

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2010-11 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 2

Question No: 47

Topic: Unmet Need

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Boyce asked:

How does the Department make policy decisions, establish policy priorities, design programs or make funding decisions in the area of homelessness if it does not know what the level of need is?

Answer:

The Department's policy priorities were set in the 2008 Homelessness White Paper, *The Road Home*. In 2008 the then Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, appointed a steering group to oversee the development of a comprehensive, long term plan to tackle homelessness including members from the homelessness sector and a researcher from Central Queensland University.

The Government engaged in extensive consultations and released a Green Paper which sought to promote public discussion and suggest ways to reduce homelessness in the long-term. More than 1,200 people attended 13 consultations and the Department received almost 600 written submissions. More than 300 people experiencing homelessness gave their views.

FaHCSIA then drew on data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. From this it was able to determine a number of priority areas on which to focus the Government's efforts.

In 2009 the then Prime Minister announced the appointment of the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness which takes a leadership role through independently monitoring the White Paper goals and targets, and providing advice to Government on strategic priorities, progress, risks and emerging issues.

In addition to this, FaHCSIA has allocated \$11.4 million under the National Partnership on Homelessness for the National Homelessness Research Agenda. The Research Agenda aims to build a robust and reliable evidence base that identifies:

- the extent and nature of homelessness for a range of disadvantaged groups as well as the homeless and at risk populations as a whole in different settings;
- the pathways in and out of homelessness; and
- effective ways for responding to homelessness.

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In addition, the Department engages with the sector, and mainstream and allied organisations who provide services to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to provide input to policy development. For example, the development of the Homelessness National Quality Framework is underpinned by two rounds of national consultations with peaks, specialist homelessness services and individuals experiencing homelessness.