

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2011-12 Supplementary Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 7

Question No: 222

Topic: Homelessness

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Payne asked:

You said in your answer to QoN54 that performance under the NPARIH cannot be tracked until Census 2011 data is released next financial year. You also said that this is a snapshot, and other initiatives will be used to inform your understanding of homelessness. Can you not therefore make estimates on progress outside of Census data releases? Tracking progress every 5 years seriously limits the ability to enable the program to evolve.

Answer:

Estimating the numbers of homeless people is a complex task, and this has been acknowledged in the community sector, academia and across governments.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) homelessness performance target is based on Census data, the only population level data on homelessness. Census 2011 data will be progressively released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from July 2012 and will provide information about progress against the NPARIH target.

In between Censuses other initiatives, as outlined in our response to QoN54 (such as the new homelessness services data collection, longitudinal study of homelessness and ABS surveys), will be used to inform our understanding of homelessness over time. While they will not provide a direct measure of progress towards the NPARIH indicator, these sources will provide information to enhance our understanding of the characteristics and needs of homeless people, factors that contribute to housing stability, and the nature of homeless people's interaction with specialist homelessness services.