

# **ACT Auditor-General's Office**

## **Performance Audit Report**

### **National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness**

**Report No. 4 /2013**

**Community Services Directorate**

**June 2013**





## ACT AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE



PA 12/03

The Speaker  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
Civic Square, London Circuit  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Madam Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you a Performance Audit Report titled 'National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness' for tabling in the Legislative Assembly pursuant to Section 17(5) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely

Dr Maxine Cooper  
Auditor-General  
19 June 2013



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# 1. REPORT SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a performance audit that reviewed the ACT Government's implementation of selected programs and initiatives under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

## BACKGROUND

### *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*

- 1.2 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* is a Council of Australian Governments initiative that was agreed in 2009 by the Commonwealth Government and all states and territories. It seeks to provide a means whereby people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion.
- 1.3 Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, each state and territory is responsible for delivering agreed programs and initiatives that contribute to the overall outcome. The ACT Government has received \$10.06 million in funding from the Commonwealth Government and has contributed \$10.74 million of its own funding to a suite of programs and initiatives under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- 1.4 Nine different programs and initiatives have been identified for delivery by the ACT Government under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The programs and their funding sources are shown in Table 2.3 on page 24 of the report.

### *Australian Council of Auditors-General concurrent audit*

- 1.5 The Auditors-General of the Commonwealth and each state and territory agreed in February 2012 to undertake a concurrent audit of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. Each Auditor-General was to audit the implementation of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* in their respective jurisdiction. While a common basis for the performance audit was adopted by the Auditors-General, there was flexibility in how each audit was to be undertaken, to recognise jurisdiction-specific needs and priorities.
- 1.6 In conducting the audit of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Audit Office focused on:
- A Place to Call Home;
  - Our Place; and
  - Mental Health Housing and Support Initiative.

- 1.7 The Audit Office focused on these programs as they account for approximately 60 percent of all funding spent in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- 1.8 Some common issues emerged from the audits that have already been finalised by the other Auditors-General:
- a recognition that programs had been delivered in accordance with agreed jurisdiction *Implementation Plan(s)*;
  - a lack of meaningful output and outcome measurements; and
  - difficulties in demonstrating programs' contribution towards overall outcomes sought from the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### AUDIT OBJECTIVE

- 1.9 The objective of this audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on whether:
- the ACT Government is meeting its obligations under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*; and
  - this is making a difference for homeless people.

### AUDIT CONCLUSION

- 1.10 The audit conclusion drawn against the audit objective is set out below.

There is no agreed international definition of homelessness and this impedes monitoring, making comparisons and facilitating community understanding on progress. Furthermore, there have been changes in the definitions of homelessness and therefore the methods for collecting data have changed. This presents the risk that comparisons made between years may result in inaccurate conclusions and the community being misinformed. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are fundamental difficulties in defining homelessness and describing the characteristics of people who might be considered to be homeless.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' cultural definition of homelessness was adopted by the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. In 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed a new definition of homelessness, which has a very broad scope, and which has contributed to an overall increase in persons in the ACT counted as homeless through the census.

The ACT Government is generally meeting its obligations under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* with respect to:

- A Place to Call Home Program;
- Our Place Program; and

- Housing and Support Initiative.

Several targets have not only been met but exceeded. The Community Services Directorate however, needs to make improvements with respect to its processes for managing National Partnership Agreement funds, identifying and reporting against performance indicators for the A Place to Call Home Program and the Housing and Support Initiative, and managing service providers.

While program targets have been achieved, these are primarily about undertaking specific actions and deliverables, rather than being measures of overall success. Other Auditors-General have reported a lack of such measures which means the achievements of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* are not able to be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine the actual overall effect of the programs on rates of homelessness in the ACT community. Furthermore, homelessness in the ACT is influenced by a range of factors including, for example, housing affordability. People are likely to remain in homelessness programs and initiatives longer if housing affordability is a problem.

## KEY FINDINGS

1.11 The audit conclusions are supported by the following findings:

### Chapter 2 – The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' *cultural definition* of homelessness was adopted by the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. Under this definition there are three levels of homelessness: primary homelessness (people without conventional accommodation), secondary homelessness (people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation and people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own) and tertiary homelessness (people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis for over 12 weeks).
- In 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed a new definition of homelessness, which recognises a person as homeless if their current living arrangement is: in a dwelling that is inadequate; or has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.
- The 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition of homelessness has a very broad scope that includes people currently sleeping rough, people in receipt of supported accommodation and people independently managing their own tenancy but in receipt of post-transitional support. This has arguably led to difficulties in accurately reflecting homelessness in the community.
- Differences in the definition and methods of counting homelessness, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics inclusion of overcrowding in the 2011 census, contributed to an overall increase in persons counted as being homeless through the census. The ACT Government has identified the revised definition of

homelessness coupled with an increase in supported accommodation places has had the effect of significantly increasing the number of homeless people reported in the ACT.

- The number of homeless reported for the ACT in 2001 was 943, while the number reported for the ACT in 2006 was 949. On census night, 19 July 2011, the number of homeless reported for the ACT was 1,785. This represented approximately 0.5 percent of the total ACT population recorded in the census (367,752) or approximately 50 persons per 10,000.
- Key drivers for the significant increase in reported homeless people in the ACT have been increases in the number of 'persons in supported accommodation for the homeless' (an increase of 140 percent between 2006 and 2011) and 'persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings' (an increase of 264 percent between 2006 and 2011). The number of 'persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out' decreased by 43 percent between 2006 and 2011. The increase in homelessness in the ACT is in the category of secondary homelessness, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition, which is less visible than primary homelessness.
- From the census data from 2006 to 2011 it could be erroneously assumed that there has been a very significant increase in homelessness in the ACT of approximately 88 percent. However, the key driver for the increase in homelessness in the ACT has been changes in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition and therefore data collection method. The ACT moved from one of the lowest rates of homelessness in Australia, as recorded in the 2001 and 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics' censuses, to the second highest rate of homelessness, behind the Northern Territory, in 2011.
- The ACT provides a significant level of support to homeless people compared with other Australian jurisdictions. For example, in 2011-12 the ACT Government spent \$55.87 per capita on homelessness, compared to the Australian average of \$21.85 and the average number of days in which a homeless client received support in the ACT was 129.4. This is significantly longer than the Australian average of 79.5 days and much greater than the next jurisdiction, New South Wales (94.8 days). The Audit Office did not examine these issues in detail, but notes that homelessness in the ACT is impacted by a wide range of factors and issues including, for example, housing affordability. Efforts to improve housing affordability, primarily through the ACT Government's *Affordable Housing Action Plan*, are expected to assist in addressing homelessness.
- The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* originated in the 2008 White Paper *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funding is allocated according to the states' and territories' share of the homeless population, as estimated by the 2006 census. The ACT accounted for approximately 1.6 percent of the Australian population as estimated by the 2006 census. Total funding for the ACT under the initial *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* was approximately \$20.8 million (\$10.06 million in Commonwealth Government funding and \$10.74 million in ACT funding).

### Chapter 3 – A Place to Call Home

- The A Place to Call Home Program is one of the four core outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, representing approximately 48 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT.
- A Place to Call Home provides for the construction of 20 new dwellings in the ACT (between 2009-10 and 2012-13) for the purpose of housing homeless families and the provision of ongoing support services to families allocated a dwelling under the program. The program is targeted at families.
- Dwellings funded and built under the A Place to Call Home Program are mostly located in Gungahlin, with a smaller number of properties located in Belconnen, Inner South, Inner North and Tuggeranong. By virtue of the agreed *Implementation Plans*, the Community Services Directorate may provide A Place to Call Home services and support to people from other public housing stock, notwithstanding that these houses were not funded and built under the A Place to Call Home Program. This allows program participants to be housed in areas of Canberra so that they can retain connections with their community, e.g. family, schools.
- There is an inconsistency between budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure on the A Place to Call Home Program. A total of \$10 million was budgeted for the program, while expenditure was \$11.08 million (as of 19 December 2012) and reported expenditure was \$12.18 million (as of 31 March 2013). It was difficult for the Audit Office to ascertain accurate actual expenditure on the program due to different sources of information being used by the Community Services Directorate. There is no single source of information for funding arrangements under the A Place to Call Home Program, nor are budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure periodically reconciled. The inconsistency and a lack of reconciliation creates the risk that information may not be readily available for management purposes. Refer to paragraph 3.35 at page 36.
- The Community Services Directorate has advised that the variance in the financial information for the A Place to Call Home Program is due to the substitution of properties within the program, i.e. the use of existing public housing stock to deliver services and support to program participants. While *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funds were used to purchase land and construct houses in greenfield sites, the substitution of these dwellings by existing public housing stock (often at a higher value) has led to inconsistency in financial information. Refer to paragraph 3.21 at page 32.
- As part of the *Implementation Plan* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Government identified a series of performance indicators and targets for the A Place to Call Home Program. The number of houses built under the program has been achieved (20) (the Community Services Directorate inaccurately reported to the Commonwealth Government that 21 houses had been built under the program), the number of tenancies established under the program in the three years to 2011-12 (19) has exceeded the target (17) and the target of 50 percent of properties being allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families has been met in the three years to 2011-12. At the time of audit fieldwork

eleven families from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community had obtained a house under the A Place to Call Home Program, which has exceeded the initial target of ten.

- The key performance indicators most recently reported on by the ACT Government have changed over the course of the program. Key performance indicators relating to ‘number of tenancies sustained for two years or more’, ‘number who are less than \$500 in arrears or on a complying repayment agreement’ and ‘lower than average tenant responsible maintenance’ would provide information to guide program management, administration and accountability for service delivery. The Community Services Directorate has advised that the change in performance indicators is due to a limited ability to accurately capture and report on meaningful data for some outcomes.
- The key performance indicators that were removed would have assisted in providing more appropriate information on key measures of success for the program, particularly with respect to the support services that are being provided to families participating in the program.
- The A Place to Call Home Program enables families to take tenancy of a home and to integrate into the local community. Of the 20 houses initially built under the program, families residing in ten houses remain in the program, while families residing in a further ten houses have exited the program. These families continue to reside in the houses by virtue of Housing ACT’s mainstream programs. Most families that have transitioned from the program did so within 12 months, while some families have remained on the program for longer than twelve months, up to two years in one instance. This reflects the need to provide ongoing tenancy support to these families.
- Stakeholders from the homelessness sector, the Community Service Directorate, First Point staff, members from community service bodies and peak bodies within the ACT all indicated that they considered the A Place to Call Home Program of value.

### **Chapter 4 – Our Place (Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Service) Program**

- The Our Place Program provides accommodation and support to young people aged 16 to 25 who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless. The program commenced in June 2011. The Our Place Program represented approximately 5.5 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- The Our Place Program accommodates program participants in two blocks of adjacent units in Canberra’s inner north. The blocks comprise a total of 15 units of one, two and three bedroom apartments.
- Barnardos Australia has been engaged by the Community Services Directorate to manage the program. Barnardos Australia is responsible for: case management support for program participants; managing and supporting tenancies under the program; managing the property through which the program is delivered; providing

life skills training to program participants; and providing information, referral and advocacy services to program participants. Barnardos Australia has engaged Anglicare ACT on a subcontracting arrangement to assist with the delivery of the program.

- The initial budget for the Our Place Program was \$1,112,724, while the revised budget for the program is \$1,186,509. The ACT has contributed the additional funding to the program.
- The number of young people accommodated in the program has consistently exceeded the initial targets for the program and the number of young people engaged in education, training and/or work has also consistently exceeded the initial targets. However, the number of young people exiting the program into independent tenancy arrangements has fallen short of expectations to date.
- The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia requires the provision of services in excess of that initially identified in the ACT's Implementation Plan. The ACT's Implementation Plan envisaged a target of between 12 and 19 young people accommodated in the program and engaged in education, training and/or work for each of the three years between 2010-11 and 2012-13. The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia, however, requires a minimum of 26 individuals accommodated and supported through the program at any one time. This significantly exceeds the initial targets established for the program.
- Barnardos Australia has provided performance reports to the Community Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. However, the reports from Barnardos Australia were provided late. The first performance report to be provided by Barnardos Australia was five months late, while more recently the reports have been provided approximately one month late. The Community Services Directorate provided formal written feedback to Barnardos Australia including escalating levels of communications regarding lateness of submission for each of the performance reports provided. The Community Services Directorate provided formal written feedback to Barnardos Australia for each of the performance reports provided, which was generally positive, with some areas identified for follow-up and future action. For each period the Community Services Directorate reported to Barnardos Australia that it had met the requirements of the service funding agreement.
- Barnardos Australia has provided financial reports to the Community Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. There was, however, a gap in the financial accountability arrangements for the program. The Our Place Program commenced in June 2011, however the Community Services Directorate did not require Barnardos Australia to provide a half-yearly financial report for the year ending 30 June 2011 (nor did it require a half-yearly performance report). Accordingly, at the time of audit fieldwork, not all of the funds provided to Barnardos Australia had been acquitted through a half-yearly financial report.
- Barnardos Australia has subcontracted parts of its program delivery to Anglicare ACT. Under the subcontract, Anglicare ACT is required to undertake general program activities, case management, tenancy management and support,

collaborative practice, property management, life skills training, information, referral and advocacy and placement panel. Barnardos Australia did not enter into a written agreement with Anglicare ACT until 12 November 2012, approximately 16 months after Barnardos Australia was engaged by the Community Services Directorate.

- Since the start of the Our Place Program, the number of young people engaged in the program since inception has not fallen below 20 young people (as anticipated in the initial ACT *Implementation Plan*) and all those engaged in the Our Place Program have been engaged in education, employment or training.

### Chapter 5 – The Housing and Support Initiative

- The Housing and Support Initiative provides people with a mental illness access to stable housing, clinical mental health services and accommodation support. Ten places have been established under this initiative. The initiative was implemented in June 2010. The Housing and Support Initiative represented approximately 5.9 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- The Housing and Support Initiative is delivered under a partnership between Housing ACT, the Health Directorate (through the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drugs Services Division) and community service providers.
- The Housing and Support Initiative is based on a similar program to that developed and implemented in New South Wales. The apparent success of the New South Wales program informed the ACT's decision to implement the Housing and Support Initiative as part of its response to the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The design of the New South Wales program was modified to fit the ACT's mental health services environment.
- Funding for the Housing and Support Initiative is provided by the Commonwealth Government. The ACT Government does not provide any direct funding for the Housing and Support Initiative.
- The proposed expenditure for the Housing and Support Initiative was initially forecast to be approximately \$1.22 million. As part of the development of the revised *Implementation Plan* in October 2012, this was revised by the Community Services Directorate to \$1.01 million. It was further revised to \$807,527. This is approximately 66 percent of the initial expected expenditure on the initiative. Reasons for the lower expenditure included a delay in housing clients and clients not requiring the estimated full amount of support. Similar to the situation with respect to the A Place to Call Home Program, there is an inconsistency between the Housing and Support Initiative budget, actual and reported expenditure on the initiative.
- The performance indicators actually identified and reported on for the Housing and Support Initiative are different to the performance indicators initially envisaged. *Implementation Plans* and annual reports from the Community Services Directorate to the Commonwealth Government only report the performance of the Housing and Support Initiative with respect to 'the number of people provided with support'

and 'the number of tenancies sustained for two years or more'. These indicators do not provide information on the actual success of the Initiative. These measures also lack a precise description of how they are being measured. Furthermore, numeric targets associated with the key performance indicators were changed in the March 2012 *Implementation Plan*. There is a lack of consistency, completeness and accuracy in the information provided in relation to performance indicators which are reported to the Commonwealth Government.

- The limited capacity to house homeless persons under the Housing and Support initiative has caused an average delay of six months for the 14 clients. This has resulted in an initial underspending for the Housing and Support Initiative.
- Case management under the Housing and Support Initiative by the Community Services Directorate, Health Directorate and community service providers reflects a model that is designed to provide a quality service. This model aims to improve a client's well-being by assisting them to live independently in the community, thereby reducing their risk of being homeless.
- The Community Services Directorate stated that they intended to have the Housing and Support Initiative independently evaluated after 12 months of operation. The ACT Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services was informed of this intention as was the Commonwealth Government through the October 2009 and October 2010 *Implementation Plans* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The March 2012 *Implementation Plan* did not include an evaluation. Although the Community Services Directorate's decision not to proceed with one was well prepared and documented, there was no evidence that this was brought to the attention of the Minister for Housing or the Commonwealth Government.
- The 2011-12 annual report to the Commonwealth Government stated that the ACT's Housing and Support Initiative was to be expanded to include clients with alcohol and drug dependencies subject to a successful outcome of an independent review. While the action taken by the Community Services Directorate may be appropriate, the documentation and communication of this decision could have been better.
- Changes have been made to the targets set for the Housing and Support Initiative. The changes to the targets and accompanying method for reporting over time, combined with a lack of specificity, makes it difficult to assess whether the initiative has actually achieved its intent. The Community Services Directorate advises that changes to the targets for the Housing and Support Initiative are due to a limited ability to accurately capture and report on meaningful data for some outcomes. While there has not been an overall evaluation of the Housing and Support Initiative it would appear that it has exceeded its anticipated outcome as there are currently 14 people being assisted under the initiative, which represents an additional 4 people as identified in the initial *Implementation Plan*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

- 1.12 The audit has made four recommendations to address the audit findings.
- 1.13 In accordance with Section 18 of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, a final draft of this report was provided to the Director-General of the Community Services Directorate for consideration and comments. The Director-General's overall response is shown below:

*The Community Services Directorate is committed to continuous improvement of internal procedures and practices to ensure the highest level of service to its partner stakeholders and the ACT community. The Auditor-General's recommendations and report support the directorate's commitment to being a leading organisation in the way we work for the people of Canberra – "by listening, responding and working together as we strive for excellence".*

*This is embedded in practice by emphasising continuous improvement in staff capacity, service delivery, governance, collaboration and accountability. The recommendations in the report highlight the need for ongoing review of internal financial and contract management procedures to ensure accurate information is available at all times. This is then used to provide evidence of positive outcomes achieved in partnership with the ACT Not for Profit Sector under programs such as the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.*

*The Community Services Directorate has implemented systems whereby support costs and hours for programs such as the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative are cross referenced to ensure the most appropriate levels of support are provided to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.*

*Social Housing and Homelessness Services is trialling a new form of response to reporting by its Not for Profit Sector Partners whereby the report assessment undertaken by contract management staff is provided in its entirety to the organisation. The aim of this is to create a more transparent contractual relationship and enable more effective collaboration in creating positive outcomes for Service Users. The directorate is also committed to the continuous review of outcomes and performance indicators when developing new or revised programs to ensure their alignment with the available evidence base and models of best practice both within Australia and internationally.*

- 1.14 In addition, the Director-General provided responses to each recommendation, as shown below.

**Recommendation 1 (Chapter 3) – Financial Management**

The Community Services Directorate should improve its processes for coordinating the expenditure of *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funds to enable accurate recording and reporting of program resources and expenditure. Program resources and expenditure should be periodically reconciled.

**Community Services Directorate response:**

*Agreed.*

*The Community Services Directorate is committed to continuous improvement of accountability measures. The ACT Government has recently signed the 2013-14 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and is implementing new resource and expenditure reconciliation measures to ensure ongoing accountability to the Commonwealth Government and the ACT Community.*

**Recommendation 2 (Chapter 4) – Contract Management**

The Community Services Directorate should improve its contract management of service providers by:

- a) requiring that a financial acquittal is undertaken for all funds provided to the service provider under the service funding agreement; and
- b) obtaining and approving documentation associated with any subcontracting arrangements.

**Community Services Directorate response:**

*Two a) Agreed.*

*The Community Services Directorate currently has financial acquittal processes in place, however the directorate is working with the ACT Not for Profit Sector to reduce the reporting burden whilst ensuring the level of financial accountability is commensurate with the level of risk to both the service provider and the ACT Government. By doing this in partnership with the ACT Not for Profit Sector the directorate is able to ensure that all stakeholders are able to accurately capture and report on expenditure of ACT and Commonwealth Government funds.*

*Two b) Agreed.*

**Recommendation 3 (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5) – Financial Management**

The Community Services Directorate should review the key performance indicators associated with the A Place to Call Home Program and Housing and Support Initiative, to inform performance indicators for any future or similar programs it manages.

**Community Services Directorate Response:**

*Agreed.*

*The directorate is committed to improving service delivery. This is occurring through review of past and current initiatives to inform future program development. The directorate strives to ensure ACT service initiatives are consistent with the available evidence base and current Australian and international models of best practice.*

**Recommendation 4 (Chapter 5) – Review**

The Community Services Directorate, in consultation with the Health Directorate, should finalise the review of the Housing and Support Initiative.

**Community Services Directorate Response:**

*Agreed.*

*The Community Services Directorate will work collaboratively with the Health Directorate to finalise a review of the Housing and Support Initiative.*

## 2. THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS

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### INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This chapter describes the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and its social and policy context. It also describes the extent of homelessness in the ACT.

### KEY FINDINGS

- There is no internationally agreed definition of homelessness. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are fundamental difficulties in defining homelessness and describing the characteristics of people who might be considered to be homeless.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' cultural definition of homelessness was adopted by the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. Under this definition there are three levels of homelessness: primary homelessness (people without conventional accommodation), secondary homelessness (people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation and people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own) and tertiary homelessness (people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis for over 12 weeks).
- In 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics developed a new definition of homelessness, which recognises a person as homeless if their current living arrangement is: in a dwelling that is inadequate; or has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.
- The 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition of homelessness has a very broad scope that includes people currently sleeping rough, people in receipt of supported accommodation and people independently managing their own tenancy but in receipt of post-transitional support. This has arguably led to difficulties in accurately reflecting homelessness in the community.
- Differences in the definition and methods of counting homelessness, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics inclusion of overcrowding in the 2011 census, contributed to an overall increase in persons counted as being homeless through the census. The ACT Government has identified the revised definition of homelessness coupled with an increase in supported accommodation places has had the effect of significantly increasing the number of homeless people reported in the ACT.
- The number of homeless reported for the ACT in 2001 was 943, while the number reported for the ACT in 2006 was 949. On census night, 19 July 2011, the number of homeless reported for the ACT was 1,785. This represented approximately 0.5 percent of the total ACT population recorded in the census

(367,752) or approximately 50 persons per 10,000.

- Key drivers for the significant increase in reported homeless people in the ACT have been increases in the number of 'persons in supported accommodation for the homeless' (an increase of 140 percent between 2006 and 2011) and 'persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings' (an increase of 264 percent between 2006 and 2011). The number of 'persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out' decreased by 43 percent between 2006 and 2011. The increase in homelessness in the ACT is in the category of secondary homelessness, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition, which is less visible than primary homelessness.
- From the census data from 2006 to 2011 it could be erroneously assumed that there has been a very significant increase in homelessness in the ACT of approximately 88 percent. However, the key driver for the increase in homelessness in the ACT has been changes in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition and therefore data collection method. The ACT moved from one of the lowest rates of homelessness in Australia, as recorded in the 2001 and 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics' censuses, to the second highest rate of homelessness, behind the Northern Territory, in 2011.
- The ACT provides a significant level of support to homeless people compared with other Australian jurisdictions. For example, in 2011-12 the ACT Government spent \$55.87 per capita on homelessness, compared to the Australian average of \$21.85 and the average number of days in which a homeless client received support in the ACT was 129.4. This is significantly longer than the Australian average of 79.5 days and much greater than the next jurisdiction, New South Wales (94.8 days). The Audit Office did not examine these issues in detail, but notes that homelessness in the ACT is impacted by a wide range of factors and issues including, for example, housing affordability. Efforts to improve housing affordability, primarily through the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan, are expected to assist in addressing homelessness.
- The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* originated in the 2008 White Paper *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funding is allocated according to the states' and territories' share of the homeless population, as estimated by the 2006 census. The ACT accounted for approximately 1.6 percent of the Australian population as estimated by the 2006 census. Total funding for the ACT under the initial *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* was approximately \$20.8 million (\$10.06 million in Commonwealth Government funding and \$10.74 million in ACT funding).

### DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

- 2.2 There is no internationally agreed definition of homelessness. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are fundamental difficulties in defining

homelessness and describing the characteristics of people who might be considered to be homeless.

2.3 According to the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health and Ageing, prior to 2012 two definitions of homelessness were used:

- the *cultural definition* used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; and
- the definition in section 4 of the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* (Commonwealth).

2.4 Section 4 of the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* (Commonwealth) provides that a person is homeless if he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing. Persons have *inadequate access to safe and secure housing* if their housing:

- damages their health;
- threatens their safety;
- marginalises them as they do not have personal amenity or economic and social support; and
- places them in circumstances which threaten or affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of their housing.

#### Australian Bureau of Statistics definition of homelessness

2.5 The Australian Bureau of Statistics *cultural definition* of homelessness was adopted by *The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. Under this *cultural definition* of homelessness there are three levels of homelessness:

- **Primary homelessness** means people without conventional accommodation, and it includes people living on the streets and in other public places such as parks, squatting in buildings or using vehicles, for temporary shelter.
- **Secondary homelessness** means people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation and people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. It also includes people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided by governments and non-government organisations and people residing temporarily in boarding houses for 12 weeks or less.
- **Tertiary homelessness** means people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis for over 12 weeks.

2.6 In 2012, the Australian Bureau of Statistics adopted a revised definition of homelessness for statistical purposes:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or

- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

2.7 The revised definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred around the following elements:

- adequacy of the dwelling;
- security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- control of, and access to, space for social relations.

2.8 The revised definition was implemented after the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* was developed and agreed in 2009.

### ***Effect of the Australian Bureau of Statistics revised definition***

2.9 The introduction of the revised Australian Bureau of Statistics definition is not without its critics. The definition has a very broad scope that includes people currently sleeping rough, people in receipt of supported accommodation and people independently managing their own tenancy but in receipt of post transitional support. This has arguably contributed to difficulties in accurately reflecting homelessness in the community.

2.10 Differences in the definition and methods of counting homelessness, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics inclusion of overcrowding in the 2011 census, contributed to an overall increase in persons counted as being homeless through the census. The ACT Government has identified that the revised definition of homelessness has had the effect of significantly increasing the number of homeless people recorded in the ACT.

2.11 For example, although rough sleeping, considered to be primary homelessness and very visible, declined by 43 percent in the ACT over the past five years, the 2011 census data showed higher overall homelessness in the ACT. The Australian Bureau of Statistics includes overcrowding in homeless numbers because persons living in overcrowded premises do not have control of or access to space for social relations. Persons displaced from home due to domestic violence are also reported as homeless if they are in temporary accommodation and do not have access to alternatives that are safe, secure and adequate.

2.12 The largest numbers of people experiencing homelessness counted in the ACT were those experiencing secondary homelessness. From a community perspective this type of homelessness is less visible than primary homelessness.

