

**Submission
No 10**

INQUIRY INTO THE PROTOCOL FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE IN PUBLIC PLACES

Organisation: NSW Government

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NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
Inquiry into the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places
NSW Government submission – final 24 February 2020

Introduction

Scope of this submission

This NSW Government submission provides information about how relevant agencies are implementing the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places (the Protocol). The submission is structured following the Terms of Reference set by the Committee.

The following NSW Government agencies have contributed to this submission:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)
- NSW Police Force
- NSW Health
- Multicultural NSW
- Ambulance Service of NSW
- Transport for NSW
- Sydney Trains
- Place Management NSW

Departments and agencies will be available throughout the Inquiry's proceedings to provide further information or clarification if required.

The NSW Government is committed to reducing street sleeping

The NSW Government is committed to breaking the cycle of disadvantage and homelessness. On 28 June 2019, the Premier set 14 new Premier's Priorities, including a commitment to reduce street homelessness across NSW by 50 per cent by 2025 under a suite of priorities to break the cycle of disadvantage. At the heart of this commitment is a belief that no one in our communities should be experiencing street homelessness.

NSW is part of a global movement to end street sleeping. The NSW Government signed the Act to End Street Sleeping Agreement in February 2019 with the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH), the City of Sydney, St Vincent de Paul, St Vincent's Health, Mission Australia, The Salvation Army, Wesley Mission, Neami National, and Yfoundations. Sydney is the tenth city, and NSW the first state, to join the Vanguard City program.

This agreement commits signatories to reducing street homelessness by 25 per cent in the City of Sydney by 2020, and by 50 per cent in the City of Sydney and across NSW by 2025. The signatories to the agreement have established the End Street Sleeping Collaboration to help coordinate service delivery.

The 2016 Census showed an increase in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW, from 1,924 in 2011 to 2,588 in 2016, making up seven per cent of all homelessness in NSW. Homelessness is a complex social issue that cannot be solved by government alone. Complex mental health and substance abuse issues are often an underlying cause of homelessness.

More than 585 people formerly living on the streets of Sydney have been housed in safe and stable accommodation since 2017 through assertive outreach led by the DCJ Homelessness Outreach Support Team (HOST) with partner health and homelessness services. This

effective model has recently been expanded to Tweed Heads and Newcastle under the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018–2023.

The impact of these assertive outreach activities is reflected in the most recent City of Sydney street count which saw the number of people experiencing street homelessness in the City of Sydney local government area drop to 254 people in August 2019, the lowest number the city has counted in winter since 2013.

To better understand the scale of street homelessness beyond Sydney, the NSW Government and non-government sectors have joined forces to conduct large scale street counts across the state in February and April 2020, with plans to reach nearly 300 towns and suburbs.

In November 2019, the End Street Sleeping Collaboration held a Connections Week in partnership with DCJ, the City of Sydney and other partners. Results from these activities are informing the development of a by-name list of people experiencing street homelessness in the City of Sydney. A Connections Week was also held on the Central Coast in November to help coordinate homelessness services and inform plans for expanded assertive outreach services in the Central Coast area.

Work is underway to deliver effective and holistic supports to improve the responses people receive when experiencing rough sleeping. Experience in the City of Sydney shows that for every reduction of five in the City of Sydney street count, there is the need to support three times as many into secure and stable housing. The NSW Government is also investing in prevention and early intervention support that will help prevent people from experiencing street homelessness.

The Protocol has guided NSW Government agencies for twenty years

The NSW Government first introduced the Protocol in 1999 through the Partnership Against Homelessness, a group of government agencies. It was developed to ensure people experiencing homelessness are treated respectfully and appropriately and are not discriminated against on the basis of their situation. The Protocol aims to assist people experiencing homelessness to receive services if they need or request them.

It was first implemented in the Sydney City business district areas during the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, and then expanded state-wide in 2002. *Guidelines for Implementation* were published in May 2013 to assist government organisations to implement the Protocol.

The Department of Communities and Justice is the lead agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Protocol. The Protocol has undergone several reviews since 1999 to ensure it remains current and to support its implementation. The current Protocol was last revised in 2014.

The Protocol has been endorsed by a number of NSW Government agencies that are responsible for public places, have contact with people experiencing homelessness, or provide services to people experiencing homelessness. Many non-government organisations also support the Protocol. All local councils have been advised of the Protocol and are encouraged to use it to guide their response to homeless people in public places.

The NSW Government is a partner in a broader service system

Homelessness is a complex issue and one that requires a comprehensive, coordinated response between all levels of government and the non-government sector.

The 2019-20 NSW Budget includes \$1 billion in continued funding towards a range of homelessness and social and affordable housing programs, including specialist homelessness services and the Link2home information and referral service.

The *NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023* was released in June 2018. It sets out the NSW Government's plan to address homelessness, focusing on prevention responses to address the root causes of homelessness and early intervention to reduce the longer-term impact of homelessness. The NSW Government committed new funding of \$61 million over four years (2018-2023) to implement the Strategy, including:

- \$20 million for homelessness social impact investment
- \$10.7 million for assertive outreach to proactively support rough sleepers, providing an end to end model with increased health capability
- \$10.6 million for sustaining tenancies support, by addressing complex needs such as mental health and drug and alcohol issues
- \$9.1 million for additional transitional accommodation
- \$6.2 million to expand Staying Home Leaving Violence program to five new sites
- \$4.7 million for universal risk screening and supports to respond early to young people at risk.

The Strategy is a framework for action that enables government agencies, the non-government sector, and the community to collaborate and act to reduce the impact of homelessness on individuals, and improve outcomes for people and families.

The Strategy builds on a range of reforms and programs that are already underway to help address the structural drivers of homelessness, including delivering new social and affordable housing through the NSW Government's 10 year plan Future Directions for Social Housing, and links to broader Government priorities, including the Premier's Priority to reduce homelessness.

The NSW Government is implementing a commissioning approach to homelessness services. This means shifting the focus from the services a provider offers to the outcomes they achieve for their clients and using data to monitor and inform continuous improvement.

This will put clients at the centre of the contracting approach. Outcomes based commissioning provides opportunities to improve outcomes for clients exiting government services through closer collaboration between government services and specialist homelessness services.

The NSW Government is updating its cross agency commitment to preventing people from exiting government services into homelessness. The 'No Exits from Government Services into Homelessness Framework' recognises that many highly vulnerable people leaving government services have multiple and complex needs. They also have unpredictable exit pathways that significantly increase their risk of homelessness.

The purpose of the Framework is to improve transition planning policy and practice to prevent exits from government services into homelessness.

The Framework is a key preventative intervention under the Premier's Priority. The Framework will coordinate and focus effort within and across government agencies to prevent exits into homelessness through:

- Consistent service principles and practices – which will inform government policies and procedures to promote consistent practice in reducing or preventing exits.
- Strengthened partnerships – for better interagency collaboration and effective multi-agency transition planning to address the full range of a person's needs and risks.
- A shared understanding of what works – through cross agency collection and dissemination of data and evidence.
- An integrated approach for vulnerable clients – through annual action plans based around vulnerable cohorts rather than individual agencies.

Response to Terms of Reference

a) Whether the Protocol continues to provide an effective framework for government organisations with an operational presence in public places and for services that support people who are experiencing homelessness.

Several NSW Government agencies engage directly with people who are experiencing homelessness and using public places, including in the provision of housing, police and health services and in the management of public spaces such as national parks. The Protocol is an important element of the NSW Government's response to homelessness and street sleeping. It has a clear focus on assisting people to access the services they need and provides a useful framework to help ensure that people who are homeless are treated respectfully.

The Protocol does not override existing laws, statutory requirements or regulations. It does not reduce the powers of organisations or their authority to enforce specific laws and regulations. The Protocol encourages officials to take the Protocol and the person's circumstances into consideration when enforcing laws and regulations and to use discretion as is appropriate under their own policies and procedures. This discretion should take account of the complex needs of homeless people, including mental health, cognitive impairment, disability, and alcohol and other drug issues.

