



**JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES
RESEARCH POLICY AND ADVOCACY UNIT**

SUBMISSION

**Senate Economics References Committee Inquiry into
Affordable Housing
March 2014**

For further information, contact:

Julie Edwards, CEO, Jesuit Social Services

Tel: 0394277388 Email: Julie.Edwards@jss.org.au

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry into affordable housing.

Finding safe and secure homes for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our community has been at the heart of Jesuit Social Services' work for over 37 years. We began as a house in suburban Melbourne providing accommodation to young people exiting prison. This work continues today with our services providing accommodation and intensive and therapeutic support to young people involved in the criminal justice system who would otherwise be homeless. It has also expanded to include support for adult prisoners, people with mental illness and alcohol and drug problems, young people leaving care, and those excluded from education.

Our work is best summed up in the words of former Pentridge Prison Chaplain Fr John Brosnan who said: *"Three things are needed by people upon their release from prison; a place to live that is decent, a job that they can handle and friendship, and the hardest to provide is friendship."* A roof over someone's head is vitally important, but it is friendship, support and connections to community that are often the keys to getting on in life.

Australia's current crisis of housing affordability impacts on the people and communities we work with in a variety of ways. Many struggle to afford everyday essentials because their housing costs are so high. Too often people have to move to locations where housing is relatively affordable but jobs are scarce. And more people are turning to the social housing system and homelessness services. The increased pressure on these services means that it is often the most vulnerable and hard to help people who miss out.

At the heart of the current crisis is a lack of affordable and appropriate housing at all levels. For the most vulnerable people in our community, particularly the young people we work with in the criminal justice system, there is significant unmet need for a diverse range of appropriate housing options with intensive trauma informed support delivered by a skilled workforce.

More widely, there is evidence that population growth is outstripping the supply of housing, particularly affordable rental housing; while in the public, community and supported housing systems there has been chronic undersupply over several decades. There is no shortage of social, economic, ethical, and human rights arguments and evidence to support the need to appropriately house all citizens in our society. What has been absent in modern Australia is the political will to make this happen.

In this submission Jesuit Social Services focuses on identifying solutions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and hard to help people in our community. This includes the young people who have experienced ongoing trauma, often as result of neglect and abuse in childhood, who have mental illness and/or intellectual disability, and who may have challenging behaviours that bring them repeatedly to the attention of the justice system, often for minor but persistent offending. Criminal justice system involvement is often the continuation of long term institutionalisation that begins in the child protection system.

For this relatively small group of people the current service system fails to provide the appropriate accommodation and support needed, indeed many are not able to access services. This is despite the fact that successive pilot models and small scale programs have demonstrated that successful interventions with these young people are possible. The social exclusion, chronic homelessness and in some cases, periods of imprisonment that people experience as a consequence is devastating, and only entrenches the problems they face.

Failure to provide effective support to people also creates enormous costs to the broader community. People with complex needs have well documented intensive interactions with acute service systems including hospital emergency departments, homelessness services, mental health CAT teams and police, and create costs through the impacts of offending.

For many of the people we work with appropriate housing needs to be combined with intensive and ongoing support. Evidence from Australia and internationally shows that with the right type of accommodation and support people can improve their wellbeing and connection to community over time. Importantly, there are wider social and economic benefits to society from this. A significant barrier at present is the time-limited, rationed, and fragmented nature of support that is available.

In both the areas of housing supply and support there is a need for a commitment to ongoing and sustainable investment to address fundamental shortcomings. This submission starts from this point, but we also attempt to identify reforms that might foster efficiency and innovation to further improve outcomes for the people and communities we work with. The ways through which this can be achieved which are outline in the summary of recommendations immediately below.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: A National Housing Strategy be developed which covers all aspects of policy relevant to the housing system. The strategy should bring the Commonwealth and states together and be developed through extensive consultation with all key stakeholders in the housing system. It must commit to sustained action at all levels to improve the supply of affordable and appropriate housing options and have clear timelines, indicators and outcome measures. The strategy must recognise our responsibility as a society to provide safe and stable housing for the most vulnerable members of our community.

Recommendation 2: As part of the process of developing a national housing strategy, federal and state governments review resources and support provided through social services systems to people with complex needs and housing issues. This should include the operation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, mental health services, housing and homelessness services, state criminal justice and child welfare systems. The potential for cross sectoral approaches utilising packages of pooled resources should be explored.