2.13 The Community Services Directorate asserts that all jurisdictions have raised concerns about the scope of the revised definition, particularly with respect to its inclusion of overcrowding in the definition and therefore collection of data for determining homelessness. Additionally, the adaptation of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' revised definition in the *National Partnership Agreement on*

*Homelessness* has created some confusion with respect to the scope of the agreement. Overcrowding issues, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overcrowding, are not addressed through the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and are instead being specifically addressed through the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

### Australian Institute of Health and Welfare definition of homelessness

- 2.14 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare defines a person as homeless if they are either living in:
- non conventional accommodation or sleeping rough; or
  - short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options.
- 2.15 At the Council of Australian Governments instigation, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare produces a data collection called the *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection*. The collection was designed to contribute to the new reporting requirements outlined in the 2008 *National Affordable Housing Agreement* and the 2009 *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- 2.16 The annual *Report on Government Services*, published by the Commonwealth Government's Productivity Commission uses the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare definition and the *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection* for its figures on homelessness.
- 2.17 The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare operate independently in defining homelessness and applying their respective definitions in collecting data on homelessness. Policy makers using their data need to appreciate the differences in definition and collection when applying the results of quantitative research by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, through the five-yearly census, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, through its continuous surveys of the homeless.
- 2.18 The lack of a consistent definition is an impediment to monitoring homelessness and restricts the community in understanding whether progress is actually being achieved. While it affects that ACT, it is only something that can be resolved by the Commonwealth Government.

### The extent of homelessness in the ACT

- 2.19 The number of homeless reported for Australia in the 2001 census was 95,314. The number declined to 89,728 in 2006 but increased to 105,237 in 2011.
- 2.20 The number of homeless reported for the ACT in 2001 was 943, while the number reported for the ACT in 2006 was 949. On census night, 9 August 2011, the number of homeless reported for the ACT was 1,785. This represented approximately 0.5 percent of the total ACT population recorded in the census (367,752) or approximately 50 persons per 10,000.

2.21 According to the 2011 census:

- 65 percent of the homeless in the ACT are in supported accommodation;
- 56 percent of the homeless in the ACT are male;
- 42 percent of the homeless in the ACT are less than 25 years old; and
- 15 percent of the homeless in the ACT are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

2.22 The following table shows a breakdown in the different categories of homeless people in the ACT between the 2006 and 2011 censuses.

**Table 2.1: Homelessness categories in the ACT (2006 and 2011 censuses)**

Homelessness category	2006	2011	Change
Persons who are in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out	51	29	- 43 %
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	461	1,105	140 %
Persons staying temporarily with other households	315	316	0 %
Persons staying in boarding houses	40	50	25 %
Persons in other temporary lodging	5	5	0 %
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	77	280	264 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>1,785</b>	<b>88 %</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

2.23 Table 2.1 indicates that:

- there has been a significant increase in the overall number of reported homeless people in the ACT between 2006 and 2011 of 88 percent. This is misleading;
- key drivers for the significant increase in reported homeless people in the ACT have been increases in the number of 'persons in supported accommodation for the homeless' (an increase of 140 percent) and 'persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings' (an increase of 264 percent).

2.24 From the census data for 2006 to 2011 it could be erroneously assumed that there has been a very significant increase in homelessness in the ACT of approximately 88 percent.

2.25 However, as noted in the preceding paragraphs, what has changed is the definition and method of determining homelessness. Due to changes in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition and therefore data collection method, the ACT moved from one of the lowest rates of homelessness in Australia, as recorded in the 2001 and 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics' censuses, to the second highest rate of homelessness, behind the Northern Territory, in 2011.

### **Homelessness support in the ACT**

- 2.26 The annual Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services* provides information on different jurisdictions' services for the homeless. The report on Government Services shows that:
- in 2011-12 the ACT Government spent \$55.87 per capita on homelessness, compared to the Australian average of \$21.85;
  - 74.3 percent of the support provided in the ACT was aimed at accommodation support and assistance to sustain a housing arrangement, compared to the Australian average of 61.5 percent; and
  - 72.3 percent of homeless clients had an agreed case management plan, compared to an Australian average of 63.1 percent.
- 2.27 This investment and emphasis is reflected in other homelessness data from the Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services*:
- the average period that a homeless person received support in the ACT was 124.2 days per support period. This is significantly longer than the Australian average of 58.7 days and much greater than the next jurisdiction, New South Wales (81.8 days);
  - the average number of days in which a homeless client received support in the ACT was 129.4. This is significantly longer than the Australian average of 79.5 days and much greater than the next jurisdiction, New South Wales (94.8 days);
  - 13.2 percent of clients in the ACT have experienced repeated periods of homelessness, compared to the average of 7.3 percent for Australia; and
  - 37.3 percent of clients in the ACT obtained or maintained independent housing after a supported period, compared to the average of 41.9 percent for Australia.
- 2.28 This data shows that the ACT provides a significant level of support to homeless people, when compared to other Australian jurisdictions. The Audit Office did not examine these issues in detail, but notes that homelessness in the ACT is impacted by a wide range of factors and issues including, for example, housing affordability. Efforts to improve housing affordability, primarily through the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan, are expected to assist in addressing homelessness.

## **GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS**

### **ACT Government policies and programs**

- 2.29 In November 2003 the ACT Government issued its first homelessness strategy plan; *Breaking the Cycle – the ACT Homelessness Strategy*. Its primary goal was:
- ... the prevention and reduction of homelessness while enabling individuals and families within the ACT to lead safe, active, participative and rewarding lives.

2.30 In 2004 the ACT Government published *The Social Compact*. *The Social Compact* contains:

... the shared vision, role and contribution of the community sector and ACT Government and principles for working together and guiding standards or undertakings for both the community sector and ACT Government for working together, planning and policy development and governance, management and accountability, and delivery of quality services and programs<sup>1</sup>.

2.31 On 29 April 2008 the ACT Department of Housing and Community Services published the *ACT Homeless Charter*. The *ACT Homeless Charter* is:

... intended to improve the circumstances of homeless people by raising community awareness and promoting a rights-based approach to homelessness service delivery. The charter is not a law, and the rights it sets out cannot be directly enforced in a court of law. It is a statement of values subject to the laws of the ACT.

People who are experiencing homelessness have the right of inclusion, rights to dignity, respect and non discrimination rights to safety and freedom.

2.32 The ACT Government funds a range of programs, managed by the Community Services Directorate, which are relevant to homelessness. These include:

- the Tenant Participation Grants Program that encourages and promotes tenant participation in the community;
- the Supportive Tenancy Service that provides early intervention support to persons who may find themselves at risk of homelessness;
- assertive outreach support for rough sleepers, accommodation and non accommodation supports for people experiencing homelessness; and
- Youth Services include the Youth Emergency Accommodation Network, Friendly Landlord Service, Family Tree House, Take Hold and Ainslie House.

### **The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness**

2.33 The Commonwealth Government issued a White Paper in 2008; *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. The White Paper sets out a national approach to reducing homelessness in Australia.

2.34 With the agreement of state and territory governments, the Commonwealth Government set two headline goals under the White Paper to guide the long term response to homelessness:

- halve overall homelessness by 2020; and
- offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://timetotalk.act.gov.au/social-compact/about-the-social-compact/>

- 2.35 Interim targets to be implemented to measure progress to these goals were also established.
- 2.36 A key outcome of the White Paper was the development of the *National Affordable Housing Agreement* and the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### National Affordable Housing Agreement

- 2.37 The *National Affordable Housing Agreement* replaced the former *Commonwealth State Housing Agreement* from 1 January 2009. Under the *National Affordable Housing Agreement 2008* the Council of Australian Governments approved additional funding from 2008-09 as part of a 12 year reform agenda outlined in the 2008 White Paper.
- 2.38 The *National Affordable Housing Agreement* is comprised of a series of National Partnership Agreements. Table 2.2 shows the National Partnership Agreements that comprise the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

**Table 2.2: National Affordable Housing Agreement**

Component – National Partnership Agreements	Funding 2008 to 2013 (billions)	Percentage of total
Homelessness	\$1.1	15
Social Housing	\$0.4	6
Remote Indigenous Housing	\$5.5	76
Supporting National Mental Health Reform	\$0.2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7.2</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Council of Australian Governments – *National Affordable Housing Agreement*

## THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS

### Objectives and outputs

- 2.39 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* originated in the 2008 White Paper *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. As shown in Table 2.2 it is a component of the overall *National Affordable Housing Agreement*. The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* comprises total funding of \$1.1 billion for all states and territories. It commenced on 1 July 2009 and was initially expected to conclude on 30 June 2013. In November 2012 it was announced that the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* would be extended for an additional year to 30 June 2014.

2.40 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* contributes to the National Affordable Housing Agreement Outcome:

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion.<sup>2</sup>

2.41 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* contributes to the following outcomes:

- fewer people will become homeless and fewer of these will sleep rough;
- fewer people will become homeless more than once;
- people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness will maintain or improve connections with their families and communities, and maintain or improve their education, training or employment participation; and
- people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will be supported by quality services, with improved access to sustainable housing.

2.42 The four agreed core outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* are:

- the A Place to Call Home housing program;
- Street to Home program for chronic homeless people;
- support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies, including through tenancy support, advocacy, case management, financial counselling and referral services; and
- assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional and health facilities, to access and maintain stable, affordable housing.

### **Roles and responsibilities under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness***

2.43 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government and the states and territories.

2.44 Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* the Commonwealth Government is responsible for:

- supporting the states and territories to deliver their measures under their respective *Implementation Plans*;
- delivering Commonwealth Government-only funded measures in the *Implementation Plan*;
- contributing funding to the states and territories;

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<sup>2</sup> *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, paragraph 13.

- monitoring performance against the performance indicators and benchmarks specified in the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and the *Implementation Plans*; and
- providing performance and financial reporting as required.

2.45 The states and territories are responsible for:

- delivering the programs that they fund solely, as per the respective *Implementation Plans*;
- contributing funding towards the programs;
- delivering the measures funded by the Commonwealth Government and identified for delivery by the states and territories in their respective *Implementation Plans*;
- participating in processes to support the Commonwealth Government in its delivery of its measures; and
- providing performance and financial reporting as required.

2.46 The Commonwealth Government and the states and territories have a shared responsibility to:

- work in partnership to refine or further develop performance indicators and provide data to enable performance reporting and evaluation of outcomes against the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*; and
- maintain and develop national data sets required to allow comparative reporting of jurisdictional service delivery effort.

#### ***National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness funding for the ACT***

2.47 *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funding is allocated according to the states and territories share of the homeless population, as estimated by the 2006 census. The ACT accounted for approximately 1.6 percent of the Australian population as estimated by the 2006 census.

2.48 The Commonwealth Government and ACT Governments each contribute funding to *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* programs in the ACT. Some programs are funded jointly by each Government. Others are funded solely by either the Australian or ACT Government.

2.49 Table 2.3 on page 24 shows the funding arrangements for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* in the ACT.

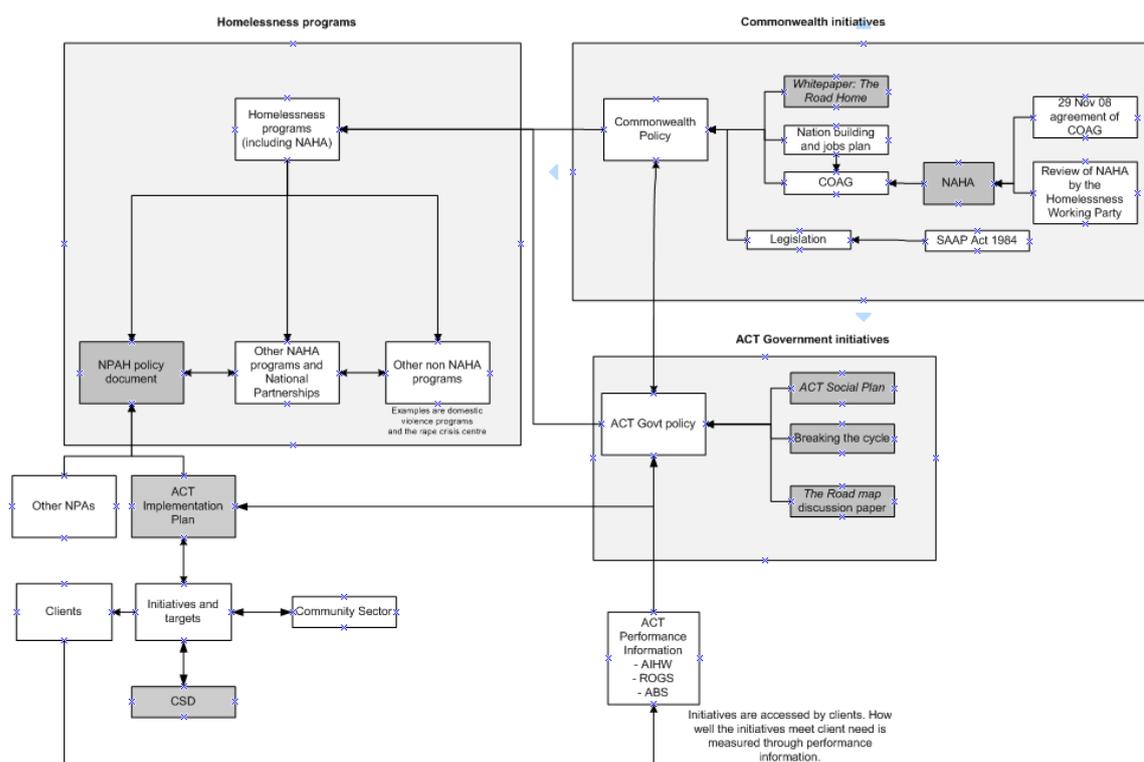
**Table 2.3: Funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness – ACT programs (\$ millions)**

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total
<b>A Place to Call Home</b>						
Commonwealth Government funding	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00
ACT Government capital funding	1.50	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.50	5.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>Building Housing Partnerships</b>						
Commonwealth Government funding		0.16	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.95
ACT Government funding		0.00	0.20	0.43	0.45	1.07
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>2.02</b>
<b>Managed supported accommodation for people exiting the Alexander Maconochie Centre</b>						
ACT Government capital funding	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54
ACT Government funding	0.20	0.72	0.72	0.74	0.75	3.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>4.67</b>
Programs funded solely by the Commonwealth Government						
<b>Street to Home - Rough Sleepers</b>		0.18	0.23	0.24	0.25	0.90
<b>Transitional support and head tenancies</b>		0.06	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.29
<b>Mental Health Housing and Support Initiative</b>		0.20	0.33	0.34	0.35	1.22
<b>Our Place</b>			0.36	0.37	0.38	1.11
<b>First Point - Central Intake Service</b>		0.10	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.50
<b>Staying at Home after Domestic Violence Program</b>		0.10				0.10
<b>Total Commonwealth Government funding over the life of the programs (\$m)</b>						<b>\$10.06</b>
<b>Total ACT funding over the life of the programs (\$m)</b>						<b>\$10.74</b>
<b>TOTAL ACT and Commonwealth Government funding (\$m)</b>						<b>\$20.81</b>

Source: Housing ACT data

2.50 Figure 2.2 below shows the range of policies, program and initiatives that relate to homelessness in the ACT. The strategies, plans and initiatives discussed in this chapter are highlighted.

