



The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
Inquiry into homelessness in Australia.

### **Adelaide Zero Project**

The Adelaide Zero Project is a coalition of homelessness, housing, health, government, university, corporate and community Partners working collaboratively to end rough sleeping in the inner-city of Adelaide. The Adelaide Zero Project has adapted the highly successful Functional Zero model pioneered by [Community Solutions](#), a not-for-profit organisation based in the United States. The Don Dunstan Foundation operates as the backbone organisation for the collective of over 40 partner organisations. The Adelaide Zero Project is part of a global effort to end rough sleeping. Adelaide was the first Australian city to become a Vanguard City through the [Institute of Global Homelessness \(IGH\)](#). Chicago, a fellow Vanguard City, has also provided inspiration for the Adelaide Zero Project. Led by the not-for-profit organisation, [All Chicago](#), the city achieved a 25% reduction in homelessness over fifteen years through greater system co-ordination, collaborative governance and data-informed prevention.

The Adelaide Zero Project adheres to five key principles:

- **Person-Centred and Inclusive:** Ensure the needs and experiences of people with lived experience of homelessness, and culturally diverse groups are represented within the Adelaide Zero Project.
- **Housing First:** Provide immediate access to housing without any housing readiness requirements, whilst simultaneously working with people to promote recovery and wellbeing.
- **No Wrong Door:** Support people sleeping rough either by direct service provision or providing support to access services from a more suitable agency, wherever in the system they present.
- **Continuous improvement:** Learn what works quickly in an evidence-based and data-driven manner and to build on successful strategies and actions.
- **Collective Action:** Work together in a coordinated way and to hold each other accountable to reach our shared goal of ending rough sleeping.



The remainder of this submission responds to the terms of reference provided by the inquiry. The Adelaide Zero Project can provide quality and specialised knowledge on the following items in the terms of reference:

4. Opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness
5. Services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including housing assistance, social housing and specialist homelessness services
6. Support and services for people at particular risk of homelessness, including:
  - c. Indigenous Australians
  - e. People exiting institutions and other care arrangements
  - g. People living with disability
  - h. People living with mental illness
8. Examples of best-practice approaches in Australia and internationally for preventing and addressing homelessness
9. The adequacy of collection and publication of housing, homelessness and housing affordability related data
10. Governance and funding arrangements in relation to housing and homelessness, particularly as they relate to the responsibility of Local, State, Territory and Federal Governments.

This submission also addresses the responses to and impact of COVID-19 on homelessness in Adelaide's inner city, which can inform strategies across other Australian cities and communities.



#### 4. Opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness;

In 2019, Dr Nonie Brennan visited Adelaide as a part of the Don Dunstan Foundation's Thinkers in Residence Program. Dr Brennan is a Senior Advisor for the Institute of Global Homelessness and was the Chief Executive Officer of All Chicago: Making Homelessness History. Under her guidance, All Chicago grew to become a national and internationally recognised leader in proven practices that prevent and end homelessness. In compiling her report for the 2019 visit, Dr Brennan urged the Adelaide Zero Project to implement measures that focus on preventing people from falling into homelessness, based on the Adelaide Zero Project's globally recognised data sources.

The following excerpt is taken from the report:

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*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 is considering opportunities for reducing rough sleeping 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*
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Following on from this recommendation, the Adelaide Zero Project is currently exploring opportunities to trial an Emergency Fund for Adelaide. Evidence from Chicago, Glasgow, Edinburgh and other communities shows that flexible, once-off small grants to individuals can be used to prevent them from falling into homelessness and/or support individuals sleeping rough into housing quickly using a Housing First approach. Evidence from Chicago's Emergency Fund in 2018 concluded that 87% of clients who were serviced by the fund were housed at the time of follow up. First-hand evidence from [Scotland](#) suggested that the flexible and relatively quick dispersal of small amounts of funds were exceedingly efficient in not only preventing homelessness, but engaging with people who had been sleeping rough for long periods of time, who may have previously refused support services. This evidence prompted the Scottish government to quickly release more funds for the program. Chicago's model was also able to pool both public and private funds to address gaps in the sector and leverage flexibility to meet individuals' needs.



