

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Public Hearing – 7 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 1

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000502

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 4

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: So that was the additional money that went out during the pandemic towards domestic and family violence, emergency relief and the mental health package? Do you have any line of sight as to how that might have been delivered to people or what proportion of that might have been expended on people who were rough sleepers during the pandemic and became subsequently housed or placed according to the strategies that were in place by the states and territories? Do you have a line of sight over that?

Mr Sloan: I would have to take that on notice but I would preface it by saying that in the additional money for emergency relief, often providers don't ask about people's circumstances because they try to be sensitive to people's current situation. They don't want people feeling like not wanting to turn up if they've got to answer personal questions. Certainly we can take it on notice and see what we can get you. I don't want to set an expectation to the committee that we can definitely come back and answer that question because quite often for these services if you come in and say you need a box of food, they give you a box of food. We want people to come in and access that and not feel that if they do come in they will have to reveal more of their life story. If they are worried about revealing more of their life story or if they have to, they may not come back in and get that assistance, so we are very mindful to make sure that these programs are rolled out in a way that encourages anyone who needs help to come forward and ask.

**Answer:**

The department does not collect information on people sleeping rough who access these services.

To better understand the delivery of Emergency Relief (ER) support during the coronavirus pandemic, in April 2020, the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, established a sector-led National Coordination Group. The National Coordination Group comprises representatives from major national ER, Food Relief and Financial Counselling service providers.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 2

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000503

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 4

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: So if we were to put that another way then perhaps it might be that those on-ground services might well advise of a level unmet need perhaps or shortages. Do you get any reporting back by those services or via the states and territories, I would presume, to the Commonwealth that, despite some emergency release relief funding hitting the ground, there might be unmet need? Are you getting any reports that there is more needed, for example?

Mr Sloan: The provision of those services is run in a different area of our organisation. I know they certainly have a range of ways they communicate with their providers. I would have to take that on notice and go back to them but I do know that they do have conversations with providers about what providers are seeing out on the ground.

Mr Bennett: If I could add to that, as reflected in the submission, we obviously have the level of funding that is provided through the NAHA. We have the priority groups I was talking about which include women and children affected by family and domestic violence. The government has provided a wide range of supports during the COVID crisis. This has included additional activities in family and domestic violence and emergency relief. I just wanted to give you the sense of the comprehensive nature of the response. The information that we would receive back through the NAHA from the states would be associated with that framework and that reporting. I think Mr Sloane has indicated we would take it on notice about providing some further information from our colleagues, who are in a different part of the department, who are providing those arrangements for emergency relief and family and domestic violence. We will take it on notice and come back to you.

**Answer:**

Refer to the answer to SQ20-000502.

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Public Hearing – 07 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 3

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000504

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 7

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: You may need to take this on notice, but I find it somewhat extraordinary that we wouldn't be collecting from the various states and territories the data at the moment around the number of rough sleepers housed during the pandemic and the data around the costs to the various state and territory governments to house rough sleepers to date. If you don't have that today, would you take that on notice? It does seem odd, given that the Commonwealth is providing at least some financial contribution through the agreement and these additional funds towards emergency relief, domestic and family violence, mental health and the national cabinet decision around the funding of the return to country program that you've referred to, that we don't seem to have a line of sight here at all around who we actually got to help on the ground. Where are the numbers of rough sleepers who were housed during the pandemic? It seems to be a very significant missing piece of information. I take it you don't have a response today. Would you take that question on notice?

Mr Naikar: We can certainly take that on notice. But I just want to add that, as Mr Bennett and Mr Sloan referenced earlier, we do meet with our state colleagues both formally and informally. During the coronavirus we have met obviously more informally to monitor the situation and to get an update about how each jurisdiction is responding to the pandemic, and also to better understand their responses and their unique challenges. We do know that jurisdictions have housed rough sleepers in temporary accommodation, including hotels and motels. Obviously, they also have focused more on ensuring these people are housed than on providing us with the data. The costs would vary depending on each jurisdiction, but, as part of our National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, we do have reporting requirements on which states would then provide us with further information, and we would regularly monitor it. We can take that on notice and confirm with states whether they have actually estimated the costs.

**Answer:**

Under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement states and territories are primarily responsible for delivering housing and homelessness services including for rough sleepers. The Department of Social Services does not collect data on housing rough sleepers.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 4

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000505

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 7

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: With regard to costs being saved by virtue of housing rough sleepers in the long term, can you confirm whether or not the Commonwealth is seeking evacuations and whether that has been done at a federal level or via the states and territories? I don't want to take up the whole of inquiry with my questions, but just before I hand over to my colleagues I want to confirm whether you have been asked to provide some thinking, planning or even costings around what a post-COVID-19 response for the provision of some more permanent housing for those people who have been temporarily housed at this point under the COVID-19 response is going to look like.

Mr Bennett: We regularly provide information and advice. In terms of answering that question more fully, I will take it on notice.

**Answer:**

The Department of Social Services regularly provides advice on a range of issues related to housing and homelessness. This includes policy options, the operation and impact of programs, cohort analysis and commentary on analysis undertaken by researchers and other organisations.

The states and territories are primarily responsible for the delivery of housing and homelessness services.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 5

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000506

**Member:** Mr Wallace

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 8

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

CHAIR: Can I jump in there, Troy. Say you had a boarding house that housed 15 people and two of them were offered a longer form of tenure—and you think that may be a minimum of three months, but we need to check that; in fact, I'll get you to check that and add that to your list of homework.

Mr Sloan: Yes, we'll take that on notice.

CHAIR: Would that mean that just those two who had tenure would no longer be regarded as homeless?

Mr Sloan: That is my understanding. Again, we'll take that on notice and double-check with ABS.

**Answer:**

The ABS' definition of homelessness includes residents of dwellings who:

- do not have control of or access to space and or no privacy; or
- have no tenure or initial tenure is short and not extendable.

However, the Census does not collect sufficient information about individual boarding house occupants' security of tenure, or their access to space for social relations, to determine whether they are homeless or not, and so the ABS makes this determination for the occupants of each boarding house as a whole.

Further information can be found in paragraphs 61-63 of [Explanatory Notes](#) in *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016 (ABS Cat No 2049.0)*.

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Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 6

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000507

**Member:** Mr Wallace

**Type of Question:** Spoken. **Hansard Page/s:** 8-9

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

Mr LAMING: ... The second question is about the degree of data sharing between the ATO, Centrelink and state departments of housing, with a particular focus on those whose income might be increasing from some private sector employment and identifying points at which they might be able to be encouraged to transition out of public housing to increase the stock that's available for new entrants. ...

...

CHAIR: Before you go to the shared equity question: why doesn't the federal government share that data with the states and territories?

Mr Bennett: Chair, you are coming back to question 2, which is to do with data sharing between the ATO, Centrelink and state housing organisations?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Bennett: It comes back to the individual requirements of each state. But I'm not aware that we have actually been requested to provide that information. It would probably be provided directly from ATO to the state organisations. I can take it on notice, but it's just not one that I'm immediately aware of.

**Answer:**

Data sharing arrangements between Commonwealth and state and territory governments have been in place for some time for a variety of shared-purpose objectives such as research, program design, improving policies and service delivery, as well as compliance purposes. Such arrangements adhere to strict protocols to protect individuals' privacy and information in accordance with Commonwealth and state legislation.

Specifically in relation to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), sharing information about the tax affairs of a particular entity is prohibited by law, except in certain specified circumstances. These exceptions do not extend to sharing income information for public housing compliance or monitoring. Sharing with the states and territories is limited to primarily the administration of state tax laws and administering state-run First Home Owner Grants schemes. The ATO also shares data with Services Australia to assist with administration of Social Security law.

State and territory governments can submit requests for Commonwealth held data to support their public housing policies and each request is assessed giving consideration to the data required and how the data will be used.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 7

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000508

**Member:** Dr Freeland

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 9

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

Dr FREELANDER: Thanks very much, Chair. Thank you to everyone who has given evidence. I find these teleconferences quite difficult; you've got to concentrate. Thanks for all your efforts. I've got a few questions. First of all, does the Commonwealth keep any data on the number of children who are classified as homeless?

Mr Bennett: We're just turning to the data sheets. Bear with us for one second, please.

Mr Sloan: In the 2016 census, there were 15,872 children under 12 and another 9,955 people aged 12 to 18 who were classified as homeless.

Dr FREELANDER: So over 25,000?

Mr Bennett: Correct.

Dr FREELANDER: Do you keep any data as to why they were homeless?

Mr Bennett: There might be a range of things, including domestic violence, breakdown of family relationships and so forth. For the specifics I would have to take that on notice.

Dr FREELANDER: Would you mind taking that on notice? I'd be interested to see—

Mr Bennett: Yes, we will.

**Answer:**

See data at Attachment A.

## ATTACHMENT A

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016 includes the following data about children and young people:

**Table 1: Children and young people by homeless operational group**

Homeless Operational Group	Age	
	Under 12 years	12–18 years
Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out	460	283
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	4,120	2,545
Persons staying temporarily with other households	1,372	698
Persons living in boarding houses	199	387
Persons in other temporary lodgings	0	13
Persons living in 'severely' crowded dwellings	9,728	6,033
<b>All homeless persons</b>	<b>15,872</b>	<b>9,955</b>

Source: ABS Cat. 2049.0 Table 1.8

*Notes:*

1. Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result, the cells do not add to the totals.
2. Homelessness itself is not a characteristic that is directly measured in the Census. Instead, estimates of the homeless population are derived from the Census using analytical techniques, based on both the characteristics observed in the Census and assumptions about the way people may respond to Census questions.



The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s (AIHW) Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) 2018-19 data tables include the following data about young people (aged 15-24) presenting to SHS alone:

**Table 2: Young people presenting alone and homeless at first presentation and main reasons (Top 10) for seeking assistance, 2018–19**

Homeless	Main reason for seeking assistance	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)
Homeless	Housing crisis	5,126	25.0
Homeless	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	3,323	16.2
Homeless	Relationship/family breakdown	2,843	13.8
Homeless	Family and domestic violence	1,984	9.7
Homeless	Previous accommodation ended	1,434	7.0
Homeless	Housing affordability stress	1,347	6.6
Homeless	Financial difficulties	1,119	5.4
Homeless	Time out from family/other situation	633	3.1
Homeless	Lack of family and/or community support	489	2.4
Homeless	Other	479	2.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>18,777</b>	<b>91.5</b>

Source: Table Young.6: Young people presenting alone, by homeless status at first presentation and main reasons (Top 10) for seeking assistance, 2018–19

**Table 3: Young people presenting alone and at risk of homelessness at first presentation and main reasons (Top 10) for seeking assistance, 2018–19**

At risk	Main reason for seeking assistance	Total clients (number)	Total clients (per cent)
At risk	Family and domestic violence	3,830	19.2
At risk	Housing crisis	2,797	14.0
At risk	Relationship/family breakdown	2,055	10.3
At risk	Financial difficulties	2,019	10.1
At risk	Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	1,597	8.0
At risk	Other	1,430	7.2
At risk	Housing affordability stress	1,420	7.1
At risk	Previous accommodation ended	790	4.0
At risk	Time out from family/other situation	641	3.2
At risk	Transition from custodial arrangements	626	3.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>17,205</b>	<b>86.2</b>

Source: Table Young.6: Young people presenting alone, by homeless status at first presentation and main reasons (Top 10) for seeking assistance, 2018–19

*Notes*

1. A person is defined as homeless if they are living in either: non-conventional accommodation or 'sleeping rough' or short-term or emergency accommodation due to a lack of other options. This includes living on the streets, squatting, staying in cars, couch surfing or no tenure, crisis shelters, living temporarily with friends and relatives, and insecure accommodation on a short-term basis.  
More information is available at AIHW Annual Report 2018-19.
2. A person is described as at risk of homelessness if they are at risk of losing their accommodation or they are experiencing one or more of a range of factors or triggers that can contribute to homelessness. Risk factors include financial or housing affordability stress, inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions, previous accommodation ended, child abuse, family, sexual and domestic violence, and relationship or family breakdown. More information is available at AIHW Annual Report 2018-19.
3. Where more than one reason for seeking assistance has been provided, the client chooses the main reason in their response to the survey.
4. Per cent calculations based on total number of homeless or at risk clients less 'Not stated'.
5. Young people are defined as any client aged 15–24 who presented to a specialist homelessness agency alone in their first period of support.

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Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 8

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000509

**Member:** Dr Freeland

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 9

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Dr FREELANDER: Is there any data available also on the lack of stability of housing and its effects on children's health and learning? Do you keep any of that sort of data at all?

Mr Sloan: There would be some studies that we could talk to our colleagues at Health and Education about, because the point is well made. We haven't got that in front of us at the moment, so we can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, and Australian Institute of Family Studies has found housing plays a significant role in a child's development.

Further information including data can be found at:

- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/housing/homelessness>
- [https://www.ahuri.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/3063/AHURI\\_RAP\\_Issue\\_171\\_What-impact-does-a-childs-housing-have-on-their-development-and-wellbeing.pdf](https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/3063/AHURI_RAP_Issue_171_What-impact-does-a-childs-housing-have-on-their-development-and-wellbeing.pdf)
- <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-91/housing-and-childrens-wellbeing-and-development>

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal  
Affairs

Public Hearing – 07 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 9

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000510

**Member:** Dr Freeland

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 10

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Dr FREELANDER: The minister certainly talks as though this is housing that's available. Has the minister asked for any modelling to be done or asked for any information? Are you aware of that?

Mr Bennett: We will provide ministers with a range of advice on different topics from time to time—

Dr FREELANDER: Yes, I'm aware how the Public Service works, mate. I know that, but has the minister actually asked for it?

Mr Bennett: I will take that on notice. I do not know the answer off the top of my head.

**Answer:**

The department regularly provides advice on a range of issues related to housing and homelessness. This includes policy options, the operation and impact of programs, cohort analysis and commentary on analysis undertaken by researchers and other organisations.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 10

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000511

**Member:** Dr Freeland

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 10

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Dr FREELANDER: Thanks for that. If I can talk again about the mental health aspects, you said that you're giving funding to the states, and, in particular, you mentioned headspace. I'm curious to know what programs you're giving money for to headspace that will help with homelessness. Do you have any details on that at all? I have a lot of involvement with headspace, and they have quite reasonable links to departments of housing but they don't seem to be offering any housing programs—

Mr Sloan: I would take that question in two ways. One is, Mr Bennett talked earlier about the wraparound services and that homelessness is a very complex issue and multiple things can impact on that, and mental health is certainly one of them. So from that perspective we see it as part of a set of wraparound services to support people, which hopefully will reduce the likelihood of them going into homelessness. For the specifics, I would have to talk to our Department of Health colleagues, so I will take that on notice and we'll try and get something from the Department of Health.

**Answer:**

The Australian Government funds *headspace* to support young people experiencing mental illness, who may also be homeless, or at risk of homelessness. The *headspace* model provides holistic care in four key areas – mental health, related physical health, alcohol and other drug use, and social and vocational support.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
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Public Hearing – 7 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 11

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000512

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 13

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: Could I pick up on the question of the \$200 million emergency relief funding that we discussed earlier on? Does the department know whether that money has now been spent? I understand it has to be spent by September. Can you advise us if that \$200 million has been spent?

Mr Bennett: I will have to take this one on notice. The part of the department that manages those arrangements is not within the social security stream, so it would be best for me to talk to some colleagues and come back to you.

Ms CLAYDON: Alright. When you're having those discussions—I guess there's a bit of a follow up—if the money hasn't been spent then why not and what's been the problem? If it has been allocated and not spent, what is the plan for any funding or support beyond September for homeless people who were put up in short-term accommodation during the pandemic? When you're asking questions around the expenditure of \$200 million, please follow up with an explanation. If it's not been spent then why not and, if it has, is there is any plan for assistance beyond September?

Mr Bennett: That is understood.

**Answer:**

The \$200 million Community Support Package was allocated over two financial years (2019-20 and 2020-21), to support services funded under the Financial Wellbeing and Capability (FWC) Activity deal with the immediate and longer terms impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. This included the immediate allocation of \$104.25 million, all of which has been paid to providers, with providers receiving their 2020-21 funding in early July 2020. This funding includes:

- \$37 million for 196 Commonwealth-funded Emergency Relief providers;
- \$7 million for the Australian Red Cross to deliver Emergency Relief and counselling support to up to 30,000 temporary migrants over the next six months, as well as an additional \$50,000 for Anglican Community Services to deliver increased Emergency Relief on Norfolk Island;

- \$19.9 million to be shared between the three food relief providers - Foodbank Australia, OzHarvest and SecondBite - to support Commonwealth funded Emergency Relief providers through increased food supplies and increasing their transport options and workforce;
- \$20 million to increase the capacity of financial counselling providers, including the National Debt Helpline, and more readily build the capability of the sector;
- \$20 million to Good Shepherd to increase access to their No Interest Loan Scheme, as an alternative to high interest products - the funding will leverage investment from financial institutions to provide loan capital of up to \$3,000 for the purchase of essential household products and payment of bills; and
- \$300,000 to the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council to provide support to the sector-led Emergency Relief National Coordination Group.

