Ending street homelessness in the inner city

ADELAIDE zero PROJECT

Support Visit Review:
Adelaide, Australia
February 2019

IGH

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION
inspiring action for a fairer world

Bendigo Bank
Bigger than a bank.

Flinders UNIVERSITY

THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

Government of South Australia

CITY OF ADELAIDE

dunstan.org.au/zeroproject

Acknowledgements

As part of Adelaide's recognition as a Vanguard City by the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH), Dame Louise Casey, Advisory Committee Chair, and Dr Nonie Brennan, CEO of All Chicago, visited Adelaide between Monday 17 September and Thursday 20 September.

Dame Louise Casey and Dr Brennan met with nearly 30 organisations and representatives from the sector; however it should be noted the duration of their visit was shortened due to unforeseen circumstances, therefore this Report should be considered in light of the limited time frame and opportunity for participation across the sector.

The visit was generously organised by the Don Dunstan Foundation with assistance from Sarah Collyer-Braham at Hutt Street Centre, and included site visits and meetings with inner city homelessness services, local and State government representatives and Adelaide Zero Project stakeholders.

* * * *

On behalf of IGH, Dr Brennan and I, I would like to extend a very warm thanks to these organisations and stakeholders for participating, including but not limited to: the Honourable Michelle Lensink MLC Minister for Human Services, the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Adelaide Martin Haese, South Australian Housing Authority, City of Adelaide, Adelaide Zero Project Steering Group Co-Chairs The Rev. Peter Sandeman and Ms Louise Miller-Frost, David Pearson, Renee Jones, Rose Lacoon Williamson, Lauren Grant, Victoria Skinner, Danielle Bament, Clare McGuinness, Ms Kim Holmes, Ms Shannon O'Keefe and Neami National's Street To Home outreach team, Mr Ian Cox, Ms Lynda Forrest, Sarah Collyer-Braham and the Hutt Street Centre, Graham Brown and Baptist Care SA team, Alison Burr, Rebecca Lucas and the Bendigo Bank team, Dr Selina Tually and University of Adelaide's CHURP centre, Associate Professor Ian Goodwin-Smith, Salvation Army's Sobering Up Unit, SA Police, South Australian Department for Corrections, Drug & Alcohol Services SA, SA Health, CAHLN's Hospital Avoidance Team, Anglicare SA, Housing Choices Australia, SYC, Simon Schrapel, Olive Bennell, Sonia Waters, St John's Youth Services, Catherine House, OARS and St Vincent de Paul.

Foreword

During my visit last year, I announced Adelaide as one of only 12 Vanguard cities in the world that has been invited to make an impact towards reducing homelessness globally. All other cities in Australia are keen to participate and are looking to Adelaide to learn from successes so far. The Institute of Global Homelessness is eager to see Adelaide continue to lead the way in Australia and globally to achieve lasting reductions in street homelessness.

After visiting in September 2018 I am pleased to see there has been solid progress towards establishing the strategic infrastructure for the Adelaide Zero Project (AZP). This is critical to build the collective will and system capacity to achieve Adelaide's vision of ending rough sleeping in the inner city. As part of this infrastructure, Adelaide has, for the first time, a functioning By-Name List where the name and needs of every person sleeping on the streets who is known to inner city agencies is accounted for with real time data. This is a critical first step in understanding the inflows and outflows into and out of homelessness. I have also observed very impressive individual agency responses, leading the way in best practice service delivery for people who are homeless. However there is still a long way to go to turn these efforts into actions which truly meet people's complex needs and ultimately reduce street homelessness. This includes integrating solutions which meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness. There is a need to urgently reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets in order to prevent mission fatigue and the loss of momentum that will inevitably follow.

The strategic governance infrastructure that has been built as part of AZP is critical in an environment where there was previously few other strategic governance frameworks across the housing and homelessness system in Adelaide and indeed within South Australia. This infrastructure will enable a much-needed collective reform of both the inner city and State-wide service system, however we must be mindful to build the ship whilst we are sailing it. It is essential that the important work focused on strategy and policy changes does not interfere with the progress towards Functional Zero street homelessness. In fact, some of the lessons that will inform the strategy work, will come from testing and trialling innovations in operational responses as part of AZP. It is important to remember that prototyping this reform model will have flow-on benefits for those outside the CBD and for other homeless cohorts, including women escaping domestic violence and young people couch-surfing. It is therefore important that the new Housing Authority leverage the AZP governance structure as a vehicle to encourage collaboration and co-ordination within the broader housing and homelessness sectors.

