



Submission to the Senate Economics
Legislation Committee Inquiry
into the
National Housing and Homelessness
Plan Bill 2024 (No. 2)

Gippsland Homelessness Network

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Introduction

The Gippsland Homelessness Network welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the National Housing and Homelessness Plan (NHHP) Bill 2024. The GHN has long been advocating for the development of a National Housing and Homelessness Plan, particularly in recognition of the Commonwealth Government's control over taxation policy and income support policy. The Gippsland Homelessness Network made a submission to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan in October, 2023.

Our belief is that housing is a basic human right. The 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan must be ambitious and courageous with the aim of ending homelessness rather than managing it. Homelessness is a hugely complex issue and one that requires structural, systems and policy change across all levels of government. Not only do we need more social and affordable housing stock with multi-service co-ordination to support those with complex needs, but we also need structural change to address home ownership, private rental affordability and Centrelink payments to be increased to alleviate poverty. A major review of the resourcing of the Specialist Homelessness Services sector must also be included in the Plan. The Plan must commit to setting, monitoring and reviewing targets to end homelessness and should include rough sleeping, overcrowding, people living in inadequate housing and people experiencing rental and mortgage stress. The progress to meeting targets should be widely reported and a revised action plan developed every 2-3 years.

About the Gippsland Homelessness Network (GHN)

The GHN is one of nine Homelessness Networks in Victoria. The Networks work together across the State and are members of the Victorian Homelessness Network (VHN). The VHN provides a mechanism for strategically progressing issues of common concern across all Regional Homelessness Networks, with a focus on operational issues relating to the co-ordination of a statewide homelessness service system.

The GHN has a membership of 11 Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) funded Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS's) which provide crisis, transitional, long term, family violence, youth support and accommodation. The Network's aim is to end homelessness and work together to deliver a co-ordinated homelessness response to the community of Gippsland. Our belief is that **housing is a basic human right and that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring**. We work collaboratively to achieve an integrated service system that provides support and assistance to people experiencing or at risk of Homelessness so that they can access and maintain secure, safe, affordable, appropriate housing in our region. Sadly this is no longer a reality given the limited resources available to the Specialist Homelessness Services, housing affordability, the lack of housing options, the high levels of family violence, the numbers of people from all walks of life who are struggling to make ends meet due to the cost of living crisis.

The GHN is governed by a Steering Committee that determines and oversees the strategic direction of the Network. It has two Local Area Service Networks (LASN's) that identify local trends, address issues of concern and share information. The Inner Gippsland LASN covers the Local Government Areas of Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Latrobe and South Gippsland Shires and the Outer Gippsland LASN covers the Local Government Areas of East Gippsland and Wellington.

The Network develops an annual Strategic Plan based on the following three strategic objectives:

Objective 1: Working together to end homelessness

Objective 2: To act as a conduit between the Department of Families Fairness and Housing and the regional services sector on issues and trends to inform policy

Objective 3: Strengthen the coordinated homelessness service system in the best interests of clients

Issues of concern are elevated to the Victorian Homelessness Network via the Local Area Service Networks (LASNs) annual survey and strategic objectives.

About Gippsland

Gippsland, a Victorian rural region covers 41,556 square kilometers and extends from Philip Island in the South West to the New South Wales border in the Far East of Victoria. It has a longitudinal population distribution totalling 300,664 (ABS 2021), representing 4.6 per cent of Victoria's population. Gippsland's principal population areas are Warragul, Latrobe Valley, Sale and Bairnsdale and it has many small and remote communities particularly in East Gippsland. The most populated Local Government Area (LGA) is Latrobe City making up 26% of Gippsland's population.

The Gippsland area includes the traditional lands of the Gunaikurnai; and Bunurong people. Aboriginal people account for 2% (ABS 2021) of the population of Gippsland.

Gippsland is best known for its primary production in mining, power generation, farming, and in tourism. Over recent years Gippsland has experienced hard times through drought, the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires, the impact of the COVID pandemic and job loss through the closure and impending closure of all coal fired power stations in Latrobe Valley and the recent Victorian Government announcement that native timber harvesting in Victoria will cease by the end of 2024.

