PRESENTATION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, LEGAL AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Homelessness

The Salvation Army

Participants

Major Jenny Begent, Head of Social Mission

Livia Carusi, National GM Homelessness

Shane Austin, State Manager Homelessness - Victoria

How do we end homelessness for good?

Recognise that the problem of homelessness is everybody's business.

- o Ending homelessness for good requires engagement of private, public and community sectors;
- o It also requires the universal service systems (health and education); and specialist health and human services to recognise that they are responsible. Housing and homeless support services can address particular areas of support, including case management and housing management;
- o Those who have a lived experience of homelessness must have a voice front and centre.

Divert people away from the homelessness system: we know that if we keep people in their housing, then the outcome is significantly better than if we must address a loss of housing, and have them enter the homelessness system;

If someone does enter the homelessness service system, it is imperative to **re-house ASAP, and provide the support that an individual or family needs**. Importantly the duration of need, that is, how long we must support someone, and that support intensity and mix needs to be the maxim;

So we need to move from *a fixed term support model* to **duration of need model of support;**

We need a focus on **outcomes not outputs**; churn and throughput of a service does not equal ending homelessness.

Structural and economic hurdles that must be addressed

o Poverty and income
o Lack of safe, appropriate and affordable housing options

If we look at the five top primary presenting reasons at The Salvation Army Homelessness Services, we can see the areas that both drive people toward homelessness, and where we need to put our focus, resources and solutions.

- Housing Crisis (imminent eviction) **26.5%**
- Domestic or family violence **13.7%**
- Financial difficulties **12.2%**
- Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling **11.1%**
- Transition from custodial arrangements **5.5%**

It is clear that income support, safety net, and wage growth/stagnation (Newstart and beyond), combined with an increase in social housing (public and community housing) are foundational components to any change in the incidence of homelessness in our community.

Areas that require additional attention and focus
(research, policy & practice)

- Street sleeping (we can end this)
- Journey of homelessness – not a linear path
- Support and case management models
- Increased housing options
- **Better understanding the impact of homelessness on children; as a result of policy and practice**
  - **Expansion of services to children in their own right**
  - Children exiting care
- Intergenerational homelessness
- Veterans
- Justice system and homelessness
  - The response, and is there a better way
  - legal access for those at risk and experiencing homelessness

The Salvation Army in Victoria:
The homelessness service picture

- We have 108 Housing & Housing specific services
- We have 19 Entry points (intake and assessment for service provision)
- We have 31 Family and Domestic violence services

In addition, we provide the State-wide crisis (phone) contact centre for homelessness services in Victoria (based out of St Kilda)

Of our clients we know the following:
In total, men and women are equally represented in presenting for support.
Age grouping receiving service and support (in descending order)
- Under 10 **13%**
- 35-39 **12%**
- 30-34 **11%**
- 25-29 **11%**

Those we are not serving: the reason we cannot offer support
- We have no accommodation option
- We have insufficient staff to assist at time of presentation

---

Other drivers and consequences impacting both the experience of homelessness, and ending homelessness, the Committee could consider a focal point:

- Unintended consequences of other sector reforms; NDIS, FV, Mental health and the impact on the homelessness service system (example, Royal Commission into FV, services draw off original homelessness sector, with little or no increase in the funding/stock to replenish);

- Industry moving into regional and rural areas on large scale projects which effect the private rental market, resulting in an increase in homelessness due to lack of living affordability and housing stock;

- Regional and rural towns and the infrastructure constraints which affect the ability to access services and support (e.g. transport, specialist medical, other community supports, connectivity – both digital and physical).

The Salvation Army Victoria Agenda foci

We are creating a three year Agenda (Strategic Plan), and the following areas of focus have emerged in the process of its development:

- Older persons (particularly older women); folks street sleeping; CALD communities – and the emergence of issues in the Victorian regional setting; those exiting custodial settings; and veterans.

- Children and their experience, and particular their needs, will also be a focus

- In terms of development, we will be working to effectively respond to homelessness, with an intentional focus on increasing long term supported housing stock across rural, regional, and metropolitan Victoria.

- For us the client experience, quality of service offering and provision is also a key element of our strategy: duration of need, and tailored response to end homelessness.

- The lived experience is essential for our understanding and ending of homelessness.

FINAL SLIDE

| 7