**Figure 2.2: Homeless Policy and Programs – Commonwealth Government and ACT Government**



Source: Community Services Directorate

### Implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

2.51 Along with other jurisdictions, the ACT develops and agrees with the Commonwealth Government an annual *Implementation Plan*, which outlines its actions to achieve the objectives, outcomes, targets and timelines in the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The Community Services Directorate prepared an initial *Implementation Plan* in October 2009. The *Implementation Plan* was revised and updated in October 2010 and March 2012.

2.52 The Commonwealth Government also requires all states and territories to provide an annual report on activities under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* within twelve weeks of 30 June each year. The Commonwealth Government subsequently reports to the states and territories and other relevant stakeholders against the performance indicators and timelines in their jurisdictional *Implementation Plans*.

- 2.53 The Community Services Directorate has provided an annual report for all years, up to and including 30 June 2012. All reports have been approved by the Commonwealth Government.
- 2.54 Quarterly financial reports are also required to be submitted to the Commonwealth Government for the *A Place to Call Home* Program. The Community Services Directorate has provided all quarterly financial reports to the Commonwealth Government from July 2010 when quarterly reporting began.
- 2.55 *The Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* requires the ACT Treasury to lodge biannual financial reports on the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* from the ACT Treasury to the Commonwealth Government. The Community Services Directorate has supplied Treasury with all information required for the reports since 2009-10.

### First Point (Central Intake Service for Homelessness)

- 2.56 First Point (Central Intake Service for Homelessness) is one of the nine ACT programs funded and delivered under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, refer to Table 2.3 at page 24. The ACT has received a total of \$500,000 from the Commonwealth Government between 2009-10 and 2012-13 to operate First Point.
- 2.57 First Point was established in November 2010 as the ACT's central intake service for homelessness services. It is the principal intake point for access to specialist homelessness services. The service is primarily telephone based, through a free call number, and operates six days a week. First Point assesses the needs of people who call the help line and collects data on their current circumstances in order to match them with appropriate homelessness services.
- 2.58 First Point may identify potential participants for the three programs considered as part of this audit. However, each of the programs has its own process for considering and, if appropriate, approving clients for participation.

### 3. A Place to Call Home Program

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- 3.1 This chapter considers the management and implementation of the A Place to Call Home Program. The A Place to Call Home Program is one of the four core outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and represented approximately 48 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

#### SUMMARY

- The A Place to Call Home Program is one of the four core outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, representing approximately 48 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT.
- A Place to Call Home provides for the construction of 20 new dwellings in the ACT (between 2009-10 and 2012-13) for the purpose of housing homeless families and the provision of ongoing support services to families allocated a dwelling under the program. The program is targeted at families.
- Dwellings funded and built under the A Place to Call Home Program are mostly located in Gungahlin, with a smaller number of properties located in Belconnen, Inner South, Inner North and Tuggeranong. By virtue of the agreed *Implementation Plans*, the Community Services Directorate may provide A Place to Call Home services and support to people from other public housing stock, notwithstanding that these houses were not funded and built under the A Place to Call Home Program. This allows program participants to be housed in areas of Canberra so that they can retain connections with their community, e.g. family, schools.
- There is an inconsistency between budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure on the A Place to Call Home Program. A total of \$10 million was budgeted for the program, while expenditure was \$11.08 million (as of 19 December 2012) and reported expenditure was \$12.18 million (as of 31 March 2013). It was difficult for the Audit Office to ascertain accurate actual expenditure on the program due to different sources of information being used by the Community Services Directorate. There is no single source of information for funding arrangements under the A Place to Call Home Program, nor are budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure periodically reconciled. The inconsistency and a lack of reconciliation creates the risk that information may not be readily available for management purposes. Refer to paragraph 3.35 at page 36.
- The Community Services Directorate has advised that the variance in the financial information for the A Place to Call Home Program is due to the substitution of properties within the program, i.e. the use of existing public housing stock to deliver services and support to program participants. While *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funds were used to purchase land and construct houses in greenfield sites, the substitution of these dwellings by existing public housing stock (often at a higher value) has led to inconsistency in financial

information. Refer to paragraph 3.21 at page 32.

- As part of the *Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Government identified a series of performance indicators and targets for the A Place to Call Home Program. The number of houses built under the program has been achieved (20) (the Community Services Directorate inaccurately reported to the Commonwealth Government that 21 houses had been built under the program), the number of tenancies established under the program in the three years to 2011-12 (19) has exceeded the target (17) and the target of 50 percent of properties being allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families has been met in the three years to 2011-12. At the time of audit fieldwork eleven families from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community had obtained a house under the A Place to Call Home Program, which has exceeded the initial target of ten.
- The key performance indicators most recently reported on by the ACT Government have changed over the course of the program. Key performance indicators relating to ‘number of tenancies sustained for two years or more’, ‘number who are less than \$500 in arrears or on a complying repayment agreement’ and ‘lower than average tenant responsible maintenance’ would provide information to guide program management, administration and accountability for service delivery. The Community Services Directorate has advised that the change in performance indicators is due to a limited ability to accurately capture and report on meaningful data for some outcomes.
- The key performance indicators that were removed would have assisted in providing more appropriate information on key measures of success for the program, particularly with respect to the support services that are being provided to families participating in the program.
- The A Place to Call Home Program enables families to take tenancy of a home and to integrate into the local community. Of the 20 houses initially built under the program, families residing in ten houses remain in the program, while families residing in a further ten houses have exited the program. These families continue to reside in the houses by virtue of Housing ACT’s mainstream programs. Most families that have transitioned from the program did so within 12 months, while some families have remained on the program for longer than twelve months, up to two years in one instance. This reflects the need to provide ongoing tenancy support to these families.
- Stakeholders from the homelessness sector, the Community Service Directorate, First Point staff, members from community service bodies and peak bodies within the ACT all indicated that they considered the A Place to Call Home Program of value.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.2 A Place to Call Home provides for:

- the construction of 20 new dwellings in the ACT (between 2009-10 and 2012-13) for the purpose of housing homeless families; and
- the provision of ongoing support services to families allocated a dwelling under the program.

3.3 The program provides funding for:

- the purchase of land;
- the construction of dwellings on the land; and
- the delivery of ongoing support services to families housed under the program by community organisations.

3.4 A Place to Call Home funding for the period is provided below:

**Table 3.1: Funding for A Place To Call Home program**

A Place to Call Home	2008-09 (\$)	2009-10 (\$)	2010-11 (\$)	2011-12 (\$)	2012-13 (\$)
Commonwealth Government funding	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
ACT Government capital funding	2,500,000	1,000,000	500,000	500,000	500,000

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plan for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013*

3.5 Additional funding of up to \$11,400 for each family for tenancy management and some set-up costs is also provided by the Commonwealth Government. This is intended to cover the purchase of goods and/or services that may be necessary to assist a family under the program.

3.6 A Place to Call Home is identified as a ‘housing first’ model of service delivery, which is an alternative to the traditional ‘pathway’ approach that has underpinned most housing services to homeless people in Australia. The ‘pathway’ approach typically graduates people from crisis response through to transitional responses and then on to long-term housing. The ‘pathway’ approach may be perceived by homeless people as a series of hurdles that they may be unwilling or unable to overcome.

3.7 In contrast to the ‘pathway’ approach, the ‘housing first’ model of service provides for long-term stable housing as a first-step in the delivery of services to the homeless. The provision of housing is complemented by the coordinated provision of services needed by each individual or family to sustain the tenancy.

### Program eligibility and targeting

- 3.8 The A Place to Call Home Program is targeted at families. Clients eligible for the program generally have a background of multiple needs and engagement with multiple service systems, including mental health, justice, family violence, substance abuse and involvement with statutory services.
- 3.9 To be eligible for participation in the A Place to Call Home Program a family must be:
- in primary or secondary homelessness (refer to paragraph 2.5);
  - eligible for public or community housing;
  - experiencing multiple, detrimental housing placements;
  - willing to work with a support agency to stabilise within a neighbourhood; and
  - able to meet the property specifications.
- 3.10 Fifty percent of the houses in the program were to be allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

### Delivery of the Program

- 3.11 Once a family is selected by the Community Services Directorate and directly housed it is provided with support by community service providers.
- 3.12 The program envisages that the family may initially be housed under a head tenancy arrangement whereby the community service provider acts as both landlord and support provider. As the family achieves independence, the tenancy may be transferred from the community service provider to the tenant.
- 3.13 This tailored support enables the family to achieve stability of tenure while settling into the local community. It is intended that after twelve months participation in the program the family will achieve independent tenancy.
- 3.14 Once independent tenancy has been achieved the property is transferred to the general public housing stock of the Territory. The tailored support provided by the community service provider is no longer required and the family enters into a public housing tenancy with Housing ACT. The family remain resident in the same house as originally provided by the A Place to Call Home Program.

### National Partnership Agreement contribution

- 3.15 The A Place to Call Home Program is one of the four core outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- 3.16 A Place to Call Home contributes to the following priority outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*:

- services to assist homeless people with substance abuse to secure or maintain stable accommodation;
- services to assist homeless people with mental health issues to secure or maintain stable accommodation;
- assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing.

### PROGRAM EXPENDITURE

3.17 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and the supporting *ACT Implementation Plan* establishes the funding arrangements for the A Place to Call Home Program.

3.18 Table 3.2 below shows budgeted, actual and reported expenditure for the A Place to Call Home Program.

**Table 3.2: A Place to Call Home Program budgeted, actual and reported expenditure**

Year	Budget funds (\$)	Actual expenditure (\$)	Reported expenditure to Commonwealth Government (\$)
2008-09	3,500,000	1,897,594	1,856,000
2009-10	2,000,000	3,431,572	2,644,000
2010-11	1,500,000	1,781,833	2,675,201
2011-12	1,500,000	3,342,208	1,544,000
2012-13	1,500,000	625,622 (to 19 December 2012)	3,460,510 (to 31 March 2013)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>	<b>11,078,829</b> (to 19 December 2012)	<b>12,179,711</b> (to 31 March 2013)

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government, Community Services Directorate quarterly reports to the Commonwealth Government

3.19 There is an inconsistency between budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure on the A Place to Call Home Program. A total of \$10 million was budgeted for the program, while expenditure was \$11.08 million (as of 19 December 2012) and reported expenditure was \$12.18 million (as of 31 March 2013), refer to Table 3.2.

3.20 It was difficult for the Audit Office to ascertain accurate actual expenditure on the program due to different sources of information being used by the Community Services Directorate. For example:

- program expenditure reported in 2008-09 and 2009-10 is based on a total program expenditure figure that was provided to the Commonwealth

Government as part of revised *Implementation Plans* (updated in October 2010 and March 2012); and

- program expenditure reported from 2010-11 to 2012-13 is based on quarterly financial reports provided to the Commonwealth Government. These quarterly reports were only required to be provided as of July 2011.

3.21 The Community Services Directorate has advised that the variance in the financial information is due to the substitution of properties within the program, i.e. the use of existing public housing stock to deliver services and support to program participants. The Community Services Directorate has advised:

Due to increased land purchase costs under the A Place to Call Home Program, Housing ACT contributed funding in addition to the reportable commitment made to the Commonwealth. Housing ACT's Capital Works Program is largely self-funded from the sale proceeds of existing properties rather than through ACT Government appropriation of funds by way of capital injections to fund the Program. Under the former Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, now the National Affordable Housing Agreement and its related National Partnership Agreements, all funds provided under the Agreement were to be re-invested in the provision of housing assistance, including the rent received and the sale proceeds from the sale of houses.

When the ACT Government appropriates money for the construction of properties, Housing ACT is required to comply with the normal reporting and control requirements specified by the ACT Government. However, for its self-funded capital works, Housing ACT is able to manage and report on these simply through internal mechanisms and inclusion of details in the ACT Budget Papers and the Directorate's annual report. The Government also does not restrict Housing ACT from using its own resources to boost or add to works which it funds by Appropriation, simply because construction costs may vary from the amount provided in the appropriation funding, as was the case in the A Place to Call Home projects.