5. **services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including housing assistance, social housing, and specialist homelessness services;**
  
8. **examples of best-practice approaches in Australia and internationally for preventing and addressing homelessness;**

The Adelaide Zero Project's scope and response to rough-sleeping is both informed by and implements international and domestic best-practice.

The Adelaide Zero Project adopts the **Functional Zero** approach, successfully pioneered in the United States. Functional Zero is a person-centred and data-driven approach, which, to date, has seen seven United States communities achieve Functional Zero for veterans' homelessness, and four communities functionally end chronic homelessness, as part of a national end homelessness campaign known as 'Built for Zero'.

Simply put, Functional Zero happens when a community's average housing placement rate is more than the number of people sleeping rough. Housing placements are any outcome where someone is securely housed, for example long-term lease in public housing, community housing or private rental, home ownership. In order to reach Functional Zero, the number of housing placements made per month must be more than the number of people sleeping rough in a city for a minimum of three consecutive months.

The Functional Zero approach starts with knowing the names and needs of every person experiencing homelessness in real-time through a **By-Name List**. The situation and needs of each person are captured using a common assessment tool called the **Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)**. The tool allows case managers to understand someone's:

- history of housing and homelessness
- risks, for example emergency service use, safety, harm, legal issues, exploitation
- socialisation and daily functions, for example relationships, self-care
- wellness, for example chronic and acute physical and mental health concerns.

The By-Name List helps us to track and understand the number of people moving through the system each month, and to co-ordinate housing and support based on individual needs.



Adelaide Zero Project's scope targets people who are sleeping rough, or have since moved into temporary shelter, within the City of Adelaide geographical boundaries.

The data compiled from the By-Name List can be viewed on the [Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard](#), which is updated monthly. The Dashboard is a national-first and the compilation of this data is vital to tracking the progress towards achieving and sustaining Functional Zero street homelessness in the inner city.

A **Housing First** (but not housing only) approach is taken to house the people on the By-Name List. Housing First is a proven approach for moving individuals out of homelessness and into secure (often referred to as permanent/non-temporary) housing, without requirements for behavioural changes on the part of those being assisted. It is an approach that is about low or no barrier housing. At its core, Housing First is based on:

- rapid access to permanent (meaning non-temporary/secure) housing;
- provision of multiple support services and systems as needed once a person is housed;
- not requiring engagement with support services as a condition of housing;
- harm minimisation rather than abstinence;
- connecting people experiencing homelessness into their local communities.

[International examples](#) have shown how effective the Housing First approach can be, however significant barriers exist in the current social housing and support system that inhibit the proper implementation of this approach in Adelaide. Prohibitive factors include inadequate supply of social housing stock, including appropriate, quality housing types that meet diverse needs for the complexity of people on Adelaide's By-Name List. As reported by Dr Nonie Brennan from the Institute of Global Homelessness during her 2019 residency, there is also a lack of long term supports for people exiting homelessness which can be provided for the length and intensity required by the individual. Dr Brennan also highlighted that some providers require people who are sleeping rough to be 'housing ready' before being offered a property, which is costing the system as it struggles to address increased health risks and vulnerability for people while they are sleeping rough.

The Adelaide Zero Project's **Aligned Housing** approach is an important mechanism to implement a Housing First principle, ensuring that the supply of houses from public, community or private housing sources are available to people on the By-Name List. The



mechanism aims to ensure that housing and support are appropriate matched to individual needs based on information on the By-Name List and the housing types available. The common assessment tool used by the Adelaide Zero Project assists workers to assess and triage the type of housing and support each individual needs, taking into consideration factors such as the individual's housing preferences, risks, health, financial and relationship needs to ensure the housing and support provided maximises their ability to sustain their tenancy ongoing. Aligned Housing is both about maximising the use of existing housing, but also sourcing new pathways. Following a 2018 visit to Adelaide, the Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Institute of Global Homelessness, [Dame Louise Casey, recommended](#) that Adelaide must increase the supply and diversity of social and community housing in order to address the high and complex needs of people who remain sleeping rough. Aligned housing requires coordination and commitment from public and community housing providers as well as the private rental sector to increase the available of appropriate housing stock for those on the By-Name List. This need applies beyond the City of Adelaide and therefore the Adelaide Zero Project supports the call by the Everybody's Home campaign for investment in 500,000 social housing dwellings over 20 years.

