



1 April 2020

Mr Andrew Wallace MP
Chair
The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Wallace

Submission to the Inquiry into the Homelessness in Australia

Thank you for the opportunity for End Street Sleeping Collaboration to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (attached).

I am forwarding this submission on behalf of the End Street Sleeping Collaboration Board.

I note that prior to the preparation of the submission two Board members declared a conflict of interest. With the agreement of the Board these two Directors were not involved in preparation of the submission.

The End Street Sleeping Collaboration represents an innovation in reducing and preventing homelessness. We would be pleased to meet with the committee to provide further information. Our submission also extends an invitation for the committee to speak with Dame Louise Casey and the Institute of Global Homelessness, about their work globally, and their insights into the Australian context.

To discuss this invitation and the work of End Street Sleeping Collaboration please contact me on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Christine McBride
Chief Executive Officer



About End Street Sleeping Collaboration

There is no one organisation that can solve homelessness – a collaborative, whole of community effort is required.

On 13 February 2019, the Premier of NSW signed a joint commitment with the Institute of Global Homelessness to join the IGH's Vanguard Cities movement, accompanied by the City of Sydney, and leaders of Australia's largest homelessness sector non-government organisations.

Collectively, these organisations committed to reducing street sleeping across NSW by 50% by 2025 and to work towards ending street sleeping in NSW by 2030. The achievement of this commitment is one of the NSW Premier's priority projects.

End Street Sleeping Collaboration is a new independent entity, established in late 2019 to coordinate a collaborative effort to reduce, and ultimately end street sleeping across NSW.

We believe the End Street Sleeping Collaboration is the only organisation of its kind in Australia's homelessness sector. The entity is owned, managed and driven by a collaboration between government (the NSW Government, the City of Sydney Council); business (Payce Foundation), and major not-for-profit organisations (Salvation Army, Mission Australia, Wesley Mission, YFoundations, Jewish House, CatholicCare, St Vincent De Paul, St Vincent's Health Australia and Neami National).

These organisations are committing resources and effort to driving a systemic change in NSW.

Like many other places, the homelessness service system in NSW has developed incrementally, with programs and services evolving separately both within and across sectors – social, health, corrections, mental health, employment are funded separately with different requirements and in different locations. Many positive and important efforts to address and prevent homelessness are in place.

In inner city Sydney, many hundreds of people have been supported into stable, long term accommodation. However, the number of people sleeping on the streets in the inner City has not reduced at the same rate, and people continue to enter into homelessness.

End Street Sleeping Collaboration's work aims to align these individual efforts to take a systemic approach. By learning from the experiences of people who are sleeping rough we can understand the drivers of homelessness and take preventative action. By taking a collaborative, systemic approach, End Street Sleeping Collaboration hopes to shift from an individual organisation-by-organisation or program-by-program efforts, to a single collaborative effort that aims to shift the focus to prevention.

The End Street Sleeping Collaboration will be working with communities across NSW, starting in the City of Sydney, to introduce a new methodology and collaborative effort to reduce street sleeping.

At the heart of this project is a belief that no one in our communities should sleep rough.

For this to be achieved, the firm focus of government, social and human services, the corporate sector and the community must be in making a joint commitment to collaboration, and systemic change.

This work is supported by the Institute of Global Homelessness' network of expert advisors, including Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, Chair of the Institute of Global Homelessness.

Global Best Practice

The Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) is the organisation supporting a global movement to end street homelessness. It is the first organisation to focus on homelessness as a global issue, with an emphasis on those who are living on the street or in emergency shelters. The Institute aims to support 150 cities to end street homelessness by 2030. The foundation for this effort will be the pioneering work of a small group of Vanguard Cities who will set and work towards goals that put them on a path to ending street homelessness by 2030.

Sydney was the 10th Vanguard city and NSW the first state to sign up to targets to reduce street sleeping. Adelaide, through the Adelaide Zero project was the first Australian city to participate.

The Institute provides support to each of the Vanguard locations drawing on the global network of experience to provide advice and guidance.

End Street Sleeping Collaboration is the ‘backbone’ organisation to coordinate implementation of the IGH approach in Sydney and across NSW.

The Institute’s work with the United Nations

In February 2020, with the advice and leadership from the Institute of Global Homelessness, the United Nations has developed its first report on the issue of homelessness and released its first ever draft resolution on Homelessness.

The report concludes that:

“Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multi-sectoral approach and integrated responses, cutting across fiscal, economic, labour, housing, health, social protection and urban development policies. Whole-of-government and whole-of society approaches need to be taken to address and prevent homelessness. Policies have to be inclusive of and responsive to the rights, needs and aspirations of individuals, especially those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations.”