3.22 There is no single source of information for funding arrangements under the A Place to Call Home Program, nor are budgeted funds, actual expenditure and reported expenditure periodically reconciled. The inconsistency of financial information and a lack of reconciliation of this information creates the risk that inaccurate financial information is:

- used to inform the management and administration of the program; and
- reported publicly.

3.23 This impairs transparency and accountability for the delivery of the program.

**Recommendation 1 (Chapter 3) – Financial Management**

The Community Services Directorate should improve its processes for coordinating the expenditure of *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* funds to enable accurate recording and reporting of program resources and expenditure. Program resources and expenditure should be periodically reconciled.

**Tenancy management support costs**

- 3.24 As mentioned in paragraph 3.5 at page 29, funding of up to \$11,400 for each family for tenancy management and some set up costs is also provided by the Commonwealth Government. The ACT had spent \$143,925 in tenancy management and set-up costs by mid-December 2012, although it reported to the Commonwealth Government that \$137,275 had been spent by 31 December 2012. Most of the families whose support had concluded and who had transitioned from the program received total funding less than \$11,400. Two families received support funding that exceeded \$11,400, including \$13,300 for one family and \$19,000 for another.
- 3.25 The Community Services Directorate does not receive any information from community bodies on how these funds are disbursed. The Community Services Directorate does not receive a specific financial acquittal of these funds. That said, the Community Services Directorate holds regular meetings with service providers to discuss the application of funds, reporting and other matters. The Community Services Directorate also receives other performance and financial reports from these community organisations, which covers the full range of programs and services delivered by the organisations. However, given that these reports also address funding from other sources, it would be difficult to track individual program funding.

**PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.26 As part of the *Implementation Plan* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Government identified a series of performance indicators and targets for the A Place to Call Home Program. Table 3.3 at page 34 shows performance indicators and targets for the program.

**Table 3.3: A Place to Call Home Program performance indicators and reported achievements**

Performance indicators	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of dwellings built	8	10	6	4	3	7	3
Number of tenancies established	8	8	6	4	3	7	3
Number of tenancies sustained for two years or more	n/a	n/a	n/a	Not reported	No targets	Not reported	No targets
Number who are less than \$500 in arrears or on a complying repayment agreement	8	8	6	4	3	Not reported	3
Lower than average tenant responsible maintenance (not planned maintenance)	n/a	100%	40%	75%	50%	Not reported	60%
Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families allocated to a property	4	2	2	3	2	3	2

N/a – not applicable.

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government

3.27 Table 3.3 at page 34 shows that:

- the Community Services Directorate has reported to the Commonwealth Government that 21 houses had been built under the program. This is inaccurate as only 20 houses had been built under the program;
- the number of tenancies established under the program in the three years to 2011-12 (19) has exceeded the target (17); and
- the target of 50 percent of properties being allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families has been met in the three years to 2011-12.

- 3.28 The key performance indicators and targets identified in Table 3.3 were those that were initially identified in the revised *Implementation Plan* dated from October 2010. These were further revised in the *Implementation Plan* that was updated in March 2012. The March 2012 *Implementation Plan*:
- did not include ‘number of tenancies sustained for two years or more’, ‘number who are less than \$500 in arrears or on a complying repayment agreement’ and ‘lower than average tenant responsible maintenance’ performance indicators; and
  - had slightly different numeric targets for the ‘number of dwellings built’ and ‘number of tenancies established’ indicators in each of the years, although the total number remained the same over the four years of the program.
- 3.29 The performance indicators relating to ‘number of tenancies sustained for two years or more’, ‘number who are less than \$500 in arrears or on a complying repayment agreement’ and ‘lower than average tenant responsible maintenance’ would provide information to guide program management, administration and accountability for service delivery.
- 3.30 The nature of the program is that it delivers services to families who are in primary or secondary homelessness. Key measures of success for the program, particularly with respect to the support services that are being provided to families participating in the program, would be whether the program participants are sustaining their tenancies and complying with tenancy agreements. The key performance indicators that were removed would assist in providing information on these outcomes.
- 3.31 It is acknowledged that changing performance indicators now, when the program is scheduled to conclude in the near future, would likely be problematic as data may not have been collected that could support reporting on changed performance indicators. However, the Community Services Directorate could review the performance indicators to inform those that could be used in future or similar programs it manages.
- 3.32 Recommendation 3 on page 61 addresses issues associated with the development and implementation of performance indicators for the management of current and future programs under National Partnership Agreements.

### ***Number of dwellings built***

- 3.33 Dwellings funded and built under the A Place to Call Home Program are mostly located in Gungahlin however, in acknowledgement of the importance of people’s connection to family and community, wherever possible the Community Services Directorate sought to locate and substitute a property in an area appropriate to the individual client’s circumstances. Due to this fact, a smaller

number of properties are located in Belconnen, Inner South and Inner North Canberra and Tuggeranong.

- 3.34 As a result, the ACT Government is achieving the broad aims of adding 20 new additional dwellings to overall public housing stock and delivering services and support to eligible families under the auspices of the A Place to Call Home Program.
- 3.35 The Community Services Directorate maintains records of properties in the program using several different data sets. There is no single data source that contains all information related to each property. For example, the Audit Office was provided with several lists of capital funding and needed to amalgamate information from these to identify expenditure for each property. Furthermore, identifying properties was challenging as they were identified in different ways in the various data sources e.g. block and section, street address. Having each property identified in an inconsistent manner presents the risk that information may not be readily available for management purposes.

### *Allocation of clients to properties under A Place to Call Home Program*

- 3.36 Potential clients for the A Place to Call Home Program may initially be identified by First Point, from which the family may be referred to the Housing Asset Assistance Program.
- 3.37 If the family has met eligibility criteria for the program (refer to section Program eligibility and targeting at page 30) the Housing Asset Assistance Program prepares a brief and forwards it to the Senior Manager of Gateway Services for consideration and approval. The brief may then be forwarded to the Senior Manager, Social Housing and Homelessness Services to note and agree, given that there are funding implications associated with the placement of the family in the program. If appropriate, the brief is sent to the Director of Housing ACT for final approval.
- 3.38 The allocation of four houses under the program was approved retrospectively by Housing ACT.
- 3.39 All houses were allocated within 51 days, with an average allocation time of 23 days. The Audit Office notes that two houses were allocated to organisations for the provision of support through other Housing ACT programs prior to being identified as suitable under A Place to Call Home.

### *Tenancies established*

- 3.40 The A Place to Call Home Program enables families to take tenancy of a home and to integrate into the local community. Of the 20 houses initially built under the program, families residing in ten houses remain in the program, while families residing in a further ten houses have exited the program. These families continue to reside in the houses by virtue of Housing ACT's mainstream programs as at May 2013.

- 3.41 Most families that have transitioned from the program did so within 12 months, while some families have remained on the program for longer than twelve months, up to two years in one instance. This reflects the need to provide ongoing tenancy support to these families.

***Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families allocated properties***

- 3.42 At the time of audit fieldwork in March 2013, eleven families from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have obtained a house under the A Place to Call Home Program. This has exceeded the initial target of ten.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

- 3.43 The Audit Office interviewed stakeholders from the homelessness sector: the Community Service Directorate, First Point staff, members from community service bodies and peak bodies within the ACT. All those interviewed indicated that they considered the A Place to Call Home Program of value.



## 4. Our Place (Youth Integrated Education and Accommodation Service) Program

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- 4.1 This chapter considers the management and implementation of the Our Place Program. The Our Place Program represented approximately 5.5 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### SUMMARY

- The Our Place Program provides accommodation and support to young people aged 16 to 25 who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless. The program commenced in June 2011. The Our Place Program represented approximately 5.5 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- The Our Place Program accommodates program participants in two blocks of adjacent units in Canberra's inner north. The blocks comprise a total of 15 units of one, two and three bedroom apartments.
- Barnardos Australia has been engaged by the Community Services Directorate to manage the program. Barnardos Australia is responsible for: case management support for program participants; managing and supporting tenancies under the program; managing the property through which the program is delivered; providing life skills training to program participants; and providing information, referral and advocacy services to program participants. Barnardos Australia has engaged Anglicare ACT on a subcontracting arrangement to assist with the delivery of the program.
- The initial budget for the Our Place Program was \$1,112,724, while the revised budget for the program is \$1,186,509. The ACT has contributed the additional funding to the program.
- The number of young people accommodated in the program has consistently exceeded the initial targets for the program and the number of young people engaged in education, training and/or work has also consistently exceeded the initial targets. However, the number of young people exiting the program into independent tenancy arrangements has fallen short of expectations to date.
- The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia requires the provision of services in excess of that initially identified in the ACT's *Implementation Plan*. The ACT's *Implementation Plan* envisaged a target of between 12 and 19 young people accommodated in the program and engaged in education, training and/or work for each of the three years between 2010-11 and 2012-13. The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia, however, requires a minimum of 26 individuals accommodated and supported through the program at any one time. This significantly exceeds the initial targets established for the program.
- Barnardos Australia has provided performance reports to the Community

Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. However, the reports from Barnardos Australia were provided late. The first performance report to be provided by Barnardos Australia was five months late, while more recently the reports have been provided approximately one month late. The Community Services Directorate provided formal written feedback to Barnardos Australia including escalating levels of communications regarding lateness of submission for each of the performance reports provided. The Community Services Directorate provided formal written feedback to Barnardos Australia for each of the performance reports provided, which was generally positive, with some areas identified for follow-up and future action. For each period the Community Services Directorate reported to Barnardos Australia that it had met the requirements of the service funding agreement.

- Barnardos Australia has provided financial reports to the Community Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. There was, however, a gap in the financial accountability arrangements for the program. The Our Place Program commenced in June 2011, however the Community Services Directorate did not require Barnardos Australia to provide a half-yearly financial report for the year ending 30 June 2011 (nor did it require a half-yearly performance report). Accordingly, at the time of audit fieldwork, not all of the funds provided to Barnardos Australia had been acquitted through a half-yearly financial report.
- Barnardos Australia has subcontracted parts of its program delivery to Anglicare ACT. Under the subcontract, Anglicare ACT is required to undertake general program activities, case management, tenancy management and support, collaborative practice, property management, life skills training, information, referral and advocacy and placement panel. Barnardos Australia did not enter into a written agreement with Anglicare ACT until 12 November 2012, approximately 16 months after Barnardos Australia was engaged by the Community Services Directorate.
- Since the start of the Our Place Program, the number of young people engaged in the program since inception has not fallen below 20 young people (as anticipated in the initial ACT *Implementation Plan*) and all those engaged in the Our Place Program have been engaged in education, employment or training.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.2 The Our Place Program provides accommodation and support to young people who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless. The purpose of the program is to provide stable housing to young people and facilitate engagement with education and employment services.
- 4.3 The Our Place Program is based on the ‘youth foyer’ model of service delivery. The ‘youth foyer’ model of service delivery is a specialist model of supported accommodation, which is recognised as a best practice model for supporting young persons. ‘Youth foyer’ models provide young people who are homeless

with stable accommodation and other support on the basis that they continue to participate in education, training or employment.

4.4 Key deliverables associated with the Our Place Program are:

- the provision of stable, safe and secure accommodation;
- access to case management and caseworker support when needed;
- assistance with the development of skills, competencies and connections, young people need to be able to successfully live independently;
- provision of independent living skills training and support;
- assistance with (re)establishing social networks, including family relationships;
- assistance with access to education, training and employment assistance, health and counselling services and other required support services; and
- outreach services, based on assessment of need after exit from the program.

4.5 The program commenced in June 2011.

### Program eligibility and targeting

4.6 The Our Place Program is targeted towards young people aged 16 to 25. Potential clients for the program are young people who:

- are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- are aged between 16 and 21 at entry;
- have low to moderate support needs; and
- are engaged in or intend to engage in education, employment or training; and
- have some ability to live independently.

### Delivery of the Program

4.7 The Our Place Program accommodates program participants in two blocks of adjacent units in Canberra's inner north. The blocks comprise a total of 15 units of one, two and three bedroom apartments. During the period of May-June of the 2010-11 financial year, the Directorate, Barnardos Australia and Anglicare ACT worked closely through the Our Place Governance Committee. This Committee provided oversight of the development and implementation phases of the Our Place Program which provided the Community Services Directorate with a high level of detail regarding the program.

- 4.8 Barnardos Australia has been engaged by the Community Services Directorate to manage the program. Barnardos Australia is responsible for:
- case management support for program participants;
  - managing and supporting tenancies under the program;
  - managing the property through which the program is delivered;
  - providing life skills training to program participants; and
  - providing information, referral and advocacy services to program participants.
- 4.9 Barnardos Australia has engaged Anglicare ACT on a subcontracting arrangement to assist with the delivery of the program.
- 4.10 There is a Steering Committee for the Our Place Program, which has a role to 'provide overarching management of the service, and to work in partnership to ensure a consistent service delivery model'. There is also the Our Place Allocations Panel for the Our Place Program. The role of the Allocations Panel is to 'consider whether the young person referred meets the Eligibility Criteria for accommodation at Our Place.'
- 4.11 The Our Place Program contributes to the following core output of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*:
- support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies, including through tenancy support, advocacy, case management, financial counselling and referral services.
- 4.12 The Our Place Program contributes to the following priority output of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*:
- support to assist young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to re-engage with their family where it is safe to do so, maintain sustainable accommodation and engagement with education and employment.

### PROGRAM EXPENDITURE

- 4.13 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and the *ACT Implementation Plan* establishes the funding arrangements for the Our Place Program.
- 4.14 Table 4.1 on page 43 shows budgeted, actual and reported expenditure under the Our Place Program. Actual expenditure represents funds provided by the Community Services Directorate to Barnardos Australia.

