



# Don't Close the Door: Save Homelessness Services

## Joint briefing note from The Australian Services Union and Homelessness Australia

In 2012 the Fair Work Commission made a landmark decision to raise the wages of workers in the social, community and disability sectors, through the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO). Underpinning this decision was the acknowledgement that the female dominated workforce was undervalued and underpaid in large part due to gender.

The Equal Pay Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplementation for federally funded homelessness services was funded via the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), between the Commonwealth and States and Territories – which expires in June 2021.

In 2020 the Federal Government announced that they would lift the base funding in the Department of Social Services Grants to cover the costs of the ERO into the future. This covers the following Federal programs funded by Department of Social Services: Youth, Disability, Families, Financial Counselling, & Emergency Relief. However, this does not include Housing and Homelessness Services.

**We are calling on the Federal Government to increase the base funding for housing and homelessness services, or hundreds of workers will lose their jobs and these critical services will be cut at a time when homelessness services are experiencing a surge a demand due to COVID-19.**

## Don't Close the Door on Homelessness Workers

There will be significant job losses in housing and homelessness services around the country if the Federal Government does not commit to increasing base funding past June 2021.

**We cannot afford to lose an estimated 565 frontline workers if we are to rebuild out of this pandemic and support our most vulnerable Australians.**

	Total loss of NHHA ERO supplementation per annum*	Workforce loss
NSW	\$7.5 million	75 front line workers
VIC	\$20.3 million	203 front line workers
QLD	\$11.4 million	114 front line workers
WA	\$8.2 million	82 front line workers
SA	\$4.4 million	44 front line workers
TAS	\$1.8 million	18 front line workers
ACT	\$1.7 million	17 front line workers
NT	\$1.2 million	12 front line workers
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56.5 million</b>	<b>565 front line workers</b>

\*Australian Government (2018), National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Table 2. Retrieved from [https://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/other/other/NHHA\\_Final.pdf](https://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/other/other/NHHA_Final.pdf)



## Don't Close the Door on Homelessness Services

In the last year (2019-20) **290,500 Australians sought help from specialist homelessness services.**

These critical services support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women and children escaping domestic violence.

Homelessness services are already struggling with current funding to respond to everyone who needs help, with 260 people turned away every day. **Two in three people turned away from homelessness services are women and children, many of whom are escaping domestic violence.**

If the Federal Government does not lift base funding, critical services will be cut and jobs lost across our major cities, regional centres and small towns.

## COVID-19 & Homelessness Services

Homelessness services are already experiencing increased demand due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

During the first six months of the pandemic, the four states (NSW, QLD, SA & VIC) that launched emergency programs housed more than 40,000 rough sleepers and others. By 30 September 2020, only a small proportion of those provided with emergency accommodation remained in hotels, and street homelessness in Sydney and Adelaide was increasing again.

Residential tenancy eviction moratoriums have already concluded in Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia, and are set to end in March across other states. This will coincide with the cut to JobSeeker and end of JobKeeper with the result that the demand on services is likely to soar.

Research by Equity Economics estimates that homelessness across Australia will surge by 9 per cent by June 2021, with the biggest impacts felt across NSW, Victoria, and Tasmania.

**To rebuild out of this crisis and be able to support our most vulnerable Australians we cannot afford to lose hundreds of critical frontline workers.**

Homelessness Australia and the Australian Services Union are deeply concerned about the serious impacts of the cessation of supplementation funding on housing and homelessness services.

**If the Federal Government does not lift base funding for housing and homelessness services past June 2021:**

- **Jobs will be cut**
- **Services will be cut**
- **Capacity for support for our most vulnerable will be reduced**
- **Increased demand for support from those impacted by COVID-19 will not be met**
- **Critical support and services to those who need it most will be cut and our most vulnerable will suffer**

**Don't Close the Door on Homelessness Services.**

**Support homelessness workers, support your communities and lift base funding for housing and homelessness services now.**