The Draft Resolution provides a definition and measures of homelessness that can be used consistently, worldwide. The Resolution:

- calls on member states to establish key categories of homelessness
- encourages member states to harmonise measurement and collection of data on homelessness
- emphasizes “the need to make concerted efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness”.

Invitation to speak with Dame Louise Casey DBE CB and the Institute of Global Homelessness

Over the last 20 years, Dame Louise Casey DBE CB has been instrumental in the development of a number of bespoke social policy programmes for the UK Government. Drawing on her previous experiences leading the UK homeless charity Shelter, Dame Louise has consistently delivered brave and innovative solutions to long standing social problems ranging from homelessness to anti-social behaviour to troubled families. As the UK Homelessness Czar, Dame Louise led a successful strategy

to reduce the number of people sleeping rough on the streets across the UK. This successful strategy was implemented in the 2000s and its success was maintained for 10 years.

At the request of the UK Government, Dame Louise is currently leading a review of the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping in the UK and is coordinating the response to coronavirus in the UK's homelessness sector.

Dame Louise has visited Australia on many occasions in recent years and is familiar with the challenges and opportunities in addressing homeless in Australia and globally.

We would like to arrange an opportunity for the committee to speak with Dame Louise and other key members of the Institute of Global Homelessness via videoconference.

To arrange this please contact Christine McBride, CEO End Street Sleeping Collaboration.

The End Street Sleeping Collaboration's Approach in NSW

The End Street Sleeping Collaboration's methodology is based on the global best practice approach of using real-time, by-name data to drive individual solutions and systemic change. The approach is used in communities across Australia (including Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth) as well as in communities around the world.

End Street Sleeping's approach is to:

1. Set a goal and commit
2. Collect person by person stories and systems data
3. Work collaboratively across the whole community
4. Reshape our service systems to focus on prevention

A cornerstone of our methodology is knowing every person sleeping on the streets by name, creating a 'By-Name List' of people who are street sleeping. The By-Name List is predicated on the principle that each person has a story to tell. A story that allows them to be assisted out of homelessness; and a story that can help us understand what factors lead people into homelessness. The By-Name List is the key to not only helping those individuals, but also to providing evidence that will inform policy innovation that will 'turn off the taps' and intervene and prevent people from having to sleep on the streets.

The information contained in the By-Name List is collected using an internationally used survey tool – the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool). This survey collects information about each person's circumstances, health, history, risks and housing needs. This information can assist services to coordinate support for individuals in a more effective way.

Collecting this data in real-time and aggregating the data provides an understanding of the number of people who are entering homelessness and leaving it, and the drivers of their situation. Understanding this information enables a community to respond to the drivers of homelessness in real time. Real time responses allow a continuous improvement environment.

Microsoft have supported End Street Sleeping Collaboration to develop an electronic data capture tool for the VI-SPDAT survey. This tool will allow specialist homelessness services to complete surveys with people and have that information uploaded to the By-Name List in real-time. The tool was used during a Connections Week in the City of Sydney in November 2019 where, with the support of collaboration partners 390 people were engaged and the beginning of the By-Name List was created. We are now working with Microsoft to increase the capability of the tools to operate in real time.

The Innovation of Real Time Data for Early Intervention and Prevention of Homelessness

There can be no doubt that the increase provision of social and affordable housing is critical to both preventing and addressing homelessness. A variety of housing types and models of support must be available to support people in different circumstances. Taking a ‘Housing First’ approach is among the most critical of these.

In addition, the innovation of real time data allows us to do more to focus on prevention of homelessness. By ‘turning off the taps’ and reducing the number of people who become homeless, and provision of adequate housing and support to those who do, homelessness is solvable.

Our aim should be to ensure that at any point in time, the amount of housing and support available is greater than the number of people who become homeless. Any instance of homelessness should be brief and infrequent.

Using the By Name List we can monitor the ‘flow’ of people entering and exiting homelessness. By understanding the pathways or system failures that are leading people to become homeless and the circumstances that cause tenancy breakdown we have the insight to intervene at a systems level.

With the combined effort of government, not-for-profit services and the community we can make the systems changes that are required. No one organisation can make this systemic shift alone.

