



Thinker in Residence: **Dr Nonie Brennan**

Ending sleeping rough in the inner city

*Adelaide, Australia
November 4-22, 2019*

Acknowledgements

This report was written with the assistance of:

Dr Nonie Brennan, Senior Advisor and Collaborating Faculty at the Institute of Global Homelessness.

Prepared by:

Clare Rowley (Adelaide Zero Project), Rose Lagoon Williamson (Thinkers in Residence Project) from the Don Dunstan Foundation and Lydia Crawford-Pope, Thinkers in Residence Catalyst, Uniting Communities.

The Don Dunstan Foundation is very grateful to Uniting Communities for seconding Lydia Crawford-Pope to act as the Project Catalyst for this residency. The Thinkers in Residence program features 'Project Catalysts' for each residency. This allows for a professional from the local sector to accompany the Thinker throughout their program, providing professional support and local knowledge to the Thinker. At the same time, this offers a powerfully immersive professional development experience for the Project Catalyst.

Thank you to our partners

Presenting Partners



Dr Nonie Brennan visited Adelaide between Monday 4 and Friday 22 November 2019. Dr Brennan is a Senior Advisor at the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) and former CEO of All Chicago.

This is Dr Brennan's second visit to Adelaide after accompanying Dame Louise Casey in 2018 as part of Adelaide's recognition as a Vanguard City by the Institute of Global Homelessness. During the 2019 residency, Dr Brennan met with over 30 organisations and representatives from the housing and homelessness sector, local and state government representatives and Adelaide Zero Project stakeholders.

The visit was organised by the Thinkers in Residence program team in partnership with the Adelaide Zero Project.

Contents

Thinkers in Residence- Overview	4
About our Thinker in Residence	5
Foreword	6
Recommendations	7
• Housing	7
• Support	7
• System	7
Recommendations and Strategies- Discussion	8-11
Closing remarks	12

Thinkers in Residence- Overview

Established in 2003, the Adelaide Thinkers in Residence program was a global first. It is a tested Social Innovation, developed in South Australia, to address urgent challenges or to explore areas of opportunity, through new policy development and systems reform.

The program brings new ideas into the state and translates them into practical solutions to improve the lives of the people who live in South Australia. The Thinkers methodology relies upon the relevance of the issue at hand, the calibre of the visiting expert (known as the Thinker), and the leadership of the public, community, university and private sector partners who invest in the residency and commit to supporting the implementation of the recommendations.

The Thinkers in Residence program helped guide the State's response to some of the most important issues of the last decade including health, education, water, climate change, manufacturing, transport and road safety.

In 2017 the first series of residencies was launched under this new model with a focus on growing the purpose economy – we called them the Social Capital Residencies. The aim was to build on South Australia's founding purpose: to be a better society, while addressing our most contemporary need – job creation. The ultimate goal, and hence the name, was for South Australia to be as well known for Social Innovation as Geneva is for diplomacy or Tamworth is for country music – to be truly known as the Social Capital of Australia.

About our Thinker in Residence

Dr Nonie Brennan, Collaborating Faculty and Senior Advisor, Institute of Global Homelessness

Helping our neighbours come 'home' has been the driving theme of Dr Nonie Brennan's career. In every role Dr Brennan has held, she has brought a visionary, systems-change perspective and a grass-roots collaborative approach that drives efficiency, shares learning, aligns funding, and increases positive community outcomes.

From 1997 to 2002, Dr Brennan served as the Executive Director of the Volunteer Centre of Battle Creek where she led programming to help volunteers meaningfully contribute to their community. She also brought the first 2-1-1 Call Centre to the state of Michigan to help people in need to navigate to appropriate community services. In 2003, Dr Brennan became the Executive Director of the Emergency Fund, which she grew to become the largest provider of homelessness prevention funding in the state of Illinois. She co-launched Chicago's Homelessness Prevention Call Centre and effectively navigated an organisational merger with the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness. In 2011, Dr Brennan became the Chief Executive Officer of All Chicago Making Homelessness History, where she served until her retirement in 2019. Under her guidance, All Chicago grew to become a national and internationally recognised leader in proven practices that prevent and end homelessness.

Notable achievements under Dr Brennan's leadership include securing, distributing, and monitoring of over \$70 million in public and private funding to prevent and end homelessness for Chicago's homeless system annually; and implementing Chicago's 'Plan 2.0 – A Home for Everyone', in partnership with Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services. She has been instrumental in leading the systems change in Chicago over the last 15 years that has led to an overall decrease in homelessness by 25%.