**Table 4.1: Budgeted, actual and reported expenditure under the Our Place Program**

Year	Initial Budget funds (\$)	Revised Budget funds (\$)	Actual expenditure (\$)	Reported expenditure to Commonwealth Government (\$)
2010-11	360,000	107,658	107,658	107,658
2011-12	370,800	530,800	530,800	530,800
2012-13	381,924	548,051	548,051	Not reported
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,112,724</b>	<b>1,186,509</b>	<b>1,186,509</b>	<b>638,458</b> (up to 2011-12)

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government

4.15 Table 4.1 shows that:

- the program’s initial budget was \$1,112,724, as identified in the ACT’s October 2010 *Implementation Plan*; and
- the revised budget for the program is \$1,186,509.

4.16 The additional \$73,785 in funding for the Our Place Program represents funding that was re-assigned to the program after the voluntary cessation of service by Tumladen Youth Service. The ACT contributed this additional funding to the program.

#### **Funding agreement with Barnardos Australia**

4.17 Following a tender process, on 20 April 2011 Barnardos Australia was awarded the contract to provide services to the Community Services Directorate for the Our Place Program. A service funding agreement between the Community Services Directorate and Barnardos Australia was signed on 21 June 2011.

4.18 The total program budget represents the amounts payable to Barnardos Australia under the service funding agreement.

#### **Purchase or construction costs**

4.19 Capital costs associated with the purchase or construction of the housing units for use in the program are not covered by program funding and are not required to be reported in the ACT’s annual report on the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* to the Commonwealth Government.

### **PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS**

4.20 As part of the *Implementation Plan* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Government identified performance indicators and targets for the Our Place Program, refer to Table 4.2 on page 44.

**Table 4.2: Our Place Program performance indicators and reported achievements**

Performance indicators	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The number of young people accommodated in the program	12	24	14	35	19
The number of young people (15 to 25 years) who engage in education, training and/or work	12	23	14	29	19
The number of young people (15 to 25 years) who are re-engaged with family	n/a	n/a	14	17	19
Number of young people (15 to 25 years) who exit the Youth Foyer into independent tenancy arrangements	n/a	n/a	14	6	19

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government

4.21 Table 4.2 shows the number of young people:

- accommodated in the program has consistently exceeded the initial targets for the program;
- engaged in education, training and/or work has consistently exceeded the initial targets for the program; and
- exiting the program into independent tenancy arrangements has fallen short of expectations to date.

4.22 There was an anomaly in the first annual report provided to the Commonwealth Government in 2010-11. This annual report identified that 24 young people were accommodated in the program, while 23 were engaged in education, training or employment. The reported figures represented the number of clients being provided with services at 30 September 2011, which was when the annual report was provided to the Commonwealth Government. It should be noted that the first seven residents were only accommodated in the program after 11 July 2011.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Selection of clients**

4.23 First Point (Central Intake Service for Homelessness) is the first point of contact for candidates for placement in the Our Place Program.

4.24 When First Point is notified of a vacancy in the program, it contacts all relevant stakeholders who have potential clients, notifying them of a vacancy on the Our

Place Program. If the potential client is willing, his or her application is subjected to the selection process.

- 4.25 The criteria for the selection of suitable candidates requires that a young person:
- must be aged between 16 to 21 years;
  - is homeless, or at risk of homelessness, but not at the point of crisis;
  - has a source of income or be eligible to obtain a source of income prior to entry into the program;
  - must be engaged in, or demonstrated an evidenced commitment to engagement in education, employment or training of at least 25 hours per week;
  - must have low to medium support needs;
  - must be willing to participate in the Our Place Program; and
  - must be willing to live in share accommodation.
- 4.26 An Allocations Panel, comprising representatives from Housing ACT, the ACT Youth Coalition, the Barnardos Australia manager and the Anglicare ACT manager reviews all applications to identify whether they meet the eligibility criteria. Persons identified as meeting the eligibility criteria are contacted by the Our Place Program staff to arrange an interview. The purpose of the interview is to confirm suitability for participation in the program.
- 4.27 Determination of placement is based on:
- existing mix in the complex and/or vacancy in shared unit; and
  - capacity and expressed willingness of the applicant to participate in the Our Place Program.
- 4.28 Once the successful candidate enters the Our Place Program, there is an initial three month period in which the young person is given an opportunity to consider if they would like to remain for the year and for the staff to determine how the young person is able to meet their commitments to the program. After two months an offer may be made to the young person for a further twelve month placement. This may be extended for a further twelve months if needs dictate.

### **Service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia**

#### ***Program activities and outputs***

- 4.29 The service funding agreement between the Community Services Directorate and Barnardos Australia requires Barnardos Australia to deliver the following activities (referred to as outputs under the service funding agreement):
- case management plan;

- 100 percent of service users are required to have a case management plan;
  - tenancy management;
    - a minimum of 26 tenancies managed at any one time;
    - an annual service vacancy rate of no more than five percent of available properties;
    - a minimum turnaround time of 85 percent within 28 days for vacant properties;
    - manage current and vacant Tenant Responsible Maintenance with a suitable recovery plan;
    - collect rent for the Tenant when it becomes due and payable;
    - manage rental collection to ensure that arrears do not exceed four percent of total expected rent;
    - require the tenant to keep the property in good, clean and tenanted condition;
    - monitor the condition of properties on at least a six-monthly basis;
  - tenancy support;
    - a minimum of 26 tenants supported at any one time;
  - property management;
    - 15 properties managed at any one time;
  - life skills training;
    - a minimum of 26 individuals supported at any one time;
  - information, referral and advocacy;
    - a minimum of 26 individuals supported at any one time;
  - telephone counselling and support;
    - telephone counselling/support is available 24 hours per day 52 weeks per year.
- 4.30 The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia requires the provision of services in excess of that initially identified in the ACT's initial *Implementation Plan*.
- 4.31 The ACT's initial *Implementation Plan* envisaged a target of between 12 and 19 young people accommodated in the program and engaged in education, training and/or work for each of the three years from 2010-11 to 2012-13, refer to Table 4.2 at page 44. The service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia, however, requires a minimum of 26 individuals to be accommodated and supported through the program at any one time. This significantly exceeds the

initial targets established for the program. Program expenditure was initially budgeted at \$1,112,724 but has subsequently been increased to \$1,186,509.

***Service funding agreement reporting requirements***

4.32 Under the service funding agreement Barnardos Australia must report to the Community Services Directorate as follows:

- an annual report, to be produced within one month of the latest date Barnardos Australia is legally required to lodge the report with the relevant regulatory authority;
- six-monthly financial reports within 30 days of 31 December and 30 June each year;
- a financial report by 30 November each year, comprising:
  - a cash/financial statement providing full details of expenditure of the funding amount;
  - a disaggregated audit report, which includes an opinion to disclose as to whether the funding amount has been expended in the manner required by the agreement; and
- a report against output and performance indicators as specified on a half yearly basis within 30 days of 30 June and 31 December of each year; and
- evidence of meeting performance requirements and other requirements of the service funding agreement to be provided to the Territory once each 12 months of the Agreement Period.

4.33 In February 2013, the Minister for Community Services announced that the Community Services Directorate would change the financial reporting intervals required of community based charitable entities under their service funding agreements from six monthly to annually as of 1 July 2013. The caveat to this proposal was that this would only occur where there was not a compelling business or other reason not to seek more frequent provision of information. The Minister has written to his ministerial colleagues seeking a similar change in their relationships with the community sector and has received a positive response from all. This proposal does not apply to grants that are not associated with a service funding agreement.

***Performance reports from Barnardos Australia***

4.34 Barnardos Australia has provided performance reports to the Community Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. The service funding agreement between the Community Services Directorate and Barnardos Australia identifies a template in which the half-yearly reports are to be provided. Barnardos Australia has provided performance reports in the format required by the Community Services Directorate.

- 4.35 However, the reports from Barnardos Australia were provided late. The first performance report to be provided by Barnardos Australia was five months late, while more recently the reports have been provided approximately one month late.
- 4.36 The Community Services Directorate provided formal written feedback to Barnardos Australia for each of the performance reports provided using an *Output and Performance Report Assessment Sheet* template. Feedback to Barnardos Australia was generally positive, with some areas identified for follow-up and future action. For each period the Community Services Directorate reported to Barnardos Australia that it had met the requirements of the service funding agreement.
- 4.37 Through the half-yearly performance reports, Barnardos Australia was required to report on:
- the number of young people engaged by the service;
  - the number of presenting units accommodated by the service;
  - the number of young people accommodated by the service;
  - the number and percentage of young people in education, employment or training;
  - the number and percentage of young people who have completed education, employment or training goals;
  - the number and percentage of young people transitioning to independent accommodation; and
  - the number and percentage of young people exiting from the program due to non-completion of goals.
- 4.38 Table 4.3 on page 49 summarises the quantitative performance information reported by Barnardos Australia for the Our Place Program:

**Table 4.3: Barnardos Australia Our Place Program performance indicators and reported achievements:**

<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Six months to 31 December 2011</b>	<b>Six months to 30 June 2012</b>	<b>Six Month to 31 December 2012</b>
Engaged in the period	28	29	35 plus 5 children <5 years
Engaged at the time of report	25, plus 2 babies	20, plus 3 babies	24, plus 3 children <5 years
Units occupied	14 with tenants 1 as an office	12 with tenants 2 x 2 bedroom units vacant 1 as an office	14 with tenants 1 as an office
Engaged in training, employment or education	23 education 2 apprentices	19 education 1 traineeship	36 education 2 traineeships
Transitioning to independent accommodation, including reconnecting with family	2	7	13
Exiting due to non completion of goals	3	7 (incl 2 reconnected with family)	4

Source: Barnardos Australia reports to the Community Services Directorate

4.39 Table 4.3 shows the number of young people:

- engaged by the service during each of the three six month performance reports has consistently exceeded the number required under the service funding agreement (26);
- engaged at the time of the provision of the report has been consistently below the number required under the service funding agreement (26);
- engaged in training, employment or education matches the number of young people engaged at the time of the report for the first two reporting periods. However, in the last reporting period there is a discrepancy in that the number engaged in training, employment or education is 38, with 35 reported as being engaged during the period. The Community Services Directorate advises that the variance in reporting was identified through the report assessment process and has since been raised with the organisation as an item for further discussion during the next site visit;
- transitioning to independent accommodation, including reconnecting with family has increased from two in the first period to thirteen in the last six month period reported; and
- exiting due to non completion of goals has fluctuated over the three periods reported. This however, has remained around 10 to 20 percent, when those reconnected with families is excluded.

### *Financial reports from Barnardos Australia*

- 4.40 Barnardos Australia has provided financial reports to the Community Services Directorate as required under the service funding agreement. The service funding agreement between the Community Services Directorate and Barnardos Australia identifies a template in which the half-yearly financial reports are to be provided, which Barnardos Australia has complied with.
- 4.41 Barnardos Australia also provided an annual financial report for the year ending 30 June 2011 and 30 June 2012, and a Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2012.
- 4.42 There was, however, a gap in the financial accountability arrangements for the Our Place Program. The Our Place Program commenced in June 2011 with \$107,658 being provided in 2010-11. However, the Community Services Directorate did not require Barnardos Australia to provide a half-yearly financial report for the year ending 30 June 2011 (nor did it require a half-yearly performance report). At the time of audit fieldwork, not all of the funds provided to Barnardos Australia had been acquitted through a half-yearly financial report. The annual financial report that was received for the year ending 30 June 2011 does not provide sufficient information on which to acquit funds provided by the Community Services Directorate.

### **Subcontract with Anglicare ACT**

- 4.43 Barnardos Australia has subcontracted parts of its program delivery to Anglicare ACT. Under the subcontract, Anglicare ACT is required to undertake general program activities, case management, tenancy management and support, collaborative practice, property management, life skills training, information, referral and advocacy and placement panel.
- 4.44 Schedule 6 of the service funding agreement with Barnardos Australia provides '[Barnardos Australia] will have in place appropriate sub-contracts with its consortium partner [Anglicare ACT]. [Barnardos Australia] will seek approval from the directorate for the subcontracts, and for any variations or terminations to the sub contracts.'
- 4.45 Barnardos Australia did not enter into a written agreement with Anglicare ACT until 12 November 2012, approximately 16 months after Barnardos Australia was engaged by the Community Services Directorate.
- 4.46 The absence of a written agreement between Barnardos Australia and Anglicare ACT was not identified until the conduct of this performance audit. This is a shortcoming in contract management arrangements for the Our Place Program.

**Recommendation 2 (Chapter 3) – Contract Management**

The Community Services Directorate should improve its contract management of service providers by:

- a) requiring that a financial acquittal is undertaken for all funds provided to the service provider under the service funding agreement; and
- b) obtaining and approving documentation associated with any subcontracting arrangements.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

4.47 Since the start of the Our Place Program:

- the number engaged in the program since inception has not fallen below 20 young people (as anticipated in the initial *ACT Implementation Plan*); and
- all residents engaged in the Our Place Program have been engaged in education, employment or training.

4.48 The Community Services Directorate stated at the Our Place Governance Committee meeting on the 29 September 2011 that the Community Services Directorate is interested in undertaking research and an evaluation of the program as it progresses over time. However, at the time of audit fieldwork, this had not been progressed.



