

# **Ending Homelessness in Australia: Challenges and Opportunities**

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# Argument

- We ought to end homelessness
- We have both morality and the technical expertise on our sides. Ending it, also, is a better way to spend our money
- When we do not end a person homelessness, why?
- Is it a poverty of ambition? Are we motivated by how charity makes us feel?
- The need to end it demonstrates our significant failures

## **Why we should**

- Move beyond rights discourse. Focus on consequences
- Participation in society
- See people as the embodiment of their deprivation
- Family responsibility

# Why we should

- Homelessness = absence of control and autonomy
- Withholding housing creates dependence
- We live in an interdependent world; resources promote positive independencies
- Appreciated and respected volunteers, but using them challenged self-worth

## **Why we should**

- Just efficient
- Pointless to treat someone who is homeless and send them back to the social conditions that make them sick (Michael Marmot 2005)
- Housing is the most powerful prescription a physician could write for a homeless person (Doran et al. 2013)

## **Why we should**

- Homelessness has the consequence of undermining legitimacy and voice:

*Well they just put you on medication and knock you out all day. You didn't get to say a thing (Tenant)*

*Always just gave more medication. All right, it did work, but it's no use just giving more medication when you don't know what's causing it (Tenant)*

# How to end homelessness

- Because of consequences (just discussed) and solutions (about to be discussed), when we do not, we are forced to justify why

# Evidence

- Purposeful street outreach
- Efficiencies in identification
- Addressing barriers to accessing housing
- Tightly linked: street outreach and affordable, secure housing
- Ongoing support?



# Evidence

- 80 – 90% tenancy sustained: Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane
- Hardest to house
- Challenge to housing readiness
- Are our housing and support systems ready?

# **Institutionalise**

- Institutionalise housing access
- Institutionalise access to support
- No more pilots
- Not only to clients

# Where do the problems sit?

- If we have to justify why we do not solve an individual's homelessness, we need precise explanations
- Is it a lack of housing?
- Rodney Fopp: Backlogs and Bottlenecks
- Is it morality?
- Are they not deserving?

## **Deservingness matters**

A 24-hours "safe-space" facility is not a solution to homelessness... People are camping in Martin Place because we have insufficient affordable housing for them.

We need immediate responses that involve secure and affordable housing, not temporary homeless accommodation, or more charity. More trials and pilots are not needed.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/dont-respond-to-injustice-by-bringing-in-the-cops-to-martin-place-20170808-gxrmrf.html#comments>

## **Comment SMH 09/08/2017 Bender**

People's problems are their own. It's not for government to sort them out by handing them a wad of other people's money (which just exacerbates the problem as more people seek to be given other people's money rather than earn their own).

People need to sort themselves out and be left to their own devices. I don't work to support others and am sick and tired of the endless gravy train handed to people who do nothing with their lives and then expect me to pay for them.

If you can't look after yourself, don't stick your hand in my pocket. I'm more than happy for the cops to move them along. Quickly and efficiently.

## **Comment SMH 09/08/2017 KK**

‘They are without shelter, so any shelter will do; not taking offers of shelter means that they are choosing homelessness.’

If I'm not happy with my house or its location can I demand the government supply a better located and more comfortable home? If I can't why should these people?

# Where do the problems sit?

- Poverty of ambition
  - Pop up housing
  - Last resort housing
  - Mobile washing machines, mobile showers, mobile hairdressers

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### ‘Dignity’ First

The pair, who have a background in disability and mental health services, wanted to combine their passion for hairdressing with their other passion - helping those who find themselves in tough situations

The trailer, funded thanks to a Dignity First grant from the Queensland Department of Housing, visits service providers around Moreton Bay, Redcliffe and Strathpine to create a space for people to "shoot the shit and be transformed"

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/mobile-barber-shop-provides-homeless-with-more-than-just-hair-cuts-20170804-gxponu.html>



## **Poverty of ambition**

- A Queensland charity received \$297,000 government funding to provide mobile washing machines and showers. Another organisation was granted \$305,000 from the Queensland Government “to buy and convert a bus so it can be used for a mobile shower and laundry service” (Queensland Government 2017)

# Poverty of ambition

- Normalises homelessness
- Distracts out attention
- Peter Singer (2015): effective altruism
- Good is determined by demonstrable impact