Dr Brennan was elected to the King's University College Board of Directors in 2019, served on the National Public Housing Museum Board of Directors, was appointed by Chicago's Mayor Rahm Emanuel to the Community Development Advisory Board and was appointed by Governor Engler to the Michigan Community Service Board. Dr Brennan serves as a part-time faculty member at DePaul University, and as Collaborating Faculty and Senior Advisor to the Institute of Global Homelessness. She holds a Doctor of Management from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management, and a Master's in Public Service from DePaul University and a Bachelor of Arts in English and History from King's University College at Western University. She has received recognition for her visionary leadership through a Special Tribute from Michigan's Governor John Engler and the Alumni of Distinction Award from King's University College in 2015. In 2017, she received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Western Reserve University.

Dr Brennan enjoys cooking, reading, travelling, and life at her cottage in Bayfield, Ontario, with her husband Michael, her two community-minded daughters, Jocelyn and Andie, and her dog Edgar.

Foreword

While visiting in 2018, Adelaide had been announced as one of only 13 Vanguard Cities in the world that had been recognised by the Institute of Global Homelessness for its commitment to reduce homelessness. Adelaide continues to lead the way in Australia and globally, with other cities looking to Adelaide to learn from the collective impact approach being championed by the Adelaide Zero Project to achieve lasting reductions in the number of people who are sleeping rough.

Returning in 2019, the progress that has been achieved is energising. Adelaide maintains its commitment to the set goal of reaching Functional Zero street homelessness by the end of December 2020. I have seen that the current system has strengths and initiatives in place to create ideal conditions for system-wide goals to be achieved.

Moreover, during my visit, Adelaide was certified by Community Solutions to be the first city outside of North America to have quality data on the names and needs of anyone sleeping rough in the inner city. No community world-wide has reached Functional Zero without meeting this milestone first.

It was clear that inner-city homelessness services, local and state government representatives and Adelaide Zero Project stakeholders have a shared appetite for change. There are respected voices from all parties that continue to discuss the need for service and sector integration and it is vital that they embrace opportunities to co-design solutions together. The vibrancy of the data that is now available from the By-Name List begins to tell the story of the real people behind the numbers and their experiences which form the statistics. Additionally, there is continued support from the Don Dunstan Foundation as the dedicated backbone agency for the project.

Homelessness and rough sleeping are not the failure of an individual, rather they are the result of complex system breakdowns. By recognising this and working together, an opportunity is created to enable the most vulnerable to access the most appropriate options for a home and to support them as their needs change over time.

Some Adelaideans are querying the methodology of a focus on people who are sleeping rough in the inner city as opposed to a state-wide effort. It's important to remember that a reduction in people who are sleeping rough in the inner city is a reduction in homelessness as a whole in South Australia. There are significant system learnings that have been achieved through the Adelaide Zero Project that can be rolled out across the state when the system is ready; and a co-ordinated effort of where the majority of service providers are based, is an efficiency of scale. Ultimately, a system matures through a process and a network effect, which has now begun with the dedication and unwavering support of the City and State representatives, services and stakeholders.

Every complex system starts with a simple system that works. In this instance, a system that supports housing the most vulnerable – those who are at risk of death and experience tri-morbidities that are exacerbated by the exposure, and the associated risk of being homeless and sleeping rough. This is the simple solution to this complex issue. Housing First is the methodology that is evidenced, researched and has internationally proven to be the most effective response. An understanding of this influenced the Recommendations for this Report.

Dr Nonie Brennan
Thinker in Residence

Recommendations

It is important for a community to have a shared understanding and shared goals. The Adelaide Zero Project has collectively chosen to work towards achieving Functional Zero in the inner city by December 2020. This goal is achievable, however there are three areas for the Adelaide Zero Project to focus on to ensure they meet their Functional Zero goal.

Housing

The Adelaide Zero Project would benefit from embracing a Housing First philosophy, which would allow service providers to move people from the By-Name List directly into permanent housing. This includes developing a shared understanding of Housing First, prioritising the most vulnerable people on the By-Name List who are experiencing sleeping rough within the Adelaide CBD, and committing to offering sustainable housing for those who have moved into temporary accommodation or been housed.

To achieve Functional Zero, the Adelaide Zero Project should focus on:

- **Increasing housing availability.**
- **Preventing people falling into homelessness.**
- **Re-defining the concept of 'housing' and 'home'.**

Support

The Adelaide Zero Project should consider enhancing its person-centred approach to ensure that periods of sleeping rough are rare, brief and non-recurring. A person-centred approach should be maintained throughout a person's journey out of homelessness. This ranges from providing support at the time of sleeping rough, to facilitating their transition into sustainable, long-term housing, as well as critical ongoing support after they are housed. All sectors should be involved in providing a person-centred response when interacting with people sleep rough or at risk of falling into homelessness.