The Protocol provides an effective framework and the participating agencies support its ongoing implementation as part of a range of strategies that assist people experiencing homelessness to be aware of, and connect to, relevant health and support services.

Opportunity to better reflect and enhance current practices

Since the current version of the Protocol was released in 2014 there have been changes to priorities and operations of services relevant to people experiencing homelessness. There has been progress in understanding how to more effectively engage with and address the complex support needs of people experiencing homelessness.

There is scope for the Protocol to be updated to better reflect and enhance current practices. An updated Protocol would emphasise the importance of partnerships across agencies and service providers in achieving outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, and facilitate this in practice with supporting resources or other mechanisms where possible.

A shared understanding of the complex profile of needs of people experiencing street homelessness, and its potential impact on a person's behaviours and communication, should form the basis of the guidance for interactions. The Protocol could also incorporate contemporary language which reflects the dignity of, and respect for, the target group.

Definition of homelessness

The Protocol does not currently provide a standard definition of homelessness. *Guidelines for Implementation* (the 'Guidelines') were published in May 2013 to support implementation of the Protocol. The Guidelines provide a definition of primary homelessness, whereby 'a person lives on the street, sleeps in parks, squats in derelict buildings, or uses cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter'. The Guidelines state that government organisations should use their own discretion to identify whether a person may be homeless or not.

Contact information

It is important for organisations to understand the services that are available to support people who ask for assistance, and for people experiencing homelessness to understand their rights in relation to the Protocol.

Government organisations implementing the Protocol are not required to coordinate or provide services for people experiencing homelessness. If people request or require assistance, the Protocol requires officials to put them in touch with local services, or pass on contact details. The Protocol contains a list of contact numbers for both local and state-wide information, advice and referral services, as well as services for specific issues such as domestic violence, child protection, young people and Aboriginal people.

This contact information continues to be useful, particularly for agencies that enact the Protocol less frequently (for example, around significant events) and are less familiar with the homelessness support sector.

Some of this information requires updating and current programs and services such as the Link2home statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service, should be included. Contact information for Aboriginal specialist services could also be provided.

Awareness of the Protocol and the local supports available for people experiencing homelessness may vary from metropolitan areas to regional and remote areas.

There are additional and updated available services and resources that could be included in the Protocol (in Appendix A) as well as resources to assist agencies to connect people with support.

Timeframe for review

Government agencies are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Protocol within their organisation. The Guidelines encourage local councils, non-government organisations, and people experiencing homelessness (through organisations such as StreetCare) to provide advocacy and operational feedback on the implementation of the Protocol and its effects on people experiencing homelessness and the service system. The intention is that any feedback provided regarding the Protocol or its implementation that requires further action is handled directly by the agency involved.

The original aim was for the current Protocol to be reviewed formally every two years from the date of publication in October 2012. It was reviewed in 2014 however participating agencies found the two year time period too frequent and not reflective of change.

b) The extent to which the Protocol is being implemented in practice by government organisations providing direct service delivery, and non-government organisations contracted on behalf of government.

Implementation guidelines and resources

Each government agency covered by the Protocol is responsible for deciding how it will be implemented within its own business and resources. It is acknowledged that policy and operational issues affecting the implementation of the Protocol will vary across each agency.

Implementation of the Protocol requires agencies to:

- identify a person within the organisation to have responsibility for overseeing the Protocol's implementation
- identify the types of public places within the organisation's jurisdiction where the Protocol will apply
- determine any specific issues that may be relevant in particular geographic locations
- communicate the requirements of the Protocol to officials and explain these in the context of the organisation's own policies, procedures and regulations
- provide officials with access to relevant local contact telephone numbers where appropriate, and use the contact numbers listed in the Protocol
- if applicable, devise an organisation-specific Protocol document based on the NSW Protocol
- conduct internal monitoring/review of the Protocol's implementation, as well as participating in any formal reviews of the Protocol.

It is intended that agencies provide the Protocol and Guidelines to all relevant staff, and include information in induction and general training for staff, as well as for contractors and volunteers. A Protocol Training Package which includes a Facilitator Guide and Participant Guide was originally developed to support training practices. These would be updated to support any revised version of the Protocol.