A well-functioning homelessness system understands the inflows into homelessness and intervenes to prevent people becoming homeless. It also intervenes when people do fall through the gaps into homelessness and supports them to be rapidly re-housed. Importantly the system must provide temporary, low barrier shelter to those who cannot be moved immediately into permanent housing. The following recommendations highlight areas in need of greater attention in Adelaide, in order to divert people or rapidly exit them from rough sleeping and ensure they are safe whilst stable housing options are sourced. It is time to turn strategies and efforts into real outcomes on the streets.

Dame Louise Casey

Chair Advisory Committee | Institute of Global Homelessness

Key Recommendations

The following are listed in order of priority. Items marked as priority should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

1. Increase the Supply of Shelter and Housing Options

There is an obvious and urgent need for an increased supply of both shelter and permanent housing solutions to safely and quickly move more people off the streets in Adelaide. Increasing supply requires these measures as soon as possible:

1.1. ***Priority:*** Establish a short-term low-barrier shelter which people with complex needs can access, even including those with pets and people who are intoxicated. The shelter should be considered a temporary 'Code Zero' response as part of AZP.

1.2. ***Priority:*** Community Housing Providers to allocate more stock for individuals on the By-Name List

1.3. ***Priority:*** SA Housing Authority to allocate more stock to individuals on the By-Name List

1.4. The Minister and the Lord Mayor of Adelaide to host a *Housing Pledge Event* whereby housing providers (from a range of housing options) can commit to providing housing stock for individuals on the By-Name List

1.5. Funding more Supported Housing properties as part of inner city system reform

2. Increase the investment in Adelaide Zero Project's backbone work

Investing in the 'backbone' work is critical to drive innovation and collective action towards solutions on the street. To ensure this, as a matter of urgency there is a need for the following resources:

2.1. ***Priority:*** A *Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator,* ideally from the SA Housing Authority, who can collaborate with the backbone organisation and homelessness services but have the authority and autonomy to influence greater responsiveness for people on the By-Name List

2.2. ***Priority:*** A *Systems Innovation Co-ordinator*, ideally from the backbone organisation or community sector, who has the skills and resources to co-ordinate, test and learn from system innovations to reduce rough sleeping. This position would collaborate with and work alongside the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator.

3. A Greater Focus on Targets and Data

Firm targets should be informed by the data to identify measurable reductions in the number of people sleeping rough. This requires:

3.1. ***Priority:*** An urgent deep dive into cases on the By-Name List to proactively inform rapid responses for people currently sleeping rough and understand the main drivers

3.2. ***Priority:*** The Minister for Human Services and the Lord Mayor of Adelaide to announce a firm target to achieve Functional Zero street homelessness in the inner city that is informed by data and includes interim reduction milestones

3.3. The *South Australian Housing and Homelessness Strategy* to incorporate data on inflows and outflows of the State-wide system, with set targets to achieve measureable reductions

3.4. ***Priority:*** Investment is needed to transition the interim By-Name List platform to a better functioning and accessible database.

3.5. A long-term consideration to transfer the State's H2H database from government to backbone oversight to ensure data is community owned, accessed and governed.

4. Invest In Early Intervention Work

High quality data should inform where to invest efforts to have the biggest impact on prevention and early intervention and divert people who are at risk of falling into homelessness. This includes investment in:

4.1. Establishment of a *flexible prevention fund* (approved by the Project Steering Group) that provides various types of financial supports to move individuals into housing and private rental, based on successful interstate and international schemes

4.2. The City of Adelaide to review how their *Community Development Grant* funding is currently distributed among homeless sector organisations, in order to free up funds that can be managed by AZP's Project Steering Group to distribute to identified priorities

4.3. Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN) to consider establishing a mental health housing and support program modelled on the successful Victorian Doorways program as a hospital avoidance measure

5. Strengthen and Leverage the Current Governance Arrangements

Whilst the AZP's governance structure is strong, there are opportunities to leverage the Project Steering Group to participate in broader reform. It is recommended that:

5.1. ***Priority:*** As part of the new Housing Authority's *Housing and Homelessness Strategy*, ensure AZP's Project Steering Group participates in system reform and allocation of the State's $11 million inner city funding. Any new funding or resources from local or State government should be co-designed with, and commissioned by, the Project Steering Group.