### ***Moving Towards Functional Zero***

The recently released [Adelaide Zero Project Implementation Plan 2.0](#), identifies a number of strategic priorities in order to reach Functional Zero. Dr Brennan recommended that the these priorities, and the associated mechanisms required to meet these priorities, should be centred around three key factors:

- Greater service coordination, to provide more responsive, multi-agency support, particularly for people sleeping rough who have high-complex needs. This includes a Housing First approach with person-centred support.
- Prevention and early intervention of rough sleeping.
- Partnering with government and services to reform the system in a way that enables organisations to achieve and sustain Functional Zero as a system-wide goal.

Adelaide Zero Project's Collective Impact approach has embedded strong partnerships within the housing and homelessness sector, however further collaboration is needed across other government, community and private sectors to enable system-wide change. This includes at local, State and Federal levels. Nationally, the Adelaide Zero Project is



participating in the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Advance to Zero campaign which is enabling community-wide learnings to inform system-wide change.

To progress towards Functional Zero, the Adelaide Zero Project aims to work with community, State and local government partner to:

- Consult with community to develop a culturally-appropriate assessment tool, to better understand and respond to the variety of reasons why Aboriginal remote visitors travel to the city of Adelaide. This includes scoping a community mobility By-Name List to better respond to individual and cultural needs.
- Undertake research and data analysis to identify and respond to inflow into the homelessness system, as well as ways to ensure people who have been housed can sustain their tenancies
- Identify new and existing housing pathways, including public, community and private options
- Undertake Continuous Improvement processes and rapid testing to improve service delivery and support people into housing faster
- Scope and establish an Emergency Fund to provide flexible assistance to individuals to prevent and reduce the number of people sleeping rough. Adelaide Zero Project also intends to seek opportunities through SA Housing Authority's Prevention Fund as well as corporate and private funding avenues.
- Engage with other local Councils where appropriate, in partnership with State government and services to scope an expansion of the model into other suburbs and regions of SA, building on the learnings of the current project
- Review the City of Adelaide grant programs to better support organisations to work towards the collective Functional Zero goal
- Undertake planning and consultation on the establishment of a South Australian Alliance to End Homelessness to replicate the Functional Zero model in other communities in SA.
- Develop and implement a private rental initiative to pilot Victoria's evaluated Doorways Program in Adelaide for 2 years. This initiative offers an initial rental subsidy and pathway to an affordable private rental property, increasing the client's ability to sustain the tenancy financially and independently.
- Continue national advocacy for housing and support plans via the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors.



## 6. support and services for people at particular risk of homelessness, including:

The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise, based at the University of South Australia, has recently compiled a deep dive data report on data from the By-Name List captured in September 2019<sup>1</sup>. This report specifically considers the range of cohorts on the By-Name List at this point in time, and their level of acuity. The information is provided below with reference to the specific cohorts. It must be noted that many of the questions asked in the common assessment tool used to compile this data only refer to the previous 6 months and are limited in other ways, for example data is self-reported, and people can choose not to answer every question. All the data below was accurate as of 18 September 2019.

### c. Indigenous Australians;

One in three people sleeping rough in Adelaide's inner-city area identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, despite being only 2% of South Australia's population according to [2016 Census Data](#). The By-Name List data also indicates:

- Almost 85% of Indigenous Australians had high acuity levels, in comparison to 70% of Non-Indigenous Australians
- 51% of Indigenous Australians experiencing rough sleeping in Adelaide Zero Project were female, in comparison to 20% of Non-Indigenous Australians
- Almost two thirds (61%) of Indigenous Australians reported the presence of a disability (physical, cognitive or psychosocial)
- Almost two thirds of Indigenous Australians reported experiencing physical health, mental health and substance use issues simultaneously, compared with roughly half of Non-Indigenous Australians
- The rate of presentations to emergency health care services was also higher for Indigenous Australians. Indigenous men also experienced the highest rate of contact with correctional institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Tually, S. and Goodwin-Smith, I. (2020). *Better understanding the people on Adelaide Zero Project's By-Name List: the evidence on acuity and inflows*, full deep dive data report, prepared by The Australian Alliance for Social Enterprise for the Adelaide Zero Project, Adelaide: University of South Australia.