This review should be conducted in partnership with local community organisations with expertise working with people with complex needs and challenging behaviours, and involve all relevant Commonwealth and state government agencies.

Recommendation 3: New investment is needed to create a stream of resources to invest in providing intensive the housing and support packages that people with complex needs and challenging behaviours need. This investment should be directed towards meeting clear outcome goals around housing, support, and social inclusion. Any new resources should be complemented by harnessing savings to health, human services and justice systems of assisting people to stabilise their lives.

Recommendation 4: These resources should be available for new programs which have the capacity to work with people with complex needs and challenging behaviour. Key features should include:

- a flexible range of secure and stable accommodation
- assistance to access and sustain this accommodation
- ongoing support delivered by a highly skilled workforce that is trauma informed and focused on building capabilities to overcome the issues that people face
- a focus on building participant's connections throughout the community
- the capacity to respond to the unique needs of particular groups including young people, women, and Aboriginal people

Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, families and communities. Our service has its origins in work with disadvantaged young people involved with the justice system in Victoria.

We do this by intervening directly to address disadvantage and by influencing hearts and minds for social change. We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- **effective services** – by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- **education** – by providing access to life-long learning and development
- **capacity building** – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- **advocacy** – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research
- **leadership development** – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice

Jesuit Social Services values every person and seeks to engage with them in a respectful way, that acknowledges their experiences and skills and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where it has the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship, and to strengthen the broader community.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by suicide, trauma and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment

Currently our direct services and volunteer programs are located in: Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory. Services include:

- **Brosnan Support Services:** supporting young people and adults in the justice system, and assisting them to make a successful transition from custody back into the community. Within the suite of services are Perry House, Dillon House and Youth Justice Community Support Services

- **Jesuit Community College:** increasing opportunities for people constrained by social and economic disadvantage to participate in education, work and community life and reach their full potential
- **Community Programs:** Working with people, including the African Australian and Vietnamese communities, on public housing estates across metropolitan Melbourne
- **Community development:** delivering social enterprise and other activities in the area of Mount Druitt, Western Sydney
- **Connexions:** delivering intensive support and counselling for young people with co-occurring mental health, substance and alcohol misuse problems
- **Artful Dodgers Studios:** providing pathways to education, training and employment for young people with multiple and complex needs associated with mental health, substance abuse and homelessness
- **Community Detention Services:** delivering case management support to asylum seekers, including unaccompanied minors, in community detention
- **Support After Suicide:** supporting people bereaved by suicide, including children and young people
- **The Outdoor Experience:** offering an alternative treatment service through a range of outdoor intervention programs for young people aged 15 – 25 years, who have or have had issues with alcohol and/or other drugs
- **Capacity building:** activities in Alice Springs
- **Just Leadership:** working in partnership with community and corporate enterprises to foster leadership for a just society
- **Jesuit Social Services volunteers:** provides the opportunity for individuals to make a difference in the community through a range of opportunities.

Research, advocacy and policy are advanced through our Policy Unit, coordinating across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services.

Detailed responses to Terms of Reference

a. Affordable and appropriate housing for everyone in our society

Relevant terms of reference:

- a. the role of all levels of government in facilitating affordable home ownership and affordable private rental, including:
 - i. the effect of policies designed to encourage home ownership and residential property investment;
 - ii. the taxes and levies imposed by the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments;
 - iii. the effect of policies designed to increase housing supply;
 - vi. the operation and effectiveness of rent and housing assistance programs;
- b. the impacts, including social implications, of public and social housing policies on housing affordability and the role of all levels of government in providing public and social housing
- m. the role and contribution of the community housing sector in delivering social and affordable renting housing;

The availability of affordable and appropriate housing poses a significant challenge to Australian society. This problem is widespread and is not limited to one type of housing. This reality is made clear from the following developments:

- Housing supply has not kept pace with population growth
- Levels of home ownership are stagnant with levels in the 25-44 age group declining by 15 per cent over the last 20 years (Toohey, 2012)
- Affordability in the private rental market has dropped from a high of 32.4 per cent in June 2006 to 11.9 per cent in September 2012 in Metropolitan Melbourne. For single people receiving Newstart and single parenting payments, the number of affordable properties falls to 0.3 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively (Council for Homeless Persons, 2014);
- Policy changes both within the housing sector (segmented waiting lists), but also other areas (such as de-institutionalisation of mental health services) (Lewis, 2006), has seen public housing increasingly accommodate vulnerable and marginalised people and families.¹
- There has been significant investment in community housing as an alternative to public housing but the rate of growth has been variable and many of the high needs people in public and supported housing are unable to be supported in community housing.
- Demand for crisis and transitional housing has continued to outstrip supply with significant unmet requests for assistance (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013). The majority of current models lack the resources and intensity to work with people with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

¹ Dr John Hall & Prof Mike Berry, 2007, 'The financial impact of welfare targeting in public housing', *AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin Issue 89*.