East Gippsland has been significantly impacted as a result of the 2019-2020 East Gippsland bushfires which resulted in the loss of 237 principal places of residence and displaced over 500 people.

Three of Gippsland's six Local Government Areas are in the top five highest rates of Family Violence in Victoria.

Overall Gippsland's population is ageing faster than the rest of Victoria, retirees are seeking sea and tree changes in our Region and our young people are leaving Gippsland to attend university and pursue education and employment opportunities.



The National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024 (2)

The GHN strongly supports the legislation of a National Housing and Homelessness Plan. This is long overdue. The lack of a planning by successive governments is largely responsible for the housing crisis that Australian now finds itself in

The legislation of this Bill creates an obligation for the Minister to develop, implement and maintain a 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan focussed on housing as a human right in collaboration with experts in the field, including people with a lived experience of homelessness.

We welcome the fact that the Plan is to be fully refreshed on a 10-year cycle and that the Minister is to prepare and present a report on the effectiveness of the Plan to Parliament every 3 years. With the right settings we can create a more equitable housing system and end homelessness in Australia.

We endorse the establishment of the National Housing Consumer Council which will provide a much needed consumer perspective. The creation of a National Housing and Homelessness Advocate to independently monitor the Plan and undertake reviews into systemic housing issues will provide confidence and transparency.

Recommendation

The Gippsland Homelessness Network recommends that the National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024 (2) be passed.

The Gippsland Homelessness Network's Submission to the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, October, 2023.

The GHN made a submission to the development of the National Housing and Plan which included the following recommendations. Many of them similar to those proposed in the Bill.

<https://www.gippslandhomelessnessnetwork.org.au/assets/2024/ghn-submission---national-housing-and-homelessness-plan--2023.pdf>

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the primary goal of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan is to end homelessness rather than manage it.

Recommendation 2

That targets to end homelessness be set for the life of the plan and the progress to achieving these targets to be widely reported and a revised action plan developed every 2-3 years.

Recommendation 3

That Governments, Federal, State and Local collaborate in the delivery of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan and include business and the private sector.

Recommendation 4

That the Plan include a pipeline of public housing that meets future social housing needs

Recommendation 5

Provide incentives for property investors to remove their properties from short term rentals to long term leases.

Recommendation 6

That the Private Rental Assistance Program be considered as a national approach to alleviate homelessness

Recommendation 7

That adequate income support be made available for young people, the unemployed, the elderly, people with a disability and women over 55 years old to lift them out of poverty.

Recommendation 8

That State Governments continue to take responsibility for public housing and discontinue the transfer of public housing to community housing providers.

Recommendation 9

That evidence based *Housing First* programs form a key strategy to ending homelessness in the National Housing and Homelessness Plan

Recommendation 10

That Assertive Outreach funding to be made available to all Homelessness Entry Points

Recommendation 11

That the Advance to Zero model to end homelessness be funded and a biannual allocation of public housing stock set aside for this purpose.

Recommendation 12

That support services be individualised, *Person Centred*; co-ordinated across sectors, tailored, flexible, scalable and increase or decrease as per the needs of the client and be outcome focused.

Recommendation 13

That sufficient dedicated emergency crisis accommodation is built for Victim Survivors of Family Violence that provides comfort and care so that families don't have to be accommodated in motels and caravans.

Recommendation 14

That facilities are available for perpetrators of Family Violence to prevent them returning to the family home

Recommendation 15

That a specific section of the Plan be committed to Young People and it should detail a comprehensive pathway of accommodation options and support including an increase in

youth refuge beds, the funding of *Youth Foyers* and *Village 21* with dedicated public housing stock as a Housing First strategy.

Recommendation 16

That *Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home; The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, 2020* be integrated into the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Recommendation 17

That funding of services and resources is allocated based on need not just on population

Recommendation 18

That mandatory Inclusionary Zoning is legislated.

Conclusion

The Gippsland Homelessness Network thanks the Senate Economics Legislation Committee for the opportunity to provide a written submission.