In April 2020, the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, established a sector-led Emergency Relief National Coordination Group (NCG) to ensure there is a collaborative, timely and coordinated approach to Emergency Relief and Food Relief across Australia. One of the key activities of the Group is to provide advice to the Minister on the distribution of the remaining funds.

The NCG has noted that demand for Emergency Relief services is not as high as anticipated. Department of Social Services data indicates that in the first half of 2020 (January to June) ER sessions nationally dropped by about 3 per cent, compared to the same period last year. The NCG is advising government on how to allocate remaining funds and has proposed that these funds be stepped down over 2020-21 to allow monitoring of the Emergency Relief environment as it continues to change and influence demand on services. The NCG is expected to provide further advice to government on this matter on 31 July 2020.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 12

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000513

**Member:** Ms Claydon

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 13

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

Ms CLAYDON: Is there some data that's being gathered or has there been any request from the minister to look at the issue around rent debt? People who may be evicted and therefore face homeless when the moratorium ends will subsequently have a large rent debt. Are you as a department gathering some data on how many renters are behind in their rent with potentially a large debt that will be closing in on them by October? What kind of thinking has the department or the government requested in how people can make good on that debt given their circumstances? The short question is: are you gathering any data on the impact of any wind back of JobKeeper or jobseeker on homelessness and the number of people who are behind on rental payments and are likely to be inheriting a big rent debt come October, and the influence of that in pushing more people perhaps into homelessness? Are you being asked to do some exploration work and some thinking around addressing these issues as a department?

Mr Bennett: As I understand your question, you're really talking about the arrangements that states have put in associated with private rental arrangements. That is an area that I can't comment too deeply on at the moment and it probably would be best to take that one on notice.

Ms CLAYDON: Do you have any line of sight about how many renters in Australia are now behind in their rent?

Mr Bennett: Again, I come back to the way the architecture works with our involvement with the states. My understanding is the arrangements you are discussing are arrangements that have been implemented by states based on state based adjustments to legislation. We would not readily, through the way that we collect data on the National Housing and Homeless Agreement, have that; hence, I was reflecting I would take it on notice.

Mr Sloan: Following on from what Mr Bennett said, certainly states have done a number of things designed to try and combat that. For example, the Victorian government announced an \$80 million rental assistance fund for renters who are facing hardship. Other states have linked tax relief for investors to a reduction in rent for renters. So there are a number of things. As Mr Bennett said, given the states have responsibility for this, there is a number of measures that states are implementing to try and combat the issue that you are raising.



**Answer:**

On 29 March 2020, National Cabinet agreed to a moratorium on evictions over the next six months for commercial and residential tenancies in financial distress who are unable to meet their commitments due to the impact of Coronavirus. Tenancy issues including enacting the evictions moratorium are a matter for States and Territories (states). States will need to consider their policy responses following the moratorium.

The Department of Social Services (the department) does not collect data on private rental arrears.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 14

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000517

**Member:** Mr Wallace

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 16

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Chair: I'd like the department to give us some more information about Housing First models—where they're operating successfully or unsuccessfully, both overseas and in Australia, how they operate and what their advantages and disadvantages are.

**Answer:**

While state and territory governments (states) are responsible for homelessness programs, the Australian Government provides funding through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), which states can use to implement Housing First models if they consider them appropriate for their circumstances.

Many states are implementing Housing First approaches across Australia, such as the Common Ground model.

Under the Housing First model, safe and secure housing is provided to people experiencing chronic homelessness prior to, and not conditional upon other issues. Housing First involves:

- Providing safe and permanent housing as the first priority for people experiencing homelessness.
- Providing wrap around services like drug and alcohol counselling or mental health treatment where needed. Engaging with these wrap around services is not required for people to maintain accommodation.

Housing First models need to be adapted to suit the conditions of a specific jurisdiction to operate successfully.

Evaluations of the Housing First model in Australia (for example, Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord and Brisbane Common Ground) have found positive outcomes for participants. The evaluations also found positive gains for governments through savings across health, justice and welfare services.

Additional information about Housing First, including international and Australian examples and evaluations, can be found at [www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/what-is-the-housing-first-model](http://www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/what-is-the-housing-first-model).