These issues have an acute impact on many of the people Jesuit Social Services works with, particularly those involved in the criminal justice system and young people with multiple and complex needs. A study that Jesuit Social Services was involved in found high levels of iterative homelessness among people on release and problems with the available accommodation support (Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2003)². This is backed up by more recent figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013) which found 43 per cent of prisoners expect to be homeless on release. This is particularly concerning given that the evidence shows that transience and homelessness are a predictor of return to prison.

At Jesuit Social Services we witness the devastating impacts that a lack of appropriate housing can have on the people and communities we work with. This experience corresponds with the wealth of research showing the profound importance that housing plays in enabling people to build a stable and productive life, and the social and economic costs that result from housing problems and homelessness (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2010) (Hulse, Jacobs, Arthurson, & Spinney, 2011).

Housing is also an important shared value within the community. It is enshrined in the universal principals of human rights which Australia is a signatory to,³ as well as a range of historical and cultural traditions, including the beliefs and values that inform the work of Jesuit Social Services. These economic and social imperatives, as well as shared community values provide the rationale for the ongoing role by government to protect and promote housing justice across the community. At its heart it requires government to play a role in promoting increased supply, particularly through financing public and community housing.

Efforts have been made over the past decade to coordinate aspects of housing policy, investment by government and programs. The most notable initiative here has been the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). However, key areas of the housing system have not been included or addressed through NAHA including the tax system, income support (notably rent assistance), and planning (Gronda & Costello, 2011). Further issues arise in light of the division of responsibility, funding and initiatives between Commonwealth and the States which make coordinated responses to housing issues more challenging. In light of this, leading community groups including Australians for Affordable Housing and the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) have identified the need for a National Housing Strategy which includes all sections of the market and includes all aspects of policy relevant to the housing system.

Recommendation 1: A National Housing Strategy be developed which covers all aspects of policy relevant to the housing system. The strategy should bring the Commonwealth and states together and be developed through extensive consultation with all key stakeholders in the housing system. It must commit to sustained action at all levels to improve the supply of affordable and appropriate housing options and have clear timelines, indicators and outcome measures. The strategy must recognise our responsibility as a society to provide safe and stable housing for the most vulnerable members of our community.

² This was reiterated by both the Victorian Parliament's Law Reform Committee and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission who have each identified significant issues with a lack of housing for people involved in the criminal justice system (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, 2013).

³ Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11(1).

Some particular areas for reform that could be developed under a National Housing Strategy include:

- Reform of Rent Assistance: Recommendations for reform of rental assistance were made in the Henry Tax Review (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). Under these reforms, the rate of Commonwealth Rental Assistance would be increased and indexed to rental prices, and housing providers would receive a high need housing payment to assist individuals with complex housing needs. These reforms would provide a means for income related rents to be phased out and rents to be linked to market rates. The merit of this reform is that it would increase support for high needs social housing tenants as well as individuals and families in the rental market. It would also generate additional rent related income for the providers of public and community housing.
- Rapid rehousing schemes: Potential models that could be considered would include private rental brokerage and management which has been trialled in the UK and Victoria (Cutts, D'Arcy, Harris, & Janicejevic, 2009). Another option would be to utilise the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and other finance to develop specialist social housing for people transitioning from custody to the community. Australian research suggests that these programs are effective in assisting households to secure, but not maintain tenancies in the private market (Council for Homeless Persons, 2014).
- Reform of housing related taxes: Australia's house prices have been significantly inflated by speculative investment in housing encouraged by the combined impact of negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount. Implementing the reforms of housing taxation proposed in the Henry Tax Review would level the playing field for home purchasers, and contain excessive house price inflation.

b. Investment in intensive support for vulnerable people

Relevant terms of reference:

- vi. the operation and effectiveness of rent and housing assistance programs
- c. the impact of Commonwealth, state and territory government policies and programs on homelessness
- e. the implications for other related changes to Commonwealth government policies and programs, including taxation policy, aged care, disability services, Indigenous affairs and for state and territory governments;

Service models within the homelessness service system provide varying levels of housing advice, accommodation and support. While these models provide critical interventions for people with temporary housing crisis or less complex underlying issues, they also must operate in an environment where resources are limited and there are significant barriers to building a highly skilled workforce. These pressures mean that services often struggle to support the small but significant number of people in the community with a combination of complex needs and challenging behaviours that put them at heightened risk of prolonged homelessness, social exclusion and of contact with the justice system.

Common issues people that Jesuit Social Services work with experience include the impacts of childhood trauma and family breakdown, negative experiences in the out of home care system, intellectual disability, acquired brain injuries, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependency, and exclusion from education and work. Particular groups, including young people, women and Aboriginal Australians also have specific needs which are often not catered for in mainstream services. The story of Sean* (name changed to protect identity), outlined below demonstrates the entrenched and overlapping nature of these issues.

Without intensive support to access and sustain appropriate forms of housing many of these people will continue to experience homelessness, and to have contact with other acute services in the community, including emergency departments, mental health CAT teams, community services and police. This only exacerbates the chaotic nature of their lives and compounds people's past experiences of trauma. It also increases risks to the community and placed pressures on already strained services and government budgets.

The impacts of inadequate accommodation and support for young people with complex needs

The story of Sean*, a participant in Jesuit Social Services Young Mens Assertive Outreach Program (YMAOP) highlights the personal challenges homeless young people face and the impacts of our community's failure to provide appropriate accommodation, care and support.

Sean is a young man aged 21. Sean's childhood was traumatic: he was emotionally and sexually abused by family members; grew up in a home where family members chronically abused drugs and alcohol and suffered from severe mental illnesses. He was bullied and isolated at school; and was denied the conventional joys of a healthy childhood like playing sports, spending time in the outdoors, trying a musical instrument etc. By the way he has been treated, Sean has, in effect, received a consistent message throughout his life: "you a loser", "you are without value", "no one cares about your existence", "no one thinks you're a good person".

On account of this, Sean, now a 21-year-old young man entering adulthood, faces many deep and complex challenges. All of these challenges are underwritten by feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, lack of self-worth, and an utter lack of love and support in his life. He is homeless, addicted to cannabis, chronically depressed and at times psychotic, morbidly obese and socially anxious. He has also experienced suicidal ideation frequently over the past years. He has been hospitalised for his psychiatric illness numerous times. Sean left school aged 16, has never had a job, has no vocational skills, and relies on the Disability Support Pension. His daily life consists of long hours of sleeping and laying in bed, eating a poor diet of takeaway and frozen foods, smoking cannabis when he can get it, playing computer games and watching movies. He does not have any friends, other than one person whom he suspects uses him for drugs.

When YMAOP first had contact with Sean he was living in a rooming house with his mother and two other strangers. His mother was mentally unwell; was suicidal and would not leave the house. Sean was the only person to care for his mother.

In August, new residents, moved into the rooming house who were heavy heroin users. The man would bash the woman, and make violent threats to Sean. They would shoot up around the house, leaving syringes on the floor and on the cushions of the couches. They would play loud heavy metal

music all day. This is indicative of the kinds of realities faced by young people in rooming houses: residents come and go, and with different residents there comes different cocktails of dysfunction: domestic violence, drug use, exploitation, criminality, mental illness, and social isolation. At this time, Sean began to feel intolerably unsafe within the house.

At this time, Sean began to engage with YMAOP more, seeking help. YMAOP reconnected him with a mental health service, moved him out of the rooming house, gave him some nights of reprieve at a motel while attempting to negotiate the housing system to find him a safe and more appropriate place to stay. Youth refuges were full, public housing would be years off, THM waitlists were months even years from delivering anything. The only option was another rooming house. YMAOP managed to get him a room in a community rooming house, which although not ideal, was a safer place than the previous private rooming house.

However, Sean's challenges continued. He became very unwell, sinking further into the depths of depression, feeling alone in the world, without value, without purpose. He had no social contact other than with YMAOP workers. His family had abandoned him completely. YMAOP were assisting him in getting to mental health appointments weekly. At the time YMAOP staff were checking in with him everyday with a phone call, and seeing him 1-2 times per week.