5.2. Refine the current governance structure to increase efficiency

5.3. The Chief Executive of the SA Housing Authority join and be actively involved with AZP's Project Steering Group

5.4. Begin pre-planning and discussion for the expansion of AZP into a *South Australian Alliance to End Homelessness*

6. Service and System Level Innovations

Increased innovation in services and system responses is needed to improve the sector's efficiency and impact. This includes:

6.1. Developing a business case for the co-location of key inner city homelessness and outreach services in a centralised service hub

6.2. Urgent integration of culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people sleeping rough

6.3. Expanding access to primary healthcare for people on the By-Name List, particularly through CAHLN's Hospital Avoidance Team and Adelaide Primary Health Network

Recommendations and Strategies – Discussion

1. Increase the Supply of Shelter and Housing Options

There is an obvious and urgent need for an increased supply of both shelter and permanent housing solutions to exit a greater number of people off the streets of Adelaide. Through the combined efforts of public and community housing there are approximately 19 people being housed per month from the By-Name List, yet an inflow rate of 40 people. As well as efforts to reduce the inflow, and rapidly re-house people in the private rental market, a greater investment of social housing is required if we are to begin reducing street homelessness in Adelaide.

It was evident during my visit that the response to invitations to participate in AZP from Community Housing Providers has been mixed, although it should be noted that not all providers were adequately engaged and consulted with during development for the project. Whilst some providers are actively involved and contributing to housing people off the By-Name List, others are reluctant to participate. This is a missed opportunity for collaboration as these agencies have been supported to obtain social housing through the transfer of public housing stock and have a responsibility to actively participate in the sector's efforts to end street homelessness. It is recommended that the SA Housing Authority and Minister of Human Services strongly endorse and enable funded homeless and housing agencies to participate within the AZP.

It is understood there is high demand for community and public housing in South Australia yet supply is low. Research also informs us that for many people who have a history of sleeping rough, private rental is not an attainable option. Social housing must be prioritised for the most vulnerable if we are to see measurable reductions in homelessness. However, providing appropriate properties is equally as important and Community Housing Providers have identified that careful needs assessments are crucial to ensure rough sleepers with complex needs have the necessary support to sustain their tenancy. Housing must also be located near services and in a way that case managers can provide follow-through support, or else people will quickly fall back into homelessness in order to access the inner city services and network they are familiar with. This approach is critical to ensure people are supported to maintain their tenancy.

In addition to a greater supply of social housing, there is a critical need for a short-term, low barrier shelter. Shelters are an essential way to move people off the streets and into long-term sustainable housing. Many people who fall into rough sleeping are able to move quickly off the streets and into stable, permanent housing through rapid re-housing initiatives such as those described above. Others who are highly vulnerable, such as the 29% who had been homeless for two years or more at the time of AZP's Connections Week, require easy, low barrier access to shelter to support them towards a life off the streets.

Currently in Adelaide the shelters that are available are too restrictive for the most vulnerable rough sleepers. A low barrier shelter is urgently required that can take people on their own terms. This includes people who are intoxicated, couples and people with pets. We are currently asking highly vulnerable people to separate from that which makes them feel safe such as their partners and their dogs. If we are to reduce the number of people sleeping rough, we must lower the barriers to providing shelter to people, in order to meaningfully engage them into long-term housing solutions.

For an emergency shelter to achieve its intended purpose, access to that service should be flexible, with minimum expectations placed on clients. If people are asked to comply with strict conditions regarding sobriety or separating from loved ones (including pets) in order to enter, many will choose to remain on the streets. The shelter should operate with a Housing First principle and aim to assist everyone into stable, secure housing as rapidly as possible. Other homelessness services including the assertive outreach team need to be linked to the shelter. Examples of low barrier shelters are emerging across the U.S and are proving extremely effective in supporting highly vulnerable people off the streets, into an environment where they can access services to assist them into permanent housing.