Further information on some Housing First approaches in Australia and overseas is below:

<b>Australia</b>	
<b>Housing First Approach</b>	<b>Further Information</b>
<p><b>Common Ground</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ‘high-density’ mixed tenure approach tailored for people experiencing chronic homelessness and people on low incomes who may have never experienced homelessness.</li> <li>• There are Common Ground facilities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT.</li> <li>• New facilities have been proposed in Perth and Canberra (Dickson).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further information can be found at: <a href="https://issr.uq.edu.au/brisbane-common-ground-evaluation">https://issr.uq.edu.au/brisbane-common-ground-evaluation</a></li> <li> <a href="https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/715825/Common-Ground-Canberra-Factsheet.pdf">https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/715825/Common-Ground-Canberra-Factsheet.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>ACT Axial Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A two-year pilot program in the ACT focusing on people with complex issues such as drug and alcohol abuse to move them into permanent accommodation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further information can be found at: <a href="https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2019/partnership-to-end-the-cycle-of-homelessness">https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2019/partnership-to-end-the-cycle-of-homelessness</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>50 Lives 50 Homes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A program tailored for rough sleepers in Perth that uses a database to track people sleeping rough in Perth and identify their specific needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further information can be found at: <a href="https://www.ruah.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Housing_and_Homelessness_Ruah.pdf">https://www.ruah.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Housing_and_Homelessness_Ruah.pdf</a></li> <li> <a href="https://www.csi.edu.au/media/50_Lives_Report_-_Executive_Summary_.pdf">https://www.csi.edu.au/media/50_Lives_Report_-_Executive_Summary_.pdf</a></li> <li> <a href="https://www.shelterwa.org.au/50-lives-50-homes-housing-first-response-to-ending-homelessness-in-perth/">https://www.shelterwa.org.au/50-lives-50-homes-housing-first-response-to-ending-homelessness-in-perth/</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Victoria HousingFirst</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A social and affordable housing provider managing 1,203 properties in Victoria, of which 82 per cent is social housing and 18 per cent is affordable housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further information can be found at: <a href="https://housingfirst.org.au/">https://housingfirst.org.au/</a></li> <li> <a href="https://housingfirst.org.au/partners/201-national-rental-affordability-scheme-nras">https://housingfirst.org.au/partners/201-national-rental-affordability-scheme-nras</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Neami National</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A support service provider involved in several Housing First programs in Australia, including the Way2Home, Street to Home and Towards Home programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further information can be found at: <a href="https://www.neaminational.org.au/our-services/housing-and-homelessness/">https://www.neaminational.org.au/our-services/housing-and-homelessness/</a></li> </ul>

<b>International Approaches</b>	
<b>Housing First Approach</b>	<b>Further Information</b>
<p><b>Finland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Finnish approach involved a commitment from all levels of government to build homeless policies on the foundations of Housing First.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further information can be found at:  <a href="https://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/finland/">https://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/finland/</a>   <a href="https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland">https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland</a> </li> </ul>
<p><b>United States (across cities)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some Housing First models provide rental assistance of varying duration and type depending on a household's needs, for example, if individuals and families have experienced long-term homelessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further information can be found at:  <a href="http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf">http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf</a> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Denmark</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing First was implemented in the Danish's <i>National Homelessness Strategy</i> (2009 to 2013) which focused on immediate access to permanent housing with intensive support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further information can be found at:  <a href="https://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/denmark/">https://housingfirsteurope.eu/countries/denmark/</a> </li> </ul>

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
Legal Affairs

Public Hearing – 7 July 2020  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Question 16

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000518

**Member:** Mr Wallace

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 16

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 21 July 2020

**Question:**

Chair: I'd like you to provide the committee with some advice on the concept of the social impact investing: how it operates; whether it's operating in Australia; how successful it has been.

**Answer:**

Social impact investing (SII) is an outcomes based investment model that aims to achieve social outcomes as well as a financial return. It brings together governments, service providers, investors and philanthropists to undertake collaborative projects that aim to achieve improved social outcomes.

The main forms of social impact investments are:

- Payment-by-outcomes programs, including social impact bonds  
In a payment-by-outcomes (PBO) model, a service provider is paid by a commissioning body (often a government) to deliver specified outcomes, and the level of payment is contingent on the measured outcomes. A social impact bond (SIB) is a type of PBO contract in which social impact investors cover the service provider's upfront costs of service delivery—with the expectation of gaining a return on their investment when outcomes are achieved.
- Social enterprises  
A social enterprise is an organisation that is led by a social or environmental mission—which may be either a not-for-profit or for-profit entity. There are many small scale social enterprises in Australia, and few large scale entities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Social Impact Investing Taskforce: Interim Report (online)

The impact investing market in Australia is relatively small, but growing. In 2020, Responsible Investment Association Australasia estimates that the total value of impact investment products widely available to Australian investors as at 31 December 2019 has risen 249 per cent to \$19.9 billion from \$5.7 billion as at 31 December 2017. This growth is driven by green, social and sustainability bonds, which account for \$17.4 billion.

