



Tasmanian
Audit Office



**Report of the Auditor-General
No. 8 of 2012-13**

**National Partnership Agreement
on Homelessness**

March 2013

Strive · Lead · Excel | To Make a Difference

INTRODUCTION

Whilst Australia is commonly referred to as the ‘Lucky Country’, enjoying a high standard of living and a well-developed welfare system, there are still those who are ‘doing it tough’.

In 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that there were over 100 000 homeless people in Australia. In Tasmania, that estimate was 2500, with 385 categorised as ‘primary homeless’¹.

In 2008, the Council of Australian Governments, established the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Under NPAH, the Commonwealth Government agreed to provide funding to states and territories that agreed to match its homelessness initiatives on a near dollar-for-dollar basis.

Some key points relating to NPAH:

- The agreement started on 1 July 2009 and was to conclude four years later. However, in 2012 the Commonwealth extended the program for another 12 months until 30 June 2014.
- Each state and territory developed implementation plans that were approved by the Commonwealth.
- Tasmania’s initial total NPAH funding was \$18.9m (\$9.3m Commonwealth and \$9.6m Tasmanian Government). Negotiations on funding for the additional year were in progress.

Housing Tasmania, a division within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), developed an implementation plan for Tasmania (IPT) consisting of six initiatives including supported accommodation facilities (SAF), intensive support and tenancy programs (KEYS-STAY) and a service coordination and improvement program (SCIP).

¹ In 2012 the ABS revised its methodology for counting homeless people which led to significantly lower estimates for 2006 and 2011. The revised total figure for 2006 was 921.

A CONCURRENT AUDIT

In 2011, the Australasian Council of Auditors-General agreed to conduct a concurrent audit on homelessness. A collaborative effort by each participating audit office resulted in the development of a common audit objective and lines of inquiry². Each office could then progress the agreed broad lines of inquiry into more specific audit criteria to suit its own needs.

DETAILED AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Are NPAH programs/initiatives well planned, implemented and monitored?

DHHS's implementation plan, while addressing the core NPAH outputs was deficient in performance measurement, risk management and did not address all additional outputs.

Monitoring of the SAF and KEYS-STAY initiatives was insufficient as we could not obtain reports for 2012. There was no evidence that non-government organisations reports were being used to measure the success of planned initiatives.

Is the implementation of NPAH making a difference to homeless people?

The audited initiatives are now in place or substantial progress has been made, although some targets have not yet been met.

There is persuasive internal evidence that the SAFs and KEYS-STAY initiatives have made a significant difference to the homeless people involved with the programs. There is nonetheless a need to perform a longitudinal study after a few years to provide objective data on the long-term outcomes.

We also found that the SCIP initiative is likely to provide consistency of service and improved case management.

The costs associated with implementing the programs are reasonable when compared to the total costs of people experiencing homelessness over a long period.

² *The only Australian jurisdiction not to participate in the concurrent audit was South Australia.*

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Table reproduces the recommendations made in the body of the Report.

REC	SECTION	WE RECOMMEND THAT ...
1	1.3	... DHHS include risk management in planning documents.
2	1.4.1	... for Commonwealth–State agreements, where significant funding is provided by the Commonwealth, State implementation plans should explicitly address all intended outputs. Where agreement has been reached with the Commonwealth not to implement some outputs, that agreement should be noted in the plan.
3	1.4.2	... wherever possible significant new strategies should be supported by relevant quantitative information addressing the magnitude of the problem.
4	1.5	... DHHS ensures greater attention to performance measures by including them in high-level implementation plans rather than only including them at the project level.
5	1.5	... DHHS includes benchmarks or targets with its performance measures.
6	1.6.1	... DHHS ensures all reporting requirements are adhered to.
7	1.6.1	... where relevant, reports from NGOs are included in departmental evaluations of the overall success of initiatives.
8	2.2.2	... with future short-term funding agreements, DHHS gives priority to ensuring the timely implementation of initiatives.
9	2.2.5	... a longitudinal study be conducted two or more years after the end of the NPAH period to more objectively assess the long-term benefits of the SAF support provided.
10	2.2.5	... subject to positive longitudinal study results, DHHS works with NGOs to ensure that the SAF homelessness program continues.

REC	SECTION	WE RECOMMEND THAT ...
11	2.3.3	... DHHS evaluates whether there are unmet homelessness needs, such as homeless youth and single fathers, for possible advocacy in Commonwealth-State negotiations.
12	2.3.5	... DHHS plan for the possible end of the NPAH period to ensure no KEYS-STAY clients are abandoned prior to receiving sufficient support to achieve independent living.
13	2.3.5	... DHHS conduct a longitudinal study to objectively determine whether there are any long-term benefits being provided by the KEYS-STAY initiatives.
14	2.3.5	... subject to positive longitudinal study results, DHHS works with NGOs to ensure that the KEYS-STAY homelessness program continues.



H M Blake
Auditor-General
19 March 2013

For the full report go to:

<http://www.audit.tas.gov.au/publications/reports/specialreport/index.html>



Tasmanian
Audit Office

Phone
Fax
Email
Web

(03) 6226 0100
(03) 6226 0199
admin@audit.tas.gov.au
www.audit.tas.gov.au

Address

Level 4, Executive Building
15 Murray Street, Hobart

Postal Address

GPO Box 851, Hobart 7001

Office Hours

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday