

James Catchpole
Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family,
Community, Housing and Youth
Parliament House
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<p><u>Submission No. 64</u> (homelessness legislation) A.O.C. Date: 26/08/09</p>

Dear Mr Catchpole,

RE: Inquiry into Homelessness Legislation

The Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) would like to thank the Committee for inviting ADCA to provide input into the Committee's deliberations.

ADCA is the national peak body, representing the non-government (NGO) alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector. As such, ADCA and our members do not directly deal with homelessness, however, our member organisations frequently deal with the AOD problems that often are co-occurring with homelessness issues. Generally half of homeless men and to a lesser extent homeless women present with a co-occurring AOD and mental health disorder.

In addition to the recommendations contained within the report, ADCA believes that the scope of this inquiry and indeed of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994 is ham-strung by an inadequate consideration of the complex needs of a significant number of homeless people. Restricting the scope of legislation hampers the development of integrated and innovative organisations who act to treat the complex needs patients (as the whole person) instead of attempting to solve complex needs issues in a piecemeal fashion.

ADCA members who do engage with homeless clientele (while not directly funded to do so), provide an important role in addressing the complex needs of these clients, including finding accommodation. This is particularly the case when potentially homeless people are transiting from AOD-supported care places, such as residential withdrawal/ re-integration back into the community.

Accordingly, ADCA believes that the AOD-specific issues below need to be considered under the third term of reference 'the role of legislation in improving the quality of services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness':

1. Funding should be provided to existing non-government AOD and other service organisations to resource outreach programs, increase capacity to engage with homeless people and provide better integration between non-government AOD organisations and dedicated homeless providers.

2. New legislation needs to encompass 'chain of care' concept with provisions for funding to create formal partnership agreements between relevant government and non-government service organisations which will ensure seamless front-line service and ease of access to a range of services For example AOD, mental health, primary healthcare and Centrelink.
3. Pharmaceutical benefits and extra concessions to enable this marginalised group to gain access to pharmacotherapies.

ADCA would be happy to discuss these issues further with the Committee at their convenience. The Patron of ADCA, Professor Ian Webster AO has provided input to the earlier Green Paper and he is also willing to contribute to the Committee's deliberations.

Kind Regards,



David Templeman
Chief Executive Officer
Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia

20 August 2009