31% of our Housing Accord target** (National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, 2025)

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# What comes after the uplift

Build a better homelessness system and be clear about what that system can and can't do.

**For services to be more effective and more efficient, the NT evidence points back to the same intervention: housing.**

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# Central Intake

## Reflections on Our First Year

*Homelessness coordination across the Northern Territory*

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# What the Central Intake Service is

**CIS is not a housing provider. It is a coordination function across the homelessness service system.**

### A SINGLE ENTRY POINT

One coordinated entry point for people seeking homelessness support anywhere in the Territory.

### PARTNERS

Yilli Rreung, Lhere Artepe, The Salvation Army and SupportLink.

### HOW PEOPLE CONNECT

By phone, through outreach, or via the ShelterMe web form on the NT Shelter website.

### FACE TO FACE

Appointments through outreach locations in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine.

### ASSESS

Pathways and case workers complete an initial assessment and identify immediate needs and risks.

### REFERRALS

People are connected to the most appropriate available services, with coordinated referrals and information sharing.

**Clearer, fairer and more consistent access across the Territory**

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# What we have learned

One year in, demand consistently outstrips available housing and coordination takes sustained work.

## Demand exceeds what is available

### Demand outstrips supply

Demand consistently exceeds available crisis accommodation, transitional housing and long-term pathways.

### Blocked pathways, continued coordination

Long waits mean CIS often keeps coordinating support when no immediate housing or service response is available.

## Coordination takes sustained work

### Relationships take time

Consistent referral processes and information sharing across many organisations require sustained relationship-building.

### Pressure on the workforce

The urgency and complexity of presentations place significant pressure on workforce capacity and wellbeing.

### Explaining our role

Community expectations can exceed our authority — we keep explaining that CIS coordinates access, it does not provide housing.

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# What coordination delivers

CIS makes access clearer and demand visible, and points the system to what is needed next.

### WHAT CIS DELIVERS

Clearer, fairer and more consistent access

### VISIBILITY

Better sight of demand, service gaps and blockages

### CONTINUITY

People tell their story once and it travels with them

### SYSTEM INTELLIGENCE

Evidence to escalate unmet demand and critical gaps

### CLEAR SCOPE

Eligibility stays with housing providers, so CIS can focus on access

### SUPPLY CASE

CIS builds the case for the housing the Territory needs

### CONNECTOR

CIS is the coordination function that holds the system together

**Strong coordination makes every bed and every service count for more**

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# The CIS model in simple terms

One entry point, delivered with partners, to make access clearer for people.



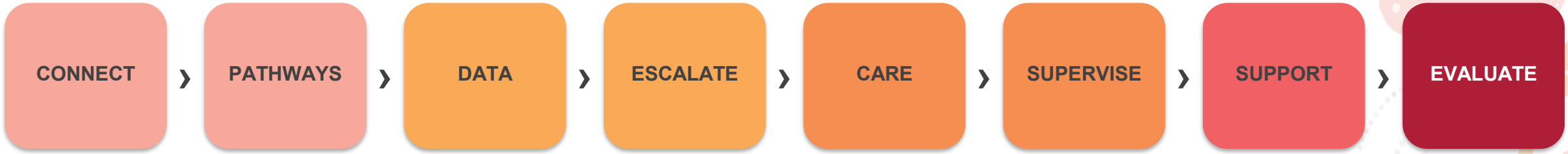

Phone, outreach and ShelterMe
Initial assessment of needs
Identification of risks

Yilli Rreung and Lhere Artepe
The Salvation Army
SupportLink

Consistent referral pathways
Shared information and expectations
Continuity of care for clients

# How we are responding

Practical actions underway across the service and the system.




## Independent evaluation

An evaluation with the University of Queensland is commencing.

## Whose voices

Clients, staff, service providers and people with lived experience.

## Why it matters

It will help us understand outcomes and adjust the model as the system develops.

# The next phase

Using what we are learning to strengthen the system.

**1**

**STRENGTHEN PATHWAYS**

Refine assessment and referral so connections happen sooner.

**2**

**SUPPORT THE WORKFORCE**

Sustain supervision, reflective practice and operational support.

**3**

**IMPROVE DATA**

Build quality, governance and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty into the model.

**4**

**EVALUATE**

Learn from clients, staff, providers and lived experience with UQ.

**5**

**ADVOCATE**

Escalate evidence for crisis accommodation and affordable housing.

**Structural responses are what people ultimately need**

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# The value of our role

In its first year, CIS has improved coordination and w.

## CIS coordinates access across the homelessness service system.

## It gives the Territory a single, trusted view of need and demand.

**Now we turn better coordination into better housing outcomes.**

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# Thank you