The Protocol states that agencies will need to consider whether contractors or volunteers who come into contact with homeless people should be covered by the Protocol or whether

they should refer situations involving people experiencing homelessness to a member of staff, for example, contracted security staff during major events.

Some health services have noted that there is opportunity to have a clearer definition of the scope of application. In particular, some services find the definition ambiguous in the context of private property which is predominately accessed by the public, such as a hospital campus or community health centre.

Operational context

The Protocol is applied in the operation of the Homelessness Outreach Support Team (HOST) and in partnerships with the City of Sydney, St Vincent's Health, NSW Police Force, Sydney Trains, DCJ, and homelessness service providers. The HOST was established in 2017 to provide immediate access to housing assistance for people sleeping rough. The team works in partnership with homelessness services, local Councils, Health, Police and Transport NSW to provide intensive and regular outreach patrols, housing assessment and support, and a rapid rehousing response for people eligible for social housing who are willing to work with DCJ and support services.

The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) has established a Corporate Sponsor for Ageing, Disability and Homelessness under its corporate sponsorship program. The Corporate Sponsor is supported by a network of Region Sponsors, newly established Aged Crime Prevention Officers (ACPOs) and a Senior Policy Officer. The portfolio has developed an Action Plan which directly reflects organisational adherence to the 'Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places'. The Protocol is promoted and implemented by these officers across the NSWPF.

The ACPOs also provide an important link with government and non-government agencies, the community and the private sector to provide effective early intervention responses. Their role involves facilitating the implementation of the Protocol within their Police Area Commands and Districts by raising officers' awareness of it. To support the establishment of the new ACPO positions, NSWPF is reviewing and updating all relevant training material.

The NSWPF policy on Homelessness is outlined in the *Police Handbook*, the key repository of NSW Police policy. The importance of adhering to the Protocol is emphasised in this policy document.

The Protocol has been implemented with positive effect at Sydney Trains. Working in line with the Protocol, and with the support of outreach programs, DCJ and NSW Police, the number of people sleeping rough in the Central Station Precinct has reduced from around 150 per day to less than 5.

Place Management NSW is part of the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment and is responsible for managing The Rocks, Darling Harbour and Circular Quay precincts on behalf of the State Government of NSW. In 2014, Place Management NSW signed up to the Protocol under its previous name of Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. Place Management NSW has actively administered the Protocol on an 'as required' basis across the precincts it manages since 2014.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service's Homeless people policy is based on the principles of the Protocol. The aims of NPWS's policy are to:

- ensure that NPWS staff respect the rights of homeless people
- ensure the safety of homeless people, staff, community and visitors
- protect the rights of all members of the general community to enjoy public amenity.

NPWS ensures that, as a general rule, people who are experiencing homelessness in areas of national parks open to the public will be left alone unless they:

- ask for help or help is being offered (e.g. contacting relevant service organisations)
- appear to be in distress or in need of help
- are behaving in a way that risks their own or other people's safety and security
- are behaving in a way that is likely to damage property or the environment.

The Protocol does not prevent NPWS from taking appropriate action if there is an ongoing breach of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act) or the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009 (NPW Regulation) with implications for park management including visitor safety and protecting the environment values of the park. NPWS will consider dealing with such matters informally, in the first instance, by asking the person to stop certain activities, remove a structure and/or leave the park. This approach has been working reasonably well and NPWS has not had any major issues with implementation of the Protocol.

The Protocol reflects current NSW Ambulance practice, noting that standard protocols and pharmacology apply when responding to persons in the community who are, or appear to be, homeless. This ensures the presenting health issues are dealt with and where necessary the person is transported to definitive care.

c) The appropriateness of the Protocol to support joint responses between government organisations, non-government organisations and local governments working in partnership to respond to homelessness.

The Protocol allows for and supports joint response by agencies to issues of homelessness whilst balancing the needs and rights of people who are homeless and located in public spaces. The Protocol does not inhibit agency responses to homelessness in other places.

NSWPF's Aged Crime Prevention Officers link with government and non-government agencies, the community and the private sector to provide effective early intervention responses. Their role involves facilitating implementation and raising awareness of the Protocol within their Police Area Commands and Districts.

There is an opportunity for NSW Government agencies to partner more closely with each other and local government to develop a more consistent approach as space occupied by people sleeping rough often sits within a multi-modal transport precinct, or in adjacent property that is typically within the managerial jurisdiction of local councils.

Local governments play an important role in balancing rights and responsibilities of the public and people sleeping rough. Local government officers are considered a key first point of contact and entry point to services and are taking an increased role in many local government areas in relation to this. The Protocol could explore including the peak body for local government as a signatory.

The Protocol details some of the principles that underpin collaborative engagement with people sleeping rough. There is an opportunity to also include information about the intersections between key protocols and agreements. For example, there are high rates of mental illness among people sleeping rough, and as such there are interactions between the Housing and Mental Health Agreement and the Protocol. The Housing and Mental Health Agreement (under review) is a formal agreement between NSW Health and DCJ regarding the planning, coordinating and delivery of mental health, accommodation support and social housing services for clients with mental health issues who are living in social housing or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The NSW Government recognises the value of joint, integrated responses between government organisations, non-government organisations and local governments to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Delivering this type of integrated care is one of three strategic directions in the *NSW State Health Plan: Towards 2021*.

Collaboration is being enhanced by activities under the Premier's Priority on Homelessness, such as street counts of people sleeping rough and new joint outreach by DCJ in collaboration with non-government organisations and local councils.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the Protocol's role in driving seamless health and social care responses, which ensure people who are homeless access support when and where they need it (Right Care, Right Place, at the Right Time).

People experiencing homelessness may require well-coordinated support responses during periods of environmental emergencies (such as fires or floods) as well as security events. Consideration could be given to providing guidance on appropriate interactions during these

sorts of emergency situations, including with Federal Police, the NSW State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Rural Fire Service. Including these agencies as signatories could be explored.

d) Whether the Protocol adequately protects the rights and interests of people who are experiencing homelessness who use public places, including indigenous people and minority groups.

Each government organisation implementing the Protocol has different roles, responsibilities and locations of service provision. People experiencing homelessness present with differing needs and circumstances. Under the Protocol, organisations are responsible for providing individual responses according to their policies and procedures, and are encouraged to consider training staff in the identification of relevant issues, such as mental health, cognitive impairment, disability, and alcohol and other drug issues.

The Guidelines provide detailed information on issues to consider for specific cohorts (children and young people, Aboriginal people, people of different cultural, linguistic, or religious backgrounds, and people with complex needs) covering key areas such as:

- Mandatory reporting
- Aboriginal people's connection and sense of belonging to country and how this impacts views of 'public' and 'private' spaces.
- People with different cultural backgrounds and/or with experiences of different political systems and how this impacts their views of officials who engage with them in public places.

Guidance and instruction is provided for agencies to recognise and respond to people with diverse culture, backgrounds and issues. There is robust evidence demonstrating the impact of trauma on people who experience homelessness and the Protocol has some references to trauma as a contributing factor. There is an opportunity to provide more guidance in working with people with complex needs and to place greater emphasis on a trauma informed approach underpinning all interactions with people who are homeless from all services.

More information could also be included around effective engagement with specific cohorts, such as connecting with a local youth service for support to approach a young person suspected of being homeless or connecting a young person with a history of care to appropriate supports.

Updates to data and terminology would be appropriate for both the Protocol and Guidelines, noting in particular:

- Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse people – references to 'cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity' to include or be changed to 'cultural safety'.
- Children and young people – wording around child protection to reflect current reporting requirements, terminology and resources.
- Contemporary norms including concepts of recovery, and concepts of prevention, minimisation and treatment of alcohol and other drug related harm.

Information around responses for specific cohorts could be provided in any supporting Guidelines, recognising that:

- Aboriginal people continue to be the most disadvantaged cohort in NSW and are over-represented in the homeless population, criminal justice and child protection systems
- Young people are also over-represented in the homeless population, including young people with a history of care or experiences of violence in the family home.
- Specific legal and policy requirements apply when staff are responding to a child or young person who may be experiencing homelessness.
- People who experience chronic homelessness are more likely to have a range of complex needs and trauma-informed support is recognised as best practice.