This is the work of YMAOP that is not connected explicitly with 'housing', the human work of YMAOP, and the prime purpose was to give people like Sean a sense of dignity, a sense that there were people who cared about him, who valued him, who thought he was a good person, who enjoyed his company, and wanted to spend time with him.

At one stage, YMAOP had not heard from Sean for many days, he was not returning calls. YMAOP paid a visit to his room, knocking on the door. When he answered, Sean was in a terrible way; he had been spending days on end in his room with the blinds drawn, not showering, not eating properly, not moving from his bed. The YMAOP worker managed to bring him out of the house to go for a walk. Sean was severely suicidal, and YMAOP encouraged and supported him to seek proper mental health assistance and he was eventually hospitalised that day.

Eventually, YMAOP supported Sean in finding a room at a Youth Refuge, which provided him, among other things, with much needed exposure to social contact with young people, and was a safe supported living environment with 24 hours staff. Sean was later successful in obtaining a THM, where he now resides. YMAOP, wherever possible, also focused on trying to get back to basics with getting Sean into a health lifestyle.

After a long road, Sean's mental health has stabilised, but Sean is likely to go on facing many challenges, especially with his mental health, social anxiety, trauma from childhood abuse, and disenfranchisement from employment, training and education pathways. If it weren't for YMAOP coming to an end, he would still greatly benefit from our support.

Jesuit Social Services experience has demonstrated that providing intensive therapeutic assistance to access and sustain housing can enable people with complex needs to maintain their housing, to build community connections, to reconnect with learning and education, and to desist from offending.

The learnings of the Young Men's Assertive Outreach Project (YMAOP) informed the development of the Next Steps project. Funded under the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan (VHAP), Next Steps provides intensive support coupled with 24 hour supported residential placements for young people aged between 16 and 24 who:

- have involvement with Youth or Adult Justice
- are at risk of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness for the first time or,
- have had multiple episodes of short term homelessness.

Next Steps aims to prevent homelessness and reduce recidivism rates. The model includes long-term intensive case management support, a strong therapeutic focus, small caseloads, stable and appropriate housing, and collaborative practice. The service delivery framework is underpinned by strength based practices, and a sound understanding of trauma based theory. Key features include:

Strengthened family relationships and social connectedness

Next Steps employs a family therapist who works alongside the Next Steps case manager and the broader care team to enable support for the wider family unit. This support is provided to the young person and their families (or significant others) in the family home or community, and has strengthened connections to family (or other significant adults). The work with the family therapists has also assisted participants to build stronger connections to peer relationships, education and employment opportunities and to the broader community.

Stable housing

Next Steps recognises the importance of stable housing and provides accommodation for three participants at any one time in a residential setting at Dillon House, a property in the north of Melbourne. Dillon House is able to provide 24 hour on site support for up to six months while permanent housing is sourced. Next Steps participants who are not resident in Dillon House or have finished their time there are supported for an extended period of time in other forms of accommodation.

The Outdoor Experience (TOE)

TOE is a Jesuit Social Services program that provides therapeutic, educative and transformative outdoor activities programs. Participation in TOE activities has allowed Next Steps participants to build skills and self esteem, and to strengthen their connection with themselves, their families and nature.

Developing life skills

This includes enhancing interpersonal relationships and strengthening participation in positive peer relationships, engaging in community activities and participating in education and employment. The program also has a focus on ontological security and increasing participant's sense of belonging and purpose. A component of this is developing individual living skills among people living in Dillon house including hygiene, routines, shopping, and managing a budget.

Employment opportunities

WISE employment is a key project partner and plays an integral role in facilitating access to employment for Next Steps participants. WISE deliver the Ex-Offender program at WISE Richmond –

the only employment service in Victoria specifically tailored to address the multiple and complex barriers confronted by jobseekers with criminal convictions.

Case Study – Next Steps

Jason (name changed to protect identity), a young man in his teens, was referred to Next Steps by Youth Justice. The referral outlined that Jason had been incarcerated twice and had developed significant drug misuse issues and mental health symptoms. Jason had a history of child protection involvement and his family had experienced ongoing homelessness. Jason's relationship with his family at the time of referral was volatile so, although they were currently housed, living with them was not an option. Currently experiencing homelessness, Jason spent time couch surfing and sleeping rough. Jason was not involved in education or employment.*

Upon working with Jason the Next Steps Program prioritised his housing needs and he took up tenancy at Dillon House. Having support staff onsite working intensively from a trauma informed approach, Jason was able to build strong relationships with his Next Steps workers. Over time Jason was linked to and engaged with the Youth Substance Abuse Service, WISE Employment, TOE (the Outdoor Experience) and the Next Steps Family Therapist.