About \$2.5 billion of investments in 2019 targeted social outcomes, an increase from \$242 million in 2018. \$766 million of the \$2.5 billion is accounted for through investment in social and affordable housing, including \$630 million in bonds issued by the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC - a corporate Commonwealth entity and financial intermediary that commenced operations in 2018).<sup>2</sup>

#### Australian Government social impact investing activity

The Government has committed \$52.7 million in funding since 2017-18 for four initiatives managed by the Department of Social Services (the department) to support SII in Australia. There are two capacity building initiatives to increase the SII market. In addition, there are two trial initiatives to enable the Government to evaluate the effectiveness of impact investing as a financial mechanism to address social disadvantage. The two trial initiatives will comprise: a number of State and Territory trial projects; and, three Payments By Outcomes projects. Under the State and Territory trial projects, \$10.1 million has been committed to help young people at risk of homelessness, as part of the 2017-18 Reducing Pressure on Housing Affordability Budget package, and two projects are currently being negotiated with state governments and service providers.

Indigenous Business Australia, a commercially-focused corporate Commonwealth entity, manages an investment program, offering sustainable investment opportunities that have the potential to generate positive economic and social impacts for Indigenous Australians.

Recent large-scale impact investments in housing have been facilitated by NHFIC to improve housing outcomes for Australians by contributing to increasing the supply of housing, particularly affordable housing.

NHFIC uses a bond aggregator model to issue bonds in the capital market. The proceeds of the social bond issuance are used to provide concessional funding arrangements to registered community housing providers (CHPs). This provides lower-cost, longer-term finance solutions to CHPs to support the provision of social/affordable housing and facilitates greater private and institutional investment in the sector. The value of bonds issued by NHFIC was \$630 million in 2019.

In the 2019-20 Budget, \$5 million was committed to fund a SII Taskforce in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop a strategy for the Australian Government's role in SII. The Taskforce delivered its interim report<sup>3</sup> to Government in January 2020. The final report is due in October 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Michaux, F, Lee, A, and Jain, A, 2020, *Benchmarking Impact: Australian Impact Investor Insights, Activity and Performance Report 2020*, Responsible Investment Association Australasia, Sydney

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/domestic-policy/social-impact-investing-taskforce-interim-report>

### State government social impact investing activity

The level of activity varies across state governments with some focusing on impact bonds and others exploring social enterprise policies. To date, three state government SII programs address homelessness as the primary outcome area. While the outcomes achieved through these programs are looking promising, it is too early to determine the success of these programs.

- The South Australian Government commissioned the Aspire SIB in 2017, raising \$9 million in private investment to fund the Aspire Program. The Hutt St Centre delivers the program, providing long-term (three years) support to 600 people experiencing homelessness in Adelaide over seven years. Support for participants includes stable accommodation, job readiness training, and pathways to employment and life skills development. The bond is underpinned by a \$17 million PBO contract with the South Australian Government, and may deliver an 8.5 per cent per annum return to investors over a 7.75 year term, if expected outcomes are achieved.
- Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI) is a \$10 million investment delivered by Sacred Heart Mission in partnership with the Victorian Government. The J2SI funding model involves a PBO contract, a deferred SIB and philanthropic guarantees to reduce financing costs. J2SI gives people experiencing long-term homelessness in Melbourne rapid access to permanent housing and intensive wrap-around support for three years. The third phase commenced in 2018 and will assist 180 people over five years.
- The New South Wales Government launched the Home & Healthy Program in 2019 in partnership with Mission Australia, supporting up to 1,200 people at-risk of homelessness leaving health facilities in Sydney over six years. The program supports participants to enter and sustain permanent housing, access mental and physical health services, engage with work, and connect with their local community. The New South Wales Government has committed \$20 million towards the program through a PBO model.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
Legal Affairs

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Parl Com QoN - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
Legal Affairs inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Written Questions from  
Minister Murphy - Question 1

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000520

**Member:** Ms Peta Murphy

**Type of Question:** Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 16

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

I have some questions about Commonwealth rental assistance. I'm interested in some of the background trends, so the number of individuals or families who have received Commonwealth rental assistance over time—in your submission the time frame is usually 2001 to 2016, and that's fine with me—what has been the trend of total government Commonwealth government expenditure on rent assistance over that time, and any change to the amount of rental assistance as a proportion of rent that has also occurred.