It would be appropriate for the Protocol to reflect the *NSW Health Policy Directive Your Health Rights and Responsibilities*¹ which summarises how the seven basic rights in the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights are achieved in NSW.

In the context of people with mental health support needs, the Protocol should continue to be underpinned by the objects of the Mental Health Act 2007 (NSW) (MHA) namely:

- To provide for the care and treatment of, and to promote the recovery of persons who are mentally ill or mentally disordered, and
- To facilitate the care and treatment of those persons through community care facilities, and
- To facilitate the provision of hospital care for those persons on a voluntary basis where appropriate and, in a limited number of situations, on an involuntary basis, and
- While protecting the civil rights of those persons, to give an opportunity for those persons to have access to appropriate care and, where necessary, to provide for treatment for their own protection or the protection of others, and
- To facilitate the involvement of those persons, and persons caring for them, in decisions involving appropriate care and treatment.

In practice, this means that when health professionals are supporting people who are experiencing homelessness they are often having to make complex decisions to balance the need for consent with assessments of health needs and risks within the scope established in legislation such as the *Mental Health Act 2007* (NSW) or the *Guardianship Act 1987* (NSW).

It would be appropriate for the Protocol to reflect the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (NSW) and the State Disability Inclusion Plan which promotes the inclusion of people with disability in the provision of supports and services to ensure equal and equitable access. The State Disability Inclusion Plan was developed by the NSW Government to meet its commitments under the Act. It demonstrates NSW commitment to identify and remove barriers that prevent people with disability enjoying full community inclusion. It is important to note that the Act is currently undergoing a statutory review that is being led by the Department of Communities and Justice. Once the review is complete, the State Plan will be reviewed to reflect any changes made to the Act.

The Protocol could also reflect the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Commonwealth Government is responsible for funding support for people to access the Scheme and secure their supports. Notwithstanding this, NSW Health funds NDIS Transition Leads and Mental Health Champions in every Local Health District and Speciality Health Network to assist inpatients to apply for access and secure their required funding.

While the NSW Government retains responsibility for homelessness and emergency accommodation services, the NDIS may be able to provide extra assistance to Scheme participants, such as a Local Area Coordinator to make contact and discuss their needs with housing providers, and funded support co-ordination to assist with sourcing appropriate housing options. In particular the Protocol and associated resources could provide information on negotiating service pathways and accessing appropriate supports for people with psychosocial disability.

e) Whether the Protocol appropriately balances the rights and interests of people who are experiencing homelessness with those of residents, businesses and other people and organisations using public places.

The Protocol allows for the lawful and considerate use of public space by people experiencing homelessness and for appropriate intervention, should that use adversely impact on other people using public places.

The Protocol supports the rights of people experiencing homelessness. There may be an opportunity for the Protocol to provide more guidance on the balance of these rights for the

¹ https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2011_022.pdf

general public and businesses, and provide more assistance in managing these broader responsibilities in an effective and sensitive way.

Councils and businesses are key stakeholders, engaging with NSW Government agencies in relation to people sleeping on or near their premises, and also interacting directly with people who are sleeping rough. It is important that businesses are aware of the Protocol so their decisions and actions are consistent with it, and they understand the parameters of agency responses.

There is an issue of public safety and hygiene when people leave belongings and bags in the street. Sometimes people sleeping on the streets may amass large amounts of belongings over time and deposit them in busy public spaces, such as entrances to stations and businesses. Councils may differ in their approach to removing and storing items which then may or may not be claimed.

Sydney Trains policy states that property left unattended is deemed either lost property (and therefore treated in a way consistent with that process) or potentially a safety or security threat that would be disposed of in a manner consistent with Sydney Trains safety and security processes.

Appendix A – Updated available services and resources

Link2home 1800 152 152

Link2home is the state-wide homelessness information and referral telephone service. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

From 9am to 10pm daily, Link2home provides callers with information, assessments and referrals to homelessness support and accommodation services across NSW.