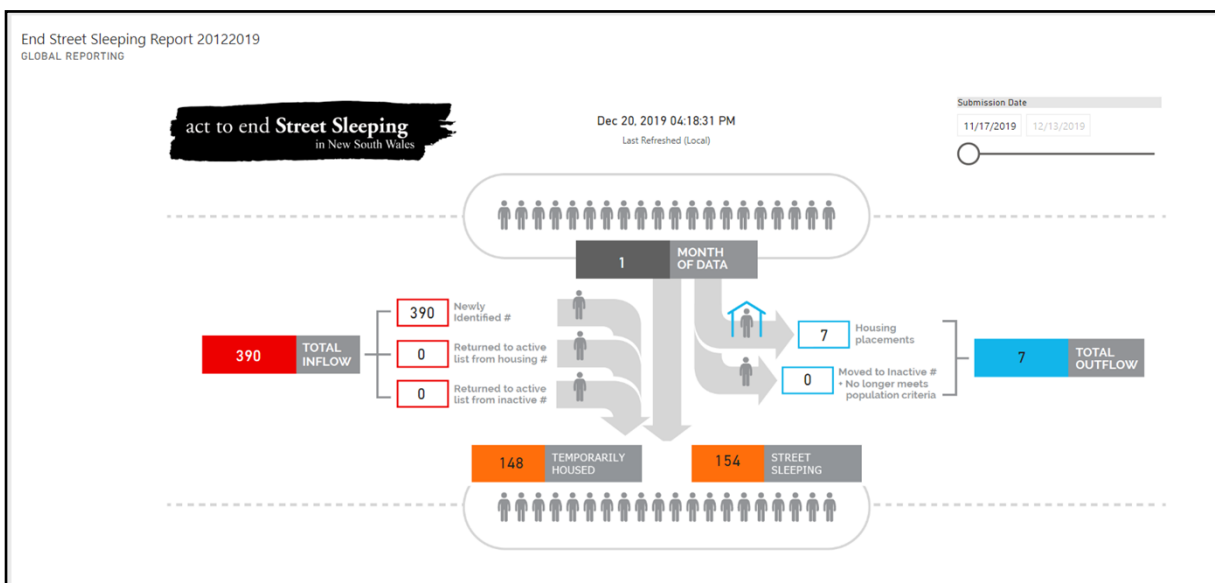


Diagram 1: Monitoring the ‘inflow’ and ‘outflow’ of homelessness using the By-Name List

People who are street sleeping represent the most vulnerable and complex form of homelessness (among many vulnerable and complex groups). By focusing our efforts on systemic change for this group, we will also be impacting the systems for other groups experiencing homelessness. By addressing rough sleeping specifically, we hope to be impacting the homelessness services system generally.

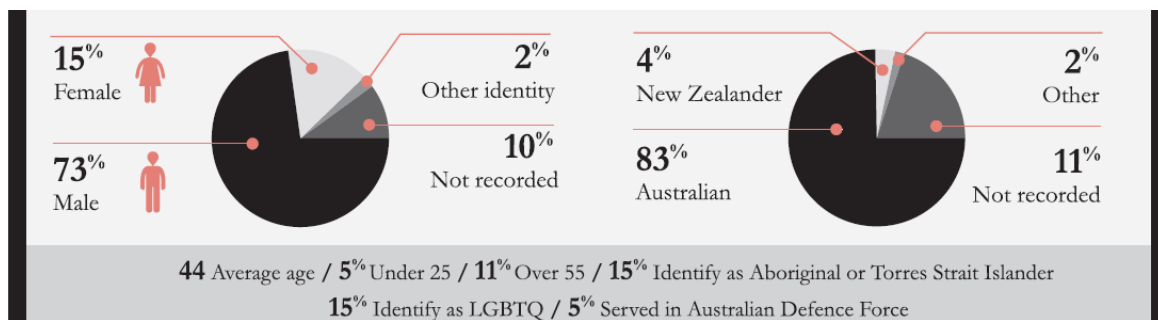
The Experiences of People Street Sleeping in Inner City Sydney

In November 2019, service providers and volunteers came together to conduct surveys with people experiencing homelessness in the City of Sydney Local Government Area. The data gathered during ‘Connections Week’ forms the start of a By-Name List for the City of Sydney community.