With secure housing Jason was able to work on developing independent living skills. The intensive work with the Family Therapist aided his reconnection with his mother and helped them begin to work through their issues. With the help of WISE he was granted an individualised response to education and employment, which addressed the barriers that previously prevented him achieving positive outcomes. His involvement with TOE allowed him to have opportunities he missed out on as a child, along with assisting him to develop confidence. Overall his participation in Next Steps has been positive with some challenges along the way.

Journey to Social Inclusion is another program that sustained housing outcomes and improved life circumstances for people with complex needs through the provision of ongoing and intensive support. Similarly to Next Steps, the factors identified in evidence of what works included:

- the importance of appropriate forms of secure and stable accommodation;
- assistance to access and sustain this accommodation;
- ongoing support focused on building capabilities to overcome the issues that people face and build their connections throughout the community. (Johnson, Kuehnle, Parkinson, & Tseng, 2012).

The economic case for intensive support

The Journey to Social Inclusion Project demonstrated that with ongoing and intensive support the most chronically homeless people could be supported to maintain housing and also to begin to improve other aspects of wellbeing. Importantly, the cost-benefit analysis of the Journey to Social Inclusion Project has shown that over time these costs can be offset by gains from spending avoided. Over a 10 year time frame it is calculated that for every dollar invested there was a saving of \$2.03. This corresponds with international evidence confirms that permanent supportive housing reduces participants' use of institutional and emergency services, and is likely to generate an overall saving to governments in the medium to long term (Council for Homeless Persons, 2014).

The economic case is also clear in regards to interactions with the criminal justice system. Of 30,775 people in prison in Australia in 2013, 17,799 (or 57.8 per cent) had experienced a prior episode of imprisonment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). A significant burden is placed on our justice system by people who churn in and out of the system. Housing problems contribute to this burden with research Jesuit Social Services was involved in finding that transience and homelessness are a predictor of return to prison (Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2003).

It is possible to get some idea of how reducing this churn can ease the burden on the justice system. Modelling by Jesuit Social Services, using an approach developed by BOCSAR in New South Wales (Weatherburn, Froyland, Moffat, & Corben, 2009), **calculated that a 10 per cent reduction in the rate of reoffending in Victoria would lead to a reduction in annual expenditure on Corrections of between \$10 and \$16 million** (Jesuit Social Services, 2014 – forthcoming).

Effective models of intensive support

There is significant diversity of need among people with combinations of complex needs and challenging behaviours, which means that one size fits all models invariably don't work. In some cases, the social contact and community environment provided by shared living arrangements are an invaluable part of the support needed. For other people, shared living arrangements continually break down exacerbating instability in their lives. This highlights the importance of providing a spectrum of housing and support options, and flexibility for service providers and individuals being supported to adapt support to fit need.

The NDIS model of providing tailored packages of support provides one potentially valuable way of organising support needs. However, early implementation of NDIS in Victoria has encountered significant challenges applying the model to people with complex combinations of issues, such as mental illness, intellectual disability and histories of trauma. The NDIS relies on people, or their family carers, having insight into their disability and their personal objectives, complying with the processes of assessment and choice making, and being able to make and sustain positive choices for themselves. Inability to meet these requirements are often the very characteristics that contribute to people being chronically homeless or coming to the frequent attention of the justice system.

In Victoria, the Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI) has enabled resources to be pooled across housing, health, justice, disability and human services to create intensive integrated support packages that have been effective both at stabilising people's lives and preventing costly impacts on acute service systems. However these packages are very tightly rationed and consequently are unable to provide the support needed to enough people.

In order to deliver effective support and housing the Federal Government needs to reform existing programs and partner with state government to focus a stream of resources on effectively supporting a target group of people with complex needs and challenging behaviours. Significant reforms to human services at a national and state level could have implications for available resources and must be taken into account. This includes the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the national review of Mental Health Services, and in states like Victoria reforms to Psychiatric Disability Support Services, alcohol and drug treatment services, child protection, Services Connect and the Community Sector Reform project.

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