The addition of a low barrier shelter to Adelaide's homelessness system should not be a long-term solution. Considered as a 'Code Zero' response as part of AZP, the shelter should be used as a temporary, point-in-time solution to safely transition those most vulnerable off the streets. With an entrenched rough sleeping population in Adelaide, this approach is critical to support people off the streets who currently have nowhere else to go. Adelaide does already have successful examples of providing low barrier shelter through their Code Blue and Code Red responses. This initiative simply needs to open and close as needed until the system is functioning better and more appropriate housing options become available for these people.

2. Increase the investment in Adelaide Zero Project's 'backbone' work

This is essential to drive urgent operational responses to reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets. The longer it takes to demonstrate outcomes, the greater the risk that AZP will experience mission fatigue. With the majority of the work to date focused on strategy and governance, there is a real risk that mission fatigue will occur while AZP is still in the early stages of implementation. There is an urgent need to demonstrate success in a reduction in the numbers of people on the streets in Adelaide in order to maintain support and momentum for this important work.

Investing in the 'backbone' work to drive innovation and collective action towards solutions on the ground is critical. Part of this investment needs to include a Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, someone who understands operations and realities on the street, but with the authority and autonomy to influence the system to be more responsive. This position should

ideally sit within the SA Housing Authority but work closely with AZP's backbone organisation, homelessness services and other parts of SA government. The position should report to the Project Steering Group to provide the adequate level of influence and be an enabler to 'unblock' the system.

In addition to this, investment is required in a Systems Innovation Co-ordinator from the community sector, or within the Don Dunstan Foundation as the backbone organisation, who can co-ordinate, test and learn from innovations that can drive lasting reductions in street homelessness in the inner city. This position needs to work hand in hand with the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator and look more globally at where the gaps in the system are in order to try, test and learn from new solutions. Investment in this critical backbone infrastructure is vital to securing the success of the Adelaide Zero Project and build on the momentum achieved to date, without which the opportunity to end street homelessness will falter.

3. A Greater Focus on Targets and Data

There is a need for an urgent deep dive into cases on the By-Name List to better understand their circumstances, prioritise support and test new responses. The AZP should be commended for establishing Adelaide's first functioning By-Name List, where the name and needs of every person sleeping on the streets who is known to inner city agencies is accounted for with real time data. Whilst this is a great start, it is not enough.
There is a need to interrogate the By-Name List to understand who is remaining on the streets and why. Alongside other data sources, further longitudinal analysis will help to 'turn off the tap' by identifying the overall demand for housing and the main feeders into homelessness.

As part of this, firm targets need to be set, which are informed by the data and identify measurable milestones to strive for in the process of achieving Functional Zero. Demonstrating success in reducing numbers in the meantime will maintain momentum for the project and provide knowledge that can be applied to the entire State-wide system. Furthermore, investing in in-depth and quality data analysis will build an evidence base to demonstrate the gap in housing and the investment required to make meaningful reductions in rough sleeping numbers.

In addition, a long-term plan for the State's H2H database should also be considered. H2H provides the ICT infrastructure at a foundational level that is required to measure trends in homelessness; however to be a powerful enabler of population level change, the data collection and administration could benefit from significant investment and reform. Transferring the database outside of a government agency to a backbone organisation would be a powerful way to enact this level of reform and monitor real time trends. Consideration should be given to how H2H can better interact with, or support, AZP's By-Name List. A significant achievement of the AZP is the collective 'ownership' of the By-Name List data, underpinning a unified commitment to change, and this should be bolstered by much-needed investment in data collection, analysis and application.

4. Invest In Early Intervention Work

High quality data will also inform where to invest efforts to have the biggest impact, such as diversion approaches for people at risk of falling into homelessness. In Chicago for example, data analysis of Veterans falling into homelessness found 30% had been evicted from private rentals. As a result of increasing one-time and emergency rental assistance, the

number of veterans becoming newly homeless decreased from 120 to 80 per month. Chicago was able to demonstrate that for each $1,000 payment in rental assistance, 79% of recipients (who would have otherwise become homeless) remained housed. This diversion approach subsequently saves costs in providing emergency shelter and street homelessness services.