Between the hours of 10 at night and 9 in the morning, Link2home provides information and assessment only and will refer people to emergency services if required. Referral to accommodation and support services is not possible during these hours.

Callers to Link2home will receive one or more of the following:

- information about local services
- an assessment to determine what kind of help is needed
- referral to appropriate specialist homelessness services (SHS), support services, temporary accommodation and/or other services.

Link2home also provides information about homelessness services across NSW to SHS providers and homelessness advocates acting on behalf of clients.

Find a Specialist Homelessness Service

Specialist homelessness services can help women, men, young people, families, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They help women experiencing domestic and family violence, people who are sleeping rough, young people leaving care, people with mental health issues, people living in unsafe conditions, older people, and people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer.

Specialist homelessness services are delivered by non-government organisations across NSW. The number and types of services varies in each location. To find a service search at: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/services

Ask Izzy

Ask Izzy is a website and app for immediate assistance with information about where to get help for shelter, food, health and other critical services. Search at: askizzy.org.au/

Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

The Mental Health Line is a state-wide 24 hour telephone service which connects people with their local mental health service. Staffed by mental health professionals, the line gives NSW residents who are seeking mental health assistance, access to specialist mental health advice, triage and referral to the most appropriate care.

Other service providers are able to speak with a mental health professional for advice about a person's clinical symptoms, the urgency of the need for care and local treatment options.

Partner agencies can ring the line for advice, guidance and referral options for people with whom they come into contact.

Consumers and carers should be referred to this service where appropriate.

Lifeline 13 11 14

Lifeline is a 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention telephone service. 13 11 14 is a confidential telephone crisis support service available 24/7 from a landline, payphone or mobile. Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can contact Lifeline. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation our trained volunteers are ready to listen, provide support and referrals.

Alcohol and Other Drug Information Services (ADIS)

Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS) is a NSW state-wide telephone service providing education, information, referral, crisis counselling and support about illegal drugs such as heroin, ice and cannabis, as well as legal drugs such as alcohol.

ADIS operates 24 hours, 7 days a week. All calls are confidential and anonymous.

The service is for:

- People affected by drugs
- Families
- Friends
- Professionals

Sydney metropolitan: 02 9361 8000
Regional & rural NSW free call: 1800 422 599

Your Room website

Your Room provides information and resources about alcohol and other drugs, tools for people to reduce alcohol and other drug-related harm and a service hub for a broad range of health and social services across NSW.

Website: <http://yourroom.com.au/>

Drug & Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service (DASAS)

DASAS provides general advice on the clinical diagnosis and management of patients with alcohol and other drug related problems, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. DASAS is a free telephone service for healthcare professionals only, funded by NSW Health and managed by St Vincent's Hospital Alcohol and Drug Service in Sydney.

Sydney metropolitan: 02 9361 8006
Regional and rural NSWL 1800 023 687

Family Drug Support (FDS) 1300 368 186

FDS provides information and support to family impacted by a loved one's alcohol and other drug use. It is available 24 hours 7 days a week.

Assertive Community Management Program (Alcohol and Other Drugs)

Housing (lack of or loss of) is frequently a factor associated with relapse in people who have Alcohol and Other Drugs related problems. A number of local health districts and one specialty health network offer the Assertive Community Management program for people with severe substance dependence and highly complex needs. These services offers long term holistic support and intensive case management to ensure people remain engaged in the community (including housing).

Contact details for these services can be found by contacting ADIS on 1800 250 015

Continuing Coordinated Care Program (Alcohol and Other Drugs)

The Continuing Coordinated Care Program delivered by non-government organisations operates across NSW and aims to strengthen pathways between services for clients with multiple needs. These services provide wrap-around care, linkage to range of social support services (including housing) and assist people remain in alcohol and other drug treatment.

Contact details for these services can be found by contacting ADIS on 1800 250 015

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The NDIS will provide Australians aged under 65, who have permanent and significant disability with funding for supports and services. The NDIS can be contacted on 1800 800 110.