#### **e. People exiting institutions and other care arrangements**

Self-reported data shows that in the six months prior to being included on the By-Name List people experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness had a high use of services and contact with institutions. Of the people who responded to the questions:

- 60% of people reporting one or more presentations to Accident and Emergency at a hospital (average = 3.0, range = 1-20).
- 54% of people reported one or more uses of an ambulance (average = 2.3).
- 44% reported one or more inpatient hospitalisations (average = 2.4).
- 21% reported one or more specialist mental health hospitalisations
- 45% reported a stay of one or more nights in a watch house or prison, including comparatively higher rates for males, both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians
- 16% reported being in foster care, out of home care or institutional care as child, the majority of which were Indigenous Australians
- 20% experienced youth detention
- 92% receiving Centrelink payment, with 60% on Newstart.

#### **g. people living with disability**

#### **h. people living with mental illness;**

The common assessment tool and By-Name List capture some data around physical health and mental health concerns. This can be used to aggregate disability figures. For people who are sleeping rough or temporarily sheltered, the data collected shows:

- three in five people who are sleeping rough or temporarily accommodated indicated the presence of a disability
- almost one third of people self-reported a brain injury, which is significant given the greater need for attention in terms of level and models of support required to support someone to manage the life-long complexities and difficulties associated with a brain injury
- 73% of people reported mental health issues



- 90% of people reporting mental health issues indicated that their mental health has a direct impact on their ability to manage their housing outcomes
- of the people who were identified as having a high acuity level overall, 78% had a mental health issue.

## **9. The adequacy of the collection and publication of housing, homelessness, and housing affordability related data**

Data and research provide a basis for the Adelaide Zero Project to make changes to operation and to advocate for reforms outside of the Project's scope. Analysis and research into the journeys of people on the By-Name List gives us an even greater understanding of the pathways into and out of sleeping rough.

Methodology from Community Solutions and the Institute of Global Homelessness has informed the way outcomes are monitored. Every month, the Adelaide Zero Project Dashboard is updated to show the number of people moving through the homelessness system in the inner-city of Adelaide. Currently the Adelaide Zero Project is the only community in Australia to have a publicly available dashboard showing the number of people who are coming into, and leaving, the homelessness system. The Adelaide Zero Project tracks seven key data points used to inform the monthly changes in the By-Name List, including the number of people:

- housed through the community
- who haven't engaged with the community for 90 days or more, or have moved outside of the community
- who are new to sleeping rough
- returning from housing
- returning or re-engaging with the community
- who are currently sleeping rough
- who would be sleeping rough, but are temporarily accommodated, for example in a crisis shelter.

The Adelaide Zero Project is part of the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, and reports data into the Advance to Zero platform, used by other communities across Australia. This data can be used at a de-identifiable level to understand homelessness, including rough



sleeping, across Australia. Data collected is not always routinely published, which is detrimental to the functioning of the homelessness sector. Data should be analysed as required to inform changes to policies and to aid in understanding the complexities around homelessness. Often data could be useful in understanding a person or groups pathways into and out of homelessness, yet it isn't easily accessible. This includes data from Health, Housing, Homelessness, Corrections, Education and other sectors which all can inform and be informed by data sharing. Data and information sharing practices are in place to rightly protect the people who are sleeping rough, however for meaningful system change, barriers need to be removed and coordinated responses need to be developed based on the evidence that exists in each of our silos.