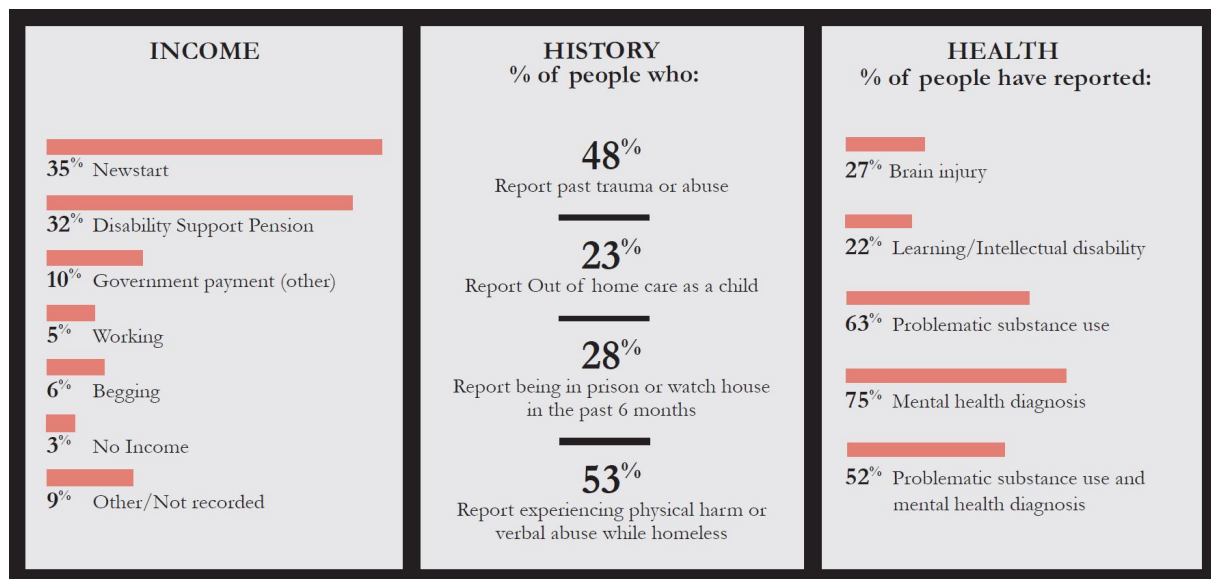
390 people who were street sleeping or staying in crisis accommodation were engaged, and 363 of those participated in a survey called the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation and Decision Assistance Tool).

The internationally used VI-SPDAT survey asks about each person’s history, wellbeing and needs. It is designed to assist service providers to understand who experiences homelessness, the risks and vulnerabilities people face and give initial insights into the types of supports people may require.

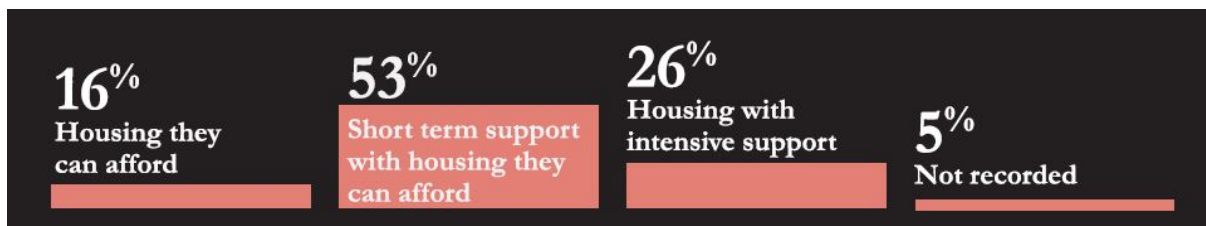
It also paints a picture of the experiences of people who homeless.



Aggregated data from the week confirms that poverty, traumatic history and health issues are the predominant experiences of those who are homeless in Sydney.