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# Supportive Housing



# **Linked Administrative Data Analysis**

- We tested theories about service usage and cost offsets
- Two time windows: 12 months pre supportive housing, and 12 months post supportive housing (N=41)
- In the 12 months pre-supportive housing people were chronically homeless

# Administrative Data Sources

- Health:
  - emergency; admitted; mental health, and ambulance
- Police:
  - offences; victims of crime, and watchhouse
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General:
  - courts
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General:
  - prisons; probation, and parole
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:
  - SHS, including accommodation and brokerage

# Linked Administrative Data

- Mental Health

	12 months pre tenancy commencement	12 months post tenancy commencement	Difference between pre and post
<b>Episodes</b>	1,029	359	-669 (65%↓)
<b>Minutes</b>	27,152	10,560	-16,592 (61%↓)
<b>Cost</b>	\$372,498	\$129,958	-\$242,540

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# Linked Administrative Data

- Queensland Police Service

	12 months pre tenancy commencement	12 months post tenancy commencement	Difference between pre and post
Occurrences as Offender	50	24	-26 (52%↓)
Cost per offender = \$2,453	\$122,650	\$58,872	-\$63,778
Offences as Offender	57	28	-29 (51%↓)
Occurrences as Victim	24	11	-13 (54%↓)
Cost per victim = \$243	\$5,832	\$2,673	-\$3,159
Occurrence Police or Corrections transport to Hospital	5	1	-4 (80%↓)
Nights in Police Custody	45	27	-18 (40%↓)
Cost per night in custody = \$830	\$37,350	\$22,410	-\$14,940
<b>Total cost of Police</b>	<b>\$165,832</b>	<b>\$83,955</b>	<b>-\$81,877</b>

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# Linked Administrative Data

	12 months pre tenancy commencement	12 months post tenancy commencement	Difference between pre and post
Admitted patients	\$1,064,167	\$472,673	-\$591,495
Mental Health	\$372,498	\$129,958.	-\$242,540
Emergency	\$102,510	\$104,860	+\$2,350
Ambulance	\$41,600	\$40,950	-\$650
<b>Subtotal Health Difference</b>	<b>\$1,580,775</b>	<b>\$748,441</b>	<b>-\$832,335</b>
Corrective Services	\$32,296	\$1,452	-\$30,844
Court	\$23,400	\$13,217	-\$10,183
Police	\$165,832	\$83,955	-\$81,877
<b>Subtotal Criminal Justice Difference</b>	<b>\$221,528</b>	<b>\$98,624</b>	<b>-\$122,904</b>
Specialist Homelessness Services	\$174,613	\$5,249	-\$169,364
<b>Total Cost Difference</b>	<b>\$1,976,916</b>	<b>\$852,314</b>	<b>-\$1,124,603</b>



## **State Government Cost offsets**

- Tenants used \$1,976,916 pre, compared to \$852,314 post
- *Pre*: Average annual spend of services \$48,217 per tenant
- *Post*: Average annual spend on services \$20,788 per tenant
- Annual cost of supportive housing per tenant = \$14,329
- $\$20,788 + \$14,329 = \$35,117$  (per tenant annually)

# State Government Cost offsets

- *Post*: Including services and supportive housing, average annual spend of \$35,117 per tenant
- *Pre*: Average annual spend of services \$48,217 per tenant
- Cost off set:  $\$48,217 - \$35,117 = \$13,100$
- It costs the Queensland Government \$13,100 to keep one individual chronically homeless for one year

# Life Changes and Identities

- Many outcomes did not change. What people did of a day and how they lived their lives however, changed demonstrably
- Social action is socially mediated – *reliance* on health, justice and welfare services solved with the provision of housing
- Moved from a homeless consumer, client, patient, inmate, to a tenant

# **Demonstrable failings**

- Support is often required, but not desired
- Eight out of ten biographies
- Housing First, supportive housing, and other housing initiatives end homelessness, but they are necessary because of our failures

# Conclusion

- Immediately end a person's homelessness with housing
- Structural change to (1) disrupt problems that manifest in deep exclusion and (2) institutionalise access to affordable and secure housing based on one's status as a person, not client of a program

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**QUESTIONS?**





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