**Answer:**

Commonwealth Rent Assistance trend data is provided below for:

- a) Recipient numbers (2001 to 2019 - table 1)
- b) Government expenditure (2001 to 2019 - table 2)
- c) Fortnightly Rent Assistance as percentage of rent (2013 to 2019 - table 3).



**Table 1 – Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipient numbers 2001 to 2019 (at June)**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Recipient numbers *</i>
2001	976,333
2002	943,877
2003	940,076
2004	949,698
2005	965,229
2006	954,317
2007	950,000
2008	943,901
2009	1,113,575
2010	1,214,008
2011	1,213,373
2012	1,254,793
2013	1,267,979
2014	1,315,385
2015	1,343,431
2016	1,345,983
2017	1,343,432
2018	1,311,187
2019	1,285,941

\*From June 2013, recipients were no longer counted as individuals, and were instead reported as an income unit - defined as a single person (with or without dependent children) or a couple (with or without dependent children). 'Recipient' numbers prior to June 2013 are not comparable to recipient figures on and after June 2013.

**Table 2 – Commonwealth Rent Assistance expenditure 2000-01 to 2018-19**

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Expenditure (\$million)</i>
2000-01	1,717
2001-02	1,815
2002-03	1,848
2003-04	1,953
2004-05	2,086
2005-06	2,134
2006-07	2,223
2007-08	2,285
2008-09	2,621
2009-10	2,941
2010-11	3,133
2011-12	3,354
2012-13	3,628
2013-14	3,950
2014-15	4,182
2015-16	4,376
2016-17	4,399
2017-18	4,439
2018-19 <sup>e</sup>	4,439

e: Estimated actual expenditure

**Table 3 – Average fortnightly entitled Commonwealth Rent Assistance as percentage of Average fortnightly rent paid**

<i>Income unit type</i>	<i>Jun-19</i>	<i>Jun-18</i>	<i>Jun-17</i>	<i>Jun-16</i>	<i>Jun-15</i>	<i>Jun-14</i>	<i>Jun-13</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Single, no children, sharer	25.37	25.48	25.50	25.54	25.84	25.90	25.94
Other single, no children	30.05	30.14	30.00	30.04	30.13	30.55	30.86
Couple, no children	21.32	21.35	21.29	21.17	21.31	21.36	21.43
Single, 1 or 2 children	21.24	21.52	21.61	21.62	21.81	21.94	21.92
Single, 3 or more children	22.34	22.53	22.53	22.59	22.60	22.89	23.01
Couple, 1 or 2 children	16.38	16.40	16.30	16.18	16.40	16.61	16.64
Couple, 3 or more children	18.15	18.15	18.18	18.32	18.15	18.45	18.36
Couple, temp or ill separated	22.93	22.29	22.43	22.15	22.18	22.54	22.66

Notes:

1. An income unit comprises a single person (with or without dependent children) or a couple (with or without dependent children). Single social security recipients living together in the same household are regarded as separate income units.
2. The figures shown are the calculation of the average rent paid divided by the average Commonwealth Rent Assistance received.
3. Average Rent Assistance per fortnight is based on 14 times the daily entitlement to Rent Assistance for the fortnight at the end of the quarter.
4. Data as at the last Friday in June.
5. Providing further data beyond 2013 would be an unreasonable diversion of resources as data would need to be recreated.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
Legal Affairs

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

**Topic:** Parl Com QoN - House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and  
Legal Affairs inquiry into homelessness in Australia - Written Questions from  
Minister Murphy - Question 4

**Question reference number:** SQ20-000523

**Member:** Peta Murphy

**Type of Question:** Written. Hansard Page/s: N/A

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 28 July 2020

**Question:**

Also, is there any data about the number of people who have contacted Services Australia experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the last three or four months, given that Services Australia is the first point of contact for these people?

**Answer:**

From March to June 2020, Services Australia social workers received 12,614 referrals for customers experiencing homelessness or accommodation issues. For the same period in 2019, social workers received 16,005 referrals for customers experiencing homelessness or accommodation issues.