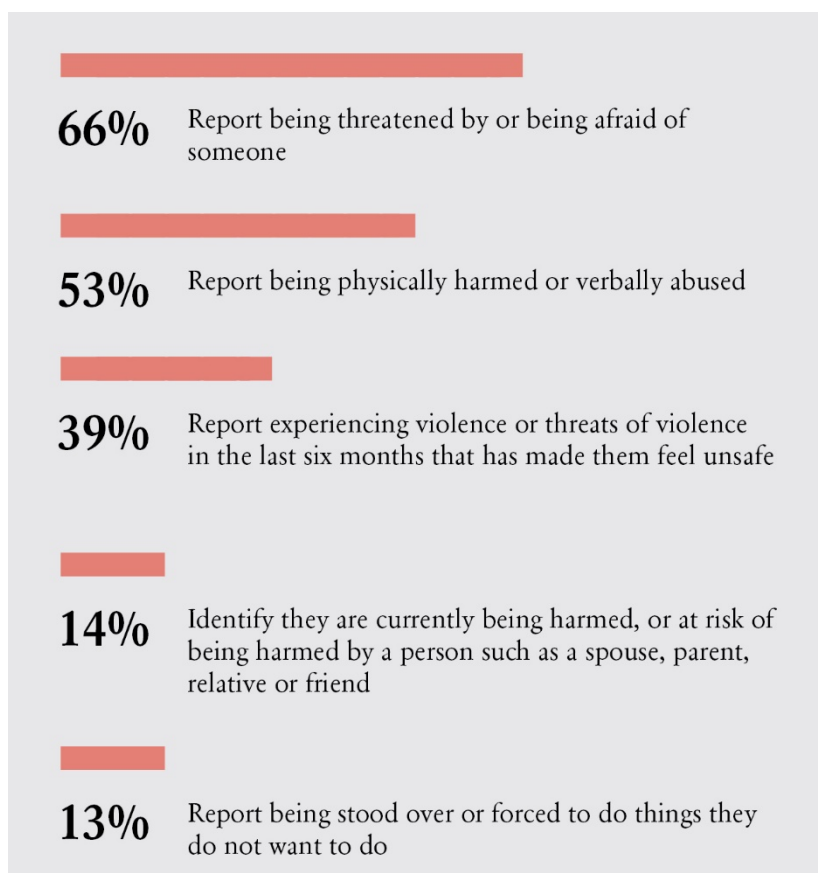


It also reinforces the need for people to have access to affordable housing in conjunction with support services in order to successfully exit homelessness.

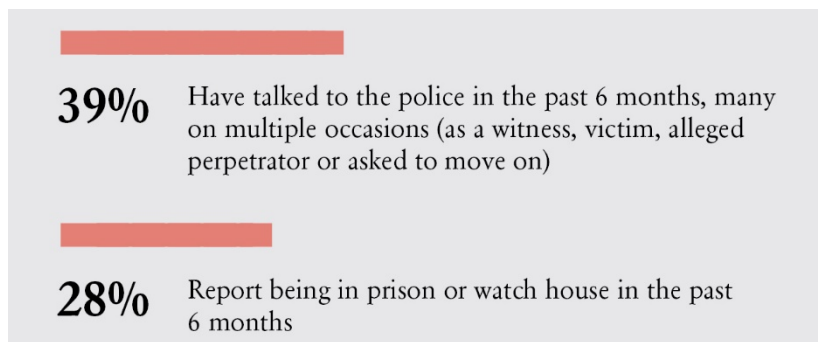


On average, people participating in the Connections Week survey were homeless for approximately 5 ½ years, many cycling in and out of homelessness over many years. The survey results provide some insights into the experiences of people during their time living in public places.

Experiences of fear and violence are commonplace:



People who are homeless report frequent engagement with police and criminal justice:



People overwhelmingly report they are unable to take care of basic daily needs - 88% report they are unable to take care of their basic needs for things such as food, bathing, changing clothes, toilet, clean water.

A life of homelessness and street sleeping is also a life that risks isolation and disconnection from the roles and engagement in meaningful work or activities that most take for granted. 53% of people identify that they are usually bored or lacking things to do on most days.

There can be no doubt that any experience of homelessness is an experience of trauma and crisis. Experience of street sleeping both creates and exacerbates deterioration in physical and mental health and wellbeing. Reducing the amount of time any person must sleep on the street and ultimately preventing it all together is a critical goal.

The history and experiences of people who were surveyed in 2019 are broadly consistent with those reported during a similar survey event (Registry Week) in the City of Sydney in 2015. This is a clear indication that new approaches are needed to successfully prevent and reduce homelessness.

Using the By-Name List in responding to Covid-19

The By-Name List is already proving to be a source of critical information in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The data has been beneficial in assisting homelessness and health services to plan and respond to Covid-19.

By name list data has been made available to homelessness and health services in inner Sydney to assist in identifying the prevalence of underlying health conditions such as asthma, emphysema and diabetes that place people at greater risk. This health information has also been cross matched with the person's level of vulnerability (VI score) to provide a wholistic indication of the level of support that a person may require. Other data such as information on history of hospitalisation can to assist in planning for the types of support people might need. These services can also search for the names of individuals who have reported a particular health diagnosis. This allows services to reach out to the people who are most at risk in a proactive way.

The End Street Sleeping Collaboration is implementing a best practice methodology, through a truly collaborative approach. With the support of a global network of experts and the backing of government, not-for-profits and business, we are focusing our target of halving street sleeping in NSW by 2025 and our vision of ending street sleeping by 2030 and we would be pleased to speak to the Committee further about our work.