To achieve Functional Zero, the Adelaide Zero Project should consider focusing on:

- **Ensuring each person receives the support and services they need.**
- **Providing training and technical assistance to the sector to ensure people's complex needs can be met.**

System

All communities worldwide who have reached Functional Zero have had a strong and well-functioning housing and homelessness system supporting the goals of effectively ending homelessness.

To do this, the Adelaide Zero Project should consider how to:

- **Make sure the right people are empowered to make decisions.**
- **Reinforce a data-driven decision-making process.**
- **Implement a process of monitoring and evaluation to ensure the system goals are being met.**

Recommendations and Strategies – Discussion

The Adelaide Zero Project has multiple opportunities for change, and an environment that is ready to embrace different approaches. There is a recognition that the current support services available to assist people with complex needs aren't effective in preventing cycles of crisis. A Housing First model, incorporating person-centred support with housing outcomes, is necessary for maintaining long-term tenancies and improved home and housing outcomes.

Adelaide should commit to a Housing First model as soon as possible, rather than requiring people to demonstrate 'housing-readiness' before they are able to be housed.

It is important to recognise there is a place for temporary, low-barrier shelter in every system, provided there are accessible and sustainable exits from shelter to permanent housing arrangements. The newly established 'Waymouth' as temporary accommodation for people sleeping rough is a great success in the short term, but there is still a need for a true low barrier shelter. A safe place where there is minimal criteria and barriers placed on people who would otherwise be sleeping rough, which people with complex needs can access, including people who are intoxicated. However, the Adelaide Zero Project's ultimate aim should be to support people from the By-Name List to access and maintain permanent housing.

Aboriginal people are 2.0% of South Australia's population. However approximately 40% of people who are actively homeless on the By-Name List identify as Aboriginal. As such, Adelaide needs an urgent response to eradicate barriers that exist throughout the housing and homelessness system which impact on the outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The SA Housing Authority released Our Housing Future 2020-2030 in December 2019. Many of the state-wide strategies included in the document have a direct link to the Adelaide Zero Project, and more can be leveraged to provide better outcomes for people on the By-Name List.



Between June 2019 and November 2019, Adelaide Zero Project's average housing placement rate was 11 people per month. This housing rate is sufficiently stabilising the number of people actively homeless in Adelaide's inner city, but needs to increase to significantly move the needle on the number of people sleeping rough. Adelaide should reassess methods to source, allocate and understand housing to reach Functional Zero by 2020.

Increase housing availability

Housing people from the By-Name List is a critical measure to meet a Functional Zero goal. Successful communities leverage all aspects of the housing system to provide appropriate housing options. Currently most of Adelaide Zero Project's housing stock comes from one source – public housing. To make positive moves in the direction of Functional Zero in 2020, the Adelaide Zero Project should look at options to:

- Source an additional five public housing properties per month.
- Source an additional five community housing properties per month.
- Allocate at least 50 people into private rental.

Adelaide hasn't extensively explored how to access private rental properties. However, options that can be considered include:

- A private rental subsidy program to support people from the By-Name List with low incomes to pay for a rental property for two years, similar to the Doorways program in Victoria.
- Head lease arrangements between private landlords and social housing providers.

Recommendations and Strategies – Discussion

Preventing people falling into homelessness

It is important to understand the role that prevention has in reducing the number of people sleeping rough. Prevention covers multiple levels, from system-level policy to make housing more affordable and accessible through to individual interventions to stop people falling into homelessness. The Adelaide Zero Project data shows that:

- 29% of people on the By-Name List slept rough before they were 25 years old.
- 30% of people on the By-Name List people were evicted from permanent housing.

The Adelaide Zero Project has the capacity through their data collection and analysis to investigate and implement tailored measures for individuals and to advocate for system-wide change. The Adelaide Zero Project could consider opportunities for reducing sleeping rough using the options All Chicago successfully implemented including:

- An Emergency Fund, which can be accessed by service providers to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness. For example paying a one-off utility bill, paying rent in arrears, supporting a family to feed an extra person couch surfing, paying for a car to be serviced so the person remains employed, and
- Connecting people with support at the point of eviction i.e. the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) help desk.

Re-defining the concept of 'housing' and 'home'

The Adelaide Zero Project has the opportunity to influence thinking on what defines 'housing' and 'home' within the local, national and international contexts. Adelaide has a transient population of people from remote Aboriginal communities who stay in the inner-city on a temporary basis. Thinking about housing in a non-traditional sense has the opportunity to create sustainable housing outcomes for all people on the By-Name List, including those who identify as Aboriginal. Adelaide could consider exploring how the current housing stock can be used better to accommodate people from the By-Name List. For example:

- Housing people who have developed a trusting relationship in shared tenancies, and
- Developing culturally appropriate responses to Aboriginal mobility.

