NEW PROVIDERS OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES ANNOUNCED

Family and Community Services Minister Gabrielle Upton today announced a $515 million package, including the restoration of funding to the inner city, to reduce homelessness and reduce repeat homelessness by tackling its causes.

At its centre are reforms to re-shape the NSW specialist homelessness system to break the cycle of homelessness while also providing a strong safety net for those in need.

The Going Home Staying Home reforms will provide a record $445 million over three years for non-government organisations to deliver homelessness services to improve the lives of more than 52,000 people a year.

An additional $70 million in complementary programs have also been announced today.

“I am pleased to confirm this Government’s commitment to provide additional and more effective help to people who don’t have a roof over their heads,” Ms Upton said.

“The Going Home, Staying Home reforms have a greater focus on early intervention and prevention, not just crisis management.

“We are wrapping integrated services around those at risk of homelessness, before they are at crisis level, before they are sleeping rough on our streets.”

Going Home Staying Home reforms will make it easier for people who need the help of specialist homelessness services in NSW.

The total budget for specialist homelessness services delivered through non-government organisations in NSW grows by 9.6 per cent from $135 million in 2013/14 to a record $148 million in 2014/15.

“Under these changes, I am reinstating the proposed reduction in funding for inner city specialist homelessness services of $8.6 million per year,” Ms Upton said.

“This includes an extra $2 million per year specifically for women’s services in the inner city.

“The large increases in funding to suburban and regional areas remain, because the evidence shows that is where the demand is. However the original proposal to reduce the funding in the inner city ran the risk of delivering too much change, too quickly.
“We need to ensure that the inner city has more support and more time to adjust, and that the people who most need our help don’t slip through the cracks.

“Importantly, the new specialist women’s service in the inner city will receive almost three times its original budget. The reforms embed specialist support for women in new services across the whole state as well.

“The new system will still include specialist services for specific target groups, such as women, young people, Aboriginal people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.”

In addition to the Going Home Staying Home program, over the next three years the NSW Government will introduce a number of complementary initiatives to prevent and respond to homelessness:

- $31.2 million to extend and increase the Start Safely program that provides stable, private rental housing for 1300 women and children escaping domestic violence;
- a new $27 million program to provide up to 4000 unaccompanied homeless children and young people under 16 years with help to reconnect with family, or transition to independence through education, training and employment;
- an additional $7.5 million for new housing and support programs to help 100 homeless people currently in the inner city to find stable homes in suburban and regional areas;
- and a new $4.5 million homelessness hotline and referral service that will act as a single state-wide phone line for people who require homelessness services.

“While there are many organisations doing fantastic work to help the needy, a new approach is needed. We can’t continue to do the same thing for 30 years and expect a different outcome,” Ms Upton said.

Under the Going Home Staying Home reforms, 336 individual services have been consolidated into 149 new service packages that will be led by 69 non-government organisations, supported by their partner agencies.

“It is an unavoidable fact that not every current service provider has been successful in the tender process.

“I am establishing a Service Support Fund so that eligible small to medium sized service providers that were not successful in the tender process can apply for 18 months of additional funding.

“To be eligible, these providers will need to demonstrate through a project plan that they can provide a specialist homelessness service that will not