#### **10. governance and funding arrangements in relation to housing and homelessness, particularly as they relate to the responsibility of Local, State, Territory and Federal Governments.**

One of the key principles of the Adelaide Zero Project's approach is collective action. This principle is informed by the [Collective Impact](#) approach, which demonstrates that innovative, sustained social change can be achieved by improving cross-sector coordination, rather than working in isolation within organisations or sectors. Adelaide Zero Project's governance structure reflects this Collective Impact approach, whereby responsibility for the delivery of mechanisms is shared across lead agencies according to each partner's expertise and capacity.

To enable effective, multi-agency collaboration, Dr Nonie Brennan highlighted during her residency that system reforms are needed locally and federally in Australia to create a structure where organisations are incentivised to work together towards system-wide goals. Dr Brennan recommended these reforms are co-designed by government and community sectors and are based on an [outcomes-evaluation framework](#), similar to that used by the United States Department of Human Services.

Additionally, one of the five key conditions of the Collective Impact approach requires a 'backbone organisation' – an organisation with dedicated resourcing to facilitate and coordinate overarching elements of a collective initiative. The Don Dunstan Foundation operates as the backbone organisation for the Adelaide Zero Project and is integral to



achieving the project's goals by coordinating multi-agency governance, communications and data. By acting as a neutral yet central partner, the Don Dunstan Foundation has also played a critical role in seeding and facilitating innovation within the sector, which many service providers, government agencies and other partners are often not appropriately resourced or positioned to do. Evidence from [Chicago's homelessness sector](#) highlighted how dedicated investment and resourcing in backbone functions can significantly assist in addressing complex and systemic social issues such as homelessness. With regards to funding, social innovation consulting firm FSG (USA) have argued that providing ongoing financial support to a backbone organisation is a leveraged investment that can amplify the effect of financial resources. Following their 2018 visit to Adelaide, Dame Louise Casey and Dr Brennan further recommended that more funding needs to be allocated to the Don Dunstan Foundation's work as a backbone organisation.

### **The Committee would particularly welcome submissions addressing the impact of Covid-19 on homelessness in Australia**

Adelaide Zero Project and its Partners have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic at all levels of the inner-city homelessness system through:

- Establishing an Adelaide Zero Project COVID-19 Response Team incorporating representatives from health, homelessness services, emergency shelter and housing providers, and government authorities
- Using the Adelaide Zero Project By-Name List and collaborative governance structures to quickly implement multi-agency responses. It is evident that the Adelaide Zero Project's Collective Impact approach and unique data is already enabling better responses in these unprecedented times.
- Increasing the frequency of Adelaide Zero Project's care coordination meetings to ensure the most vulnerable people are being supported faster.

The SA Housing Authority has provided the COVID-19 Emergency Accommodation for Rough Sleepers Coordinated Health Response, to support people experiencing homelessness to maintain social distancing measures. This means that many people on the By-Name List who were sleeping rough in the inner city are temporarily sheltered during COVID-19. As of 12 June 2020, there are 266 people who were sleeping rough who are



currently temporarily accommodated to protect them from COVID-19, with a total of 538 people for the total COVID-19 emergency response. Together, the sector must ensure these people do not return to the streets after COVID-19. All stakeholders must also ensure new system reforms enable us to prevent or support any new people falling into homelessness in the future.

There are learnings to be gained from the changes COVID-19 has inflicted on the system. Importantly, it was apparent that when a genuine accommodation offer was available, people were more willing to engage with services. Through COVID-19 responses, some efficiencies have been found to house people temporarily and also to find permanent housing outcomes. These efficiencies need to be captured at Local, State and Federal levels to ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief and non-recurring experience for people, particularly when faced with external risks such as a global pandemic.

Adelaide Zero Project remains concerned about the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the withdrawal of support measures that were put in place during the pandemic, including:

- the moratorium on evictions due to suspended rental payments
- the reduction of the JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments on household income
- the effects rapid housing of people from temporary accommodations, and the supports needed to keep them housed into the future
- the relationship service providers have built with clients being eroded due to temporary changes in rules and service provision
- how people who aren't eligible for the increased services come out of the situation.

Each of the above points indicate potential increases in people experiencing homelessness over the medium to long-term. This would significantly hamper the system's ability to effectively support these people out of homelessness, particularly if the system is expected to meet increased demand within its current capacity.