Recommendations and Strategies – Discussion



Support

Providing 'wrap-around' support services is a key principle of the Housing First approach. Person-centred and individually tailored support plans are necessary to support people who have been sleeping rough to maintain their tenancies. The Adelaide Zero Project is well-positioned to do this by drawing on unique, individual data in the By-Name List as well as collective knowledge from its diverse range of partners.

Person-centred support

Internationally, it is being realised that time-limited support services are not delivering long-term results for communities aiming for Functional Zero. Each individual has different requirements for support, with regards to the type and duration. Hutt St Centre's Aspire program is demonstrating that long-term support can increase a person's ability to sustain a tenancy (2019 Aspire Social Impact Bond Annual Investor Report). The Adelaide Zero Project can use the learning from other communities and organisations to:

The project can use the learning from other communities and organisations to:

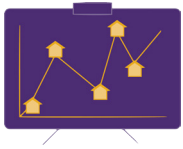
- Implement a person-centred approach, across all sectors.
- Focus on systems change to ensure each person receives the right level and length of support they need.
- Co-design options for improving the support system with services across all sectors interacting with people before, during, or after they are sleeping rough.

Training and technical assistance

Having an appropriately trained and supported workforce increases the capacity of the housing and homelessness system to support people with complex needs. All Chicago developed a training and technical assistance function to provide tools to enable the workforce to provide effective outreach and case management. The Adelaide Zero Project needs to consider:

- How to observe, monitor and evaluate the skill level of current workers, and
- Developing a system-wide training package to increase workers' capacity to support people with complex needs to maintain housing.

Recommendations and Strategies – Discussion



System

A properly-functioning housing and homelessness system increases the ability to make system-wide changes, and meet the goal of Functional Zero. The Adelaide Zero Project has the capacity to reach Functional Zero, however some strategies can be used to make changes more sustainable and effective.

Empowered decision-making

Because Adelaide Zero Project is a Collective Impact initiative, every organisation and individual involved needs to be empowered to make decisions across all levels of the project. Adelaide has the opportunity to engage widely to set effective system goals, and empower the collective to meet them. The Adelaide Zero Project should:

- Work with the Minister for Human Services and the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Adelaide to recruit the Ministers responsible for Health, Corrections, Child Protection, Education and Aboriginal Affairs portfolios to sit on the AZP's Strategic Advisory Group.
- Look at decision escalation pathways, for example from Co-ordinated Care through to Strategic Advisory Group to ensure systemic issues are addressed quickly
- Focus on action-orientated meetings including reviewing the roles of each of the governance and working groups in the decision-making process.
- Share actions, and progress across AZP and the wider sectors.

Data-driven decision-making

Using data to make decisions regarding changes to the system is a proven way to make long-term effective changes. The Adelaide Zero Project has improved its data collection and analysis capacity considerably in the last 12 months. This means the data can now be used to inform system-level decisions. Adelaide could look at utilising the data to:

- Set system-level targets based on previous outcomes
- Increase the focus on continuous improvement activities.
- Link with other organisations, for example Government departments responsible for Education, Health, Corrections, to identify ways to prevent people from entering the homelessness system.

Evaluation and monitoring framework

Learning from what has and has not worked is an important step in meeting goals. No organisation has ever met a goal they have not set. Adelaide can learn to go beyond the data, looking at what actions are being taken and how successful the housing outcomes are. The Adelaide Zero Project should:

- Consider developing an evaluation and monitoring process to ensure the project meets its Functional Zero goal.
- Encourage system-wide learning, including from providers who are getting better outcomes at the program level and implementing effective changes.

Closing Remarks

The recommendations included in this Report range widely from those that are relatively quick and straightforward to those systemic changes which will require many partners to fully achieve. This is not uncommon when we begin to address complex issues such as homelessness.

Countries and communities around the world are trying to develop systems that can eradicate the global issue of homelessness. No community wants people living and dying on the street. Homelessness is not a problem of broken people. It is a problem of broken systems.

In many respects, Adelaide is leading the way in developing and implementing strategies that build and support the advancement of a system to end sleeping rough and yet is running the risk of falling short of the targets.

Adelaide needs to urgently divert resources to ending street homelessness, but only for a limited time. An attrition will occur as the system matures but not until those who are at the highest risk have been serviced. This is difficult work, so it is important to continue the momentum by celebrating successes, but also by being honest and flexible when something does not work. This takes genuine will and commitment across a community. Adelaide has already shown it possess the qualities required to make a lasting change and create a community where no one is homeless. Together you can end homelessness in 2020.

More information:

For more information about the Thinkers in Residence program visit <https://dunstan.org.au/thinkers-in-residence/>

For further information about the Adelaide Zero Project, including the latest data, Implementation Plan and the Phase One Research Report, visit www.dunstan.org.au/zeroproject