There is currently a notable gap in investment to support people financially into private rental. The current government bond guarantee and one-week rent in advance scheme is not sufficient to support the majority of people sleeping rough into private rentals and in some cases, community housing. It is recommended a fund be established that is approved by AZP's Project Steering Group to provide adequate short-term rental financial assistance to help people sleeping rough to access and maintain private rental leases. There are a number of examples nationally and internationally that have demonstrated the effectiveness of such initiatives, including the Rent-deposit and Guarantee Scheme in the UK and Landlord Insurance Scheme in Chicago. Another example is the Doorway program by the Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria, the Victorian Government, clinical mental health services and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV), which has demonstrated success in reducing hospital admissions through housing and rental assistance.

Alongside the fund, it is recommended to establish a brokerage system and centralised service, by which short-term rental financial assistance and advocacy could be provided to divert people at risk of falling into homelessness. The existing Tenancy Information and Advisory Service (TIAS) funded by SA Government successfully supports 80% of clients predominantly living in social and community housing to avoid eviction by providing light-touch financial intervention and support. This service could be bolstered by being connected to the AZP fund proposed above as a means of providing fast-acting and well-timed early intervention.

5. Strengthen and Leverage the Current Governance Arrangements

Whilst the governance structure established for AZP over the 12 months is strong, there are opportunities to make further improvements. Firstly, the AZP provides a unique opportunity to shift the way State funding and resources are allocated (e.g. financial grants and State housing assets) to enable the sector to lead a more collaborative effort to end rough sleeping. AZP's Project Steering Group provides a unique opportunity for the State government to test a commissioning approach and give the group a role in the re-design and allocation of the $11 million it currently invests in inner city homelessness services.

Whilst AZP's Project Steering Group has an effective mix of government and non-government representatives, the group would benefit from having a higher level representation from the SA Housing Authority. It is recommended the CE of the SA Housing Authority be an active member of the Project Steering Group.

In order to leverage lessons learned through the AZP and apply these to other regions, it is recommended a State-wide backbone organisation be considered. There would be great benefit in considering a South Australian Alliance to End Homelessness which builds on the current AZP governance structure to apply the reform work State-wide. This should only be initiated once measurable progress towards achieving Functional Zero street homelessness has been made in the inner city.

6. Areas in Need of Service and System Level Innovations

In addition to some immediate operational and governance actions, it is recommended efforts be increased towards innovation in services and system responses. These include the following:

- Co-location of essential frontline services – develop a business case for a centralised hub of essential services for people sleeping rough which includes inner city homelessness and housing services, outreach services, and primary healthcare services such as CALHN's Hospital Avoidance Team and Drug & Alcohol Services SA (DASSA).

- Meeting Aboriginal needs – as part of AZP, urgent work is required to better integrate a culturally appropriate response for Aboriginal people who are sleeping rough, as well as meet the cultural needs of those who are vulnerable visitors to the inner city parklands.

- Host a Primary Healthcare Solutions Lab – greater access to primary healthcare services for rough sleepers is required. Health services are a powerful way to initially engage people who may resist engaging other types of services. There is a lack of access to health services for rough sleepers currently. It is recommended primary healthcare services in both government and non-government sectors are engaged to develop a comprehensive strategy.

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

Thank you to our partners

Presented by

DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION
inspiring action for a fairer world

Principal Partner

Bendigo Bank
Bigger than a bank.

University Partners

Flinders University

The University of Adelaide

Government Partners

City of Adelaide

Government of South Australia – Department of Human Services

Government of South Australia – Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Government of South Australia – SA Health

Government of South Australia – Department for Correctional Services

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

South Australia Police – Keeping SA Safe

Major Partners

Aboriginal Sobriety Group

Anglicare SA

baptist care sa

Broadley Trust

Carrington Cottages

Catherine House Inc.

Community Housing Ltd – Group of Companies

community sector banking

End Homelessness SA

Housing Choices South Australia

rebuilding lives – hutt St Centre

Junction

WE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS VE

mercy foundation

Neami National – Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing

OARS Community Transitions

The Salvation Army

st john's youth services

SYC

Uniting Communities

Supporting Partners

aaeh australian alliance to end homelessness

Community Solutions

IGH Institute of Global Homelessness

Mental Health Coalition of South Australia

The Message Bureau

Together SA

ShelterSA – Housing: a basic human right

Women's Safety Services SA