## 5. The Housing and Support Initiative

- 5.1 This chapter considers the management and implementation of the Housing and Support Initiative which represented approximately 5.9 percent of the overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### SUMMARY

- The Housing and Support Initiative provides people with a mental illness access to stable housing, clinical mental health services and accommodation support. Ten places have been established under this initiative. The initiative was implemented in June 2010. The Housing and Support Initiative represented approximately 5.9 percent of overall initial funding in the ACT under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.
- The Housing and Support Initiative is delivered under a partnership between Housing ACT, the Health Directorate (through the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drugs Services Division) and community service providers.
- The Housing and Support Initiative is based on a similar program to that developed and implemented in New South Wales. The apparent success of the New South Wales program informed the ACT's decision to implement the Housing and Support Initiative as part of its response to the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The design of the New South Wales program was modified to fit the ACT's mental health services environment.
- Funding for the Housing and Support Initiative is provided by the Commonwealth Government. The ACT Government does not provide any direct funding for the Housing and Support Initiative.
- The proposed expenditure for the Housing and Support Initiative was initially forecast to be approximately \$1.22 million. As part of the development of the revised *Implementation Plan* in October 2012, this was revised by the Community Services Directorate to \$1.01 million. It was further revised to \$807,527. This is approximately 66 percent of the initial expected expenditure on the initiative. Reasons for the lower expenditure included a delay in housing clients and clients not requiring the estimated full amount of support. Similar to the situation with respect to the A Place to Call Home Program, there is inconsistency between the Housing and Support Initiative budget, actual and reported expenditure on the initiative.
- The performance indicators actually identified and reported on for the Housing and Support Initiative are different to the performance indicators initially envisaged. *Implementation Plans* and annual reports from the Community Services Directorate to the Commonwealth Government only report the performance of the Housing and Support Initiative with respect to 'the number of people provided with support' and 'the number of tenancies sustained for two years or more'. These indicators do not provide information on the actual

success of the Initiative. These measures also lack a precise description of how they are being measured. Furthermore, numeric targets associated with the key performance indicators were changed in the March 2012 *Implementation Plan*. There is a lack of consistency, completeness and accuracy in the information provided in relation to performance indicators which are reported to the Commonwealth Government.

- The limited capacity to house homeless persons under the Housing and Support initiative has caused an average delay of six months for the 14 clients. This has resulted in an initial underspending for the Housing and Support Initiative.
- Case management under the Housing and Support Initiative by the Community Services Directorate, Health Directorate and community service providers reflects a model that is designed to provide a quality service. This model aims to improve a client's well-being by assisting them to live independently in the community, thereby reducing their risk of being homeless.
- The Community Services Directorate stated that they intended to have the Housing and Support Initiative independently evaluated after 12 months of operation. The ACT Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services was informed of this intention as was the Commonwealth Government through October 2009 and October 2010 *Implementation Plans* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The March 2012 *Implementation Plan* did not include an evaluation. Although the Community Services Directorate's decision not to proceed with one was well prepared and documented, there was no evidence that this was brought to the attention of the Minister for Housing or the Commonwealth Government.
- The 2011-12 annual report to the Commonwealth Government stated that the ACT's Housing and Support Initiative was to be expanded to include clients with alcohol and drug dependencies subject to a successful outcome of an independent review. While the action taken by the Community Services Directorate may be appropriate, the documentation and communication of this decision could have been better.
- Changes have been made to the targets set for the Housing and Support Initiative. The changes to the targets and accompanying method for reporting over time, combined with a lack of specificity, makes it difficult to assess whether the initiative has actually achieved its intent. The Community Services Directorate advises that changes to the targets for the Housing and Support Initiative are due to a limited ability to accurately capture and report on meaningful data for some outcomes. While there has not been an overall evaluation of the Housing and Support Initiative it would appear that it has exceeded its anticipated outcome as there are currently 14 people being assisted under the initiative, which represents an additional 4 people as identified in the initial *Implementation Plan*.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.2 The Housing and Support Initiative provides people with a mental illness access to stable housing, clinical mental health services and accommodation support. Ten places have been established under this initiative. The initiative was implemented in June 2010.
- 5.3 The Housing and Support Initiative provides:
- long-term secure and affordable housing and property and tenancy management services;
  - clinical care and rehabilitation services; and
  - accommodation support and rehabilitation services.
- 5.4 The 'housing first' principle guides the Housing and Support Initiative and in so doing access to permanent and stable housing is provided concurrently with support services to sustain the housing arrangement. This is fundamentally different from a 'pathways' approach that requires people to become 'housing ready' before they can obtain permanent housing.
- 5.5 Under the 'housing first' principle, the delivery of services to people with a mental illness is predicated on effective multidisciplinary and collaborative case management.

### Eligibility and targeting

- 5.6 The Housing and Support Initiative aims to deliver services to persons with moderate to severe mental health issues who desire to, and are capable of living independently.

### Service delivery model

- 5.7 The Housing and Support Initiative is delivered under a partnership between Housing ACT, the Health Directorate (through the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drugs Services Division) and community service providers.
- 5.8 The roles and responsibilities of the different ACT Government agencies and community service providers are outlined in the following paragraphs.

### Community Services Directorate

- 5.9 The Community Services Directorate has a central role in the administration and coordination of the Housing and Support Initiative. This Directorate:
- is responsible for monitoring the Housing and Support Initiative, providing funding to the Health Directorate and the community service providers and providing participants with property and associated maintenance services; and

- provides a Housing and Support Initiative client with a suitable house through its public housing program. Housing managers in Housing ACT also provide intensive tenancy management services, including monitoring of rental payments and periodic inspections of properties.

### **Health Directorate**

5.10 The Health Directorate is responsible for the provision of mental health services under the Housing and Support Initiative and the management of the contracts for services provided by the community service providers.

### **Community service providers**

5.11 Community service providers are responsible for providing ongoing support services to clients. This may include:

- assistance with daily living;
- assistance with sustaining a tenancy;
- referral and connection to other services;
- assistance with developing and maintaining social connections, including schooling; and
- assistance with accessing other support services after leaving the Initiative.

5.12 Ongoing support services to a client under the Housing and Support Initiative are guided by a personalised Mental Health Recovery Plan.

### **Oversight committees**

5.13 The Housing and Support Initiative is coordinated through the Housing and Support Initiative Executive Committee, the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee and the Client Selection Panel for which Housing ACT provides the secretariat.

### **New South Wales program**

5.14 The Housing and Support Initiative is based on a similar program to that developed and implemented in New South Wales. A 2007 evaluation of the New South Wales program identified that:

- there was significant participation;
- 50 percent of program participants reported improved physical health;
- 68 percent of program participants reported an improvement in psychological wellness;
- a reduction in hospitalisation rates occurred for 84 percent of participants; and

- participants reported that their access to mental health services increased, 92 percent of participants regularly saw their case managers and 89 percent were still in contact with their psychiatrists.

5.15 The apparent success of the New South Wales program informed the ACT's decision to implement the Housing and Support Initiative as part of its response to the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. The design of the New South Wales program was modified to fit the ACT's mental health services environment.

### **National Partnership Agreement contribution**

5.16 The Housing and Support Initiative contributes to the following core output of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*:

- support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies, including through tenancy support, advocacy, case management, financial counselling and referral services.

5.17 The Housing and Support Initiative contributes to the following priority outputs of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*:

- services to assist homeless people with mental health issues to secure or maintain stable accommodation; and
- assistance for homeless people, including families with children, to stabilise their situation and to achieve sustainable housing.

### **INITIATIVE EXPENDITURE**

5.18 The *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* and the ACT *Implementation Plan* establishes the funding arrangements for the Housing and Support Initiative.

5.19 Funding for the Housing and Support Initiative is provided by the Commonwealth Government. The ACT Government does not provide any direct funding for the Housing and Support Initiative. Table 5.1 on page 58 shows budgeted, actual and reported expenditure for the Housing and Support Initiative.

**Table 5.1: Housing and Support Initiative budgeted, actual and reported expenditure**

Year	Budget expenditure (\$)	Revised budget expenditure (\$)	Actual expenditure (\$)	Reported expenditure to Commonwealth Government (\$)
2009-10	200,000	19,762	Not reported	19,762
2010-11	329,000	329,000	334,862	329,000
2011-12	339,000	315,000	426,051	315,000
2012-13	348,000	143,765	Not available	Not reported
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,216,000</b>	<b>807,527</b>	<b>760,913</b> (to 2011-12)	<b>663,762</b> (to 2011-12)

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government

5.20 The proposed expenditure for the Housing and Support Initiative was initially forecast to be approximately \$1.22 million. As part of the development of the revised *Implementation Plan* in October 2012, this was revised by the Community Services Directorate to \$1.01 million. It was further revised to \$807,527. This is approximately 66 percent of the initial expected expenditure on the initiative. The reason for the lower anticipated expenditure is not mentioned in the documentation provided to the Commonwealth Government. However, the Audit Office is aware that the reasons included a delay in housing clients and clients not requiring the estimated full amount of support.

5.21 Similar to the situation with respect to the A Place to Call Home Program, there is an inconsistency in the Housing and Support Initiative budget, actual and reported expenditure on the initiative. Recommendation 1 on page 33 addresses inconsistency and ambiguity issues associated with the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### Costs of the initiative

5.22 Funding allocated through the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* to the Housing and Support Initiative does not cover all costs. Funding allocated through the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* covers:

- costs of the services provided by the community service providers; and
- some of the salary of the housing managers.

5.23 Examples of costs not covered by funding from the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* include:

- costs of health services delivered by the Health Directorate; and
- costs for the coordination of the Initiative.

## Unspent initiative funds

5.24 The March 2012 *Implementation Plan* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* states:

... unexpended HASI [Housing and Support Initiative] funds will be allocated to the Building Housing Partnerships – Transitional Support and Head Lease Program, to provide additional head lease packages for people with complex needs including mental illness, where Housing and Support Initiative support packages are not suitable.

5.25 The Housing and Support Initiative total revised budget to the end of the 2011-12 financial year was \$807,527, actual expenditure was \$760,913 and expenditure reported to the Commonwealth Government was \$663,762, refer to Table 5.1 at page 58.

## INITIATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

5.26 As part of the *Implementation Plan* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*, the ACT Government identified performance indicators and targets for the Housing and Support Initiative, refer to Table 5.2:

**Table 5.2: Housing and Support Initiative performance indicators and achievements**

Performance Indicators	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The number of people provided with support	n/a	4	8	9	4	14	2
The number of tenancies sustained for two years or more	n/a	n/a	8	6	12	No report	14

Source: *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness Implementation Plans* for the Australian Capital Territory for the period July 2008 – June 2013, Community Services Directorate annual reports to the Commonwealth Government,

5.27 Table 5.2 shows:

- ‘The number of people provided with support’ under the initiative has consistently exceeded the targets established; and
- ‘The number of tenancies sustained for two years or more’ indicator has not always been reported and for the year (2010-11) when it was reported, the target was not achieved.

5.28 The performance indicators and targets shown in Table 5.2 were identified in the October 2010 *Implementation Plan*. The numeric targets were changed in the March 2012 *Implementation Plan* as follows:

- 'The number of people provided with support' were 8 in 2010-11, 10 in 2011-12 and 15 in 2012-13; and
- 'The number of tenancies sustained for two years or more' had no targets for 2010-11 and 2011-12, and a target of 8 in 2012-13.

5.29 Furthermore:

- 'The number of tenancies sustained for two years or more' indicator was not reported against in the 2011-12 annual report, while this indicator was reported as 'The number of tenancies sustained for *one* year or more' in the 2010-11 annual report; and
- in the 2009-10 annual report an additional indicator 'The number of tenancies successfully transitioned to independent tenancy' was also reported against, with one client identified as having successfully transitioned to independent tenancy.

5.30 The 2009-10 annual report states that 10 clients had been referred and accepted into the Initiative. This statement does not correspond with Housing ACT's own administrative records, which show that the Client Selection Panel approved seven clients for entry into the initiative at their first meeting on 21 April 2010. The Client Selection Panel did not make another decision to admit clients into the Initiative until November 2010.

5.31 There is a lack of consistency, completeness and accuracy in the information provided in relation to performance indicators that are reported to the Commonwealth Government. The Community Services Directorate asserts that some key performance indicators were altered due to a limited ability to accurately capture and report on meaningful data for some outcomes under the program.

### **Performance Indicators**

5.32 The performance indicators actually identified and reported on, as shown in Table 5.2 on page 59, are different to the performance indicators initially envisaged for the initiative. The initial ACT *Implementation Plan*, developed in October 2009, anticipated that the performance of the initiative would be measured by:

- the number of tenancies sustained;
- a reduction in proportion of people re-admitted to the Psychiatric Services Unit;
- a reduction in the proportion of people entering homelessness from the Psychiatric Services Unit; and
- improved living situations for tenants with mental illness.

5.33 *Implementation Plans* and annual reports from the Community Services Directorate to the Commonwealth Government only report the performance of

the Housing and Support Initiative with respect to 'The number of people provided with support' and 'The number of tenancies sustained for two years or more'. These indicators do not provide information on the actual success of the Initiative. These measures also lack a precise description of how they are being measured.

- 5.34 The number of clients who have sustained a tenancy for a specified timeframe, as initially anticipated, is an important indicator as it demonstrates the continuing success of the Housing and Support Initiative in addressing homelessness. Furthermore, performance indicators that provide information on the time taken to provide clients with suitable housing options or the extent and nature of the support services provided would also be useful measures of the program's implementation.
- 5.35 However, it is acknowledged that the initial performance indicators associated with re-admission of people to the Psychiatric Services Unit and proportion of people entering homelessness from the Psychiatric Services Unit were likely to be difficult to measure and establish a causality with the Housing and Support Initiative.

### **Recommendation 3 (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5) – Program Management**

The Community Services Directorate should review the key performance indicators associated with the A Place to Call Home Program and Housing and Support Initiative, to inform performance indicators for any future or similar programs it manages.

## **INITIATIVE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Initiative governance and administrative arrangements**

- 5.36 Service delivery through the Housing and Support Initiative is overseen by the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee. This Committee includes representatives from:
- Housing ACT;
  - Health Directorate;
  - community service providers who provide services for the Housing and Support Initiative (or the Housing and Recovery Program);
  - ACT Mental Health Consumer network;
  - Carers ACT; and
  - The Mental Health Coalition.
- 5.37 This Committee itself is overseen by the Housing and Support Initiative Executive Committee. This Executive Committee comprises:
- executive officers from Housing ACT;

- executive officers from the Health Directorate; and
- a representative of the ACT Mental Health Community Coalition.

5.38 The Executive Committee focuses on the strategic decisions necessary to implement the initiative across the directorates. It has met four times with the last meeting held in June 2011.

### ***Governance and administrative documentation***

5.39 Guidance for the Housing and Support Initiative is provided through the *Housing and Support Initiative Manual*. This Manual was developed by Housing ACT and disseminated across all the parties involved with the Housing and Support Initiative. The Manual provides:

- an overview of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- procedural guidance to the Client Selection Process;
- information on how privacy is addressed;
- procedural guidance for various aspects of the initiative such as responding to changes in the client's mental health status and handling complaints; and
- an overview of the forms used to support the initiative.

5.40 This *Housing and Support Initiative Manual* provides the framework needed for the delivery of services.

### ***Information exchange between Housing ACT and the Health Directorate***

5.41 Housing ACT and the Health Directorate have developed an information exchange process whereby:

- Housing ACT provides the Health Directorate with an overview of clients who have been accepted by the Client Selection Panel into the Housing and Support Initiative; and
- the Health Directorate provides Housing ACT with a copy of all the invoices from the community service providers that have been approved for payment. These invoices contain an overview of all direct and indirect hours of services provided, which is useful information for managing the program.

5.42 However, Housing ACT does not collate the information received from the Health Directorate, with respect to the number of hours of service provided, in an aggregated form. This makes it difficult to use this information for management and reporting purposes.

### Selection of community service providers

- 5.43 Clients who have been accepted into the Housing and Support Initiative are given the opportunity to choose their preferred provider from seven contracted community service providers.
- 5.44 Allowing clients to choose their service provider can potentially have an adverse impact on the capacity of each community service provider to plan for these services, because (potential) clients can have a preference for other service providers, or even change between service providers if they are not satisfied with the services that are provided to them. However, enabling this choice empowers clients to assume leadership for their own recovery.

### Selection of clients for the Housing and Support Initiative

- 5.45 Potential suitable clients are referred to the Housing and Support Initiative either by staff from the Health Directorate's Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Services or staff from a community service provider which is contracted to provide services under the Housing and Support Initiative.
- 5.46 The *Housing and Support Initiative Manual* defines eligibility criteria and initiative priorities. Key requirements are that the potential client:
- is over 16;
  - has a severe mental disorder;
  - is eligible for ACT public housing;
  - desires and is able to live independently; and
  - is not receiving high-level disability support.
- 5.47 It is mandatory for a client to have a clinical manager as well as a community service provider who is willing to provide ongoing support services through the Housing and Support Initiative. This will ensure that the client will be matched to the right service and has adequate relationships to support him or her to live independently in the community.
- 5.48 The Client Selection Panel assesses whether a potential client meets all the criteria to enter the Housing and Support Initiative. It also selects clients for the Housing and Recovery Initiative, which is funded by the *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospitals* (Sub-Acute Care Program Scheme C). While these are similar initiatives, this audit only considered the Housing and Support Initiative.

### Housing of clients under the Housing and Support Initiative

- 5.49 In June 2010 thirteen clients were referred for assistance under the Housing and Support Initiative, seven of whom had in-principle approval to receive services.

Of these, one client was already housed, with the others being housed by November 2010.

- 5.50 The delays in housing clients were caused by a shortage of suitable housing. Generally, suitable dwellings for clients are one or two person units, located in a safe and preferably small scale environment, and matching with the client's particular needs, for instance close to his/her support network of family and/or friends.
- 5.51 The limited capacity to house homeless persons under the Housing and Support Initiative has caused an average delay of six months for the 14 clients. This has resulted in an initial underspending for the Housing and Support Initiative.
- 5.52 The average time it took to house a person eligible for support under the Housing and Support Initiative was longer than the average waiting time for other clients on the social housing waiting list.
- 5.53 The Community Services Directorate advised that the length of time taken to allocate a property to a client on priority is dependent on a number of factors including individual clients' needs, suitability of available properties and the appropriateness of location tenant mix. These factors are particularly important for Housing and Support Initiative clients who are in the main eligible for one to two bedroom properties, but due to their health and personal circumstances require a low density living environment. The Community Services Directorate advised that these combined factors contribute to the identified longer waiting period.

### Case Management

- 5.54 There are many models for undertaking effective case management to reduce homelessness. In general, these involve providing support from intake, through assessment and planning, service provision, evaluation to consolidating a result and or exiting the Housing and Support Initiative. Quality case management is likely to be achieved if the following exists:
- collaboration and cooperation – a true team approach;
  - right matching of services – person centred;
  - contextual case management culture and flexibility;
  - the right kind of engagement – relationships and advocacy;
  - coordinated and well managed system – ethics and communication; and
  - evaluation for success – support and training.

### Intake

- 5.55 The Client Selection Panel applies a set of selection criteria to assess whether a client is likely to be able to be successful. One of the criteria is for the client to

have a clinician and a community service provider who is willing to provide ongoing support through the Housing and Support Initiative.

- 5.56 It is mandatory to secure a clinician's support before an application can be lodged for assistance under the Housing and Support Initiative. However, some clinicians appeared to give support, on the assumption that the Initiative was designed to provide housing to a person with mental health issues rather than it being both a housing and intensive support program.

### Assessment

- 5.57 The Client Selection Panel advised the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee that the application form did not provide the members of the panel with adequate and sufficient information to gain an understanding of the complexity of needs of the clients. This issue has been discussed by the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee and is being resolved. There may be benefits in having this documented in the *Housing and Support Initiative Manual*.

### Recovery Plan Planning

- 5.58 The client, assisted by his or her clinical manager, develops a Mental Health Recovery Plan that details the needs of the client and defines goals to be achieved. Based on these goals the plan identifies appropriate services. This client-based plan, which is updated on a monthly basis, also functions as a practical resource, as it contains specific service-related information such as the times at which services will be provided and also includes the name and contact details of the person(s) who will deliver them.
- 5.59 Mental Health Recovery Plans appear to be effective, as reflected in the minutes of meetings of the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee. These plans are continuously improved to reflect the needs and goals of the client. This provides autonomy for the client.
- 5.60 The Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee meeting minutes indicate that some community service providers have concerns with respect to the coordination of the initiative. There was evidence that the issues raised were resolved.

### Referral/Linking

- 5.61 Referral and linking clients to other services is an integral part of the Housing and Support Initiative and is embedded in the service funding agreement with community service providers. Under the service funding agreement, the community service provider is required to deliver:
- provision or referral to groups or workshops on topics such as stress management, mental and physical wellbeing, and relationship building;
  - assistance with developing links with health, community and other services;

- provision of or referral to transport, advocacy, and information services; and
- linkages into longer term education or work opportunities as appropriate.

### Advocacy

5.62 Advocacy and self advocacy are also an integral part of the Housing and Support Initiative. The service funding agreements with community service providers require a community service provider to provide or refer a client to advocacy services.

### Transitioning

5.63 While the *Housing and Support Initiative Manual* does not provide direct guidance on actions for transitioning from the Initiative, the Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee has discussed this topic regularly. The Committee's role is to oversee and advise on the operation of the program including transition.

### Evaluation

5.64 Monitoring and evaluation of the progress of individual clients being assisted under the initiative is achieved through the monthly update of the Mental Health Recovery Plan.

5.65 Case management under the Housing and Support Initiative by the Community Services Directorate, Health Directorates and community service providers reflects a model that is designed to provide a quality service. This model aims to improve a client's well-being by assisting them to live independently in the community, thereby reducing their risk of being homeless.

### Initiative evaluation

5.66 The Community Services Directorate stated that they intended to have the Housing and Support Initiative independently evaluated after 12 months of operation. The ACT Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services was informed of this intention as was the Commonwealth Government through October 2009 and October 2010 *Implementation Plans* for the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

5.67 The October 2010 *Implementation Plan* flagged an expansion of the Housing and Support Initiative, subject to a successful evaluation. Despite the fact that this did not occur, the Housing and Support Initiative was expanded to 15 places in 2011-12, while the Housing and Recovery Program commenced in the same year. The October 2010 *Implementation Plan* allocated approximately \$100,000 for an independent evaluation of the initiative.

- 5.68 The March 2012 *Implementation Plan* did not include an evaluation. Although the Community Services Directorate's decision not to proceed with one was well prepared and documented, there was no evidence that this was brought to the attention of the Minister for Housing or the Commonwealth Government. However, the 2011-12 annual report to the Commonwealth Government stated that the ACT's Housing and Support Initiative was to be expanded to include clients with alcohol and drug dependencies subject to a successful outcome of an independent review. While the action taken by the Community Services Directorate may be appropriate, the documentation and communication of this decision could have been better.
- 5.69 The Community Services Directorate's Asset Management Branch commenced work on an internal review of the Housing and Support Initiative in 2011. This review, *Mental Health Housing and Support Initiative - an Evaluation*, identified the following issues for the Initiative:
- all clients supported under the initiative have maintained tenancy for 12 months;
  - no clients have had any periods of hospitalisation;
  - all clients are engaged in some form of social activity (usually with support worker);
  - some clients have re-established relationships with family;
  - some clients have commenced and completed study at the Canberra Institute of Technology;
  - there had been no complaints made against clients supported under the initiative;
  - initiative clients had no arrears in rental payments (although this might be explained by the fact that some of the clients were living under guardianship arrangements); and
  - there was no property damage reported involving clients supported under the initiative.
- 5.70 There was no evidence to indicate that the review had been presented to the Community Services or Health Directorate management. This review should be finalised in consultation with the Health Directorate.

### **Recommendation 4 (Chapter 5) – Review**

The Community Services Directorate, in consultation with the Health Directorate, should finalise the review of the Housing and Support Initiative.

### **INITIATIVE OUTCOMES**

- 5.71 Changes have been made to the targets set for the Housing and Support Initiative. The changes to the targets and supporting method for reporting over time, combined with a lack of specificity, makes it difficult to assess whether the initiative has actually achieved its intent.
- 5.72 While there has not been an overall evaluation of the Housing and Support Initiative it would appear that it has exceeded its anticipated outcome as there are currently 14 people being assisted under the initiative, which represents an additional 4 people as identified in the initial *Implementation Plan*.

## APPENDIX A: AUDIT CRITERIA, APPROACH AND METHOD

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### AUDIT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on whether:

- the ACT Government is meeting its obligations under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*; and
- this is making a difference for homeless people.

### AUDIT LINES OF INQUIRY

The audit was designed around four lines of inquiry that mirror the audit's objectives. These lines of inquiry were adopted by each State/Territory Auditor-General in his or her report on the National Partnership:

- are programs and initiatives delivered under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* well planned and supported by reliable administrative processes;
- is the implementation of the ACT's National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness making a difference for homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless;
- are ACT Government agencies and non-government organisations collaborating effectively to deliver the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*; and
- is the ACT meeting its obligations under the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*.

### AUDIT APPROACH AND METHOD

The performance audit was conducted under the authority of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, and in accordance with the principles, procedures, and guidance contained in Australian Auditing Standards relevant to performance auditing. Of particular relevance is the professional standard on assurance engagements - *ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements*.

The audit approach and method consisted of:

- review of reports on the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness* published by other Australian audit offices as part of the concurrent audit;
- review of policies and procedures for assessing the Directorate's administration of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*. This involved identifying the governance and accountability framework and related policy and procedures for administration of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness*; and

- 
- interviews with and review of documents provided by Directorate staff, community service providers and peak bodies.

## AUDIT REPORTS

Details of reports published prior to 2009-10 can be obtained from the ACT Auditor-General's Office or

### Reports Published in 2012-13

Report No. 3 / 2013	ACT Government Parking Operations
Report No. 2 / 2013	Executive Remuneration Disclosed in ACTEW Corporation Limited's (ACTEW) 2010-11 Financial Statements and Annual Report 2011
Report No. 1 / 2013	Care and Protection System
Report No. 10 / 2012	2011-12 Financial Audits
Report No. 9 / 2012	Grants of Legal Assistance
Report No. 8 / 2012	Australian Capital Territory Public Service Recruitment Practices
Report No. 7 / 2012	ACT Auditor-General's Annual Report 2011-12
Report No. 6 / 2012	Emergency Department Performance Information

### Reports Published in 2011-12

Report No. 5 / 2012	Management of Recycling Estates and E-waste
Report No. 4 / 2012	Development Application and Approval System for High Density Residential and Commercial Developments
Report No. 3 / 2012	Early Childhood Schooling
Report No. 2 / 2012	Whole-of-Government Information and ICT Security Management and Services
Report No. 1 / 2012	Monitoring and Minimising Harm Caused by Problem Gambling in the ACT
Report No. 06 / 2011	Management of Food Safety in the Australian Capital Territory
Report No. 05 / 2011	2010-11 Financial Audits
Report No. 04 / 2011	Annual Report 2010-11

### Reports Published in 2010-11

Report No. 03 / 2011	The North Weston Pond Project
Report No. 02 / 2011	Residential Land Supply and Development
Report No. 01 / 2011	Waiting Lists for Elective Surgery and Medical Treatment
Report No. 10 / 2010	2009-10 Financial Audits
Report No. 09 / 2010	Follow-up audit – Courts Administration
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