

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2015-16 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 4.1 Housing and Homelessness Question No: SQ15-000695

Topic: Homelessness Services

Hansard page: CA138, 3 June 2015

Senator Ludlam, Scott asked:

Women who were older and living alone will be poorer than men of equivalent age. They will be less able to maintain home ownership and also less able to compete in the private rental market for affordable accommodation. It is now I think reasonably well established that older women who were living alone will be less well-off, less wealthy than men of their age, unless able to retain home ownership or compete in the private rental market. I wonder whether the government has a strategy to deal with that problem and whether you have any data on the profile of women accessing homelessness services. For example, is it changing in line with that general trend of older women simply not being able to compete for private rentals or home ownership?

Answer:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) publishes data on Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). This data collection commenced in July 2011.

This AIHW data shows that an additional 4 per cent of people accessed specialist homelessness services in 2013-14 (254,001 in total) compared to 2012-13. Over this period the number of female clients aged 55 or over that accessed specialist homelessness services increased by 9 per cent to 9,752¹. The AIHW publishes its SHS data at www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness-publications/.

The Commonwealth Government is continuing to support state and territory governments to provide services to vulnerable Australians who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, by committing to funding of up to \$115 million each year, for two years, under the 2015-17 National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. This is on top of the approximately \$1.3 billion per annum provided by the Commonwealth to states and territories through the National Affordable Housing Agreement, which includes around \$260 million for homelessness services.

The Commonwealth Government also provides Commonwealth Rent Assistance to around 1.3 million individuals and families, at a cost of approximately \$4.4 billion in 2014-15, to assist with private rental costs.

Future funding arrangements, and the respective roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories in housing assistance and homelessness services, will be considered in the context of the White Paper on the Reform of the Federation.

¹ *Specialist homelessness services 2012-13 and 2013-14 – Supplementary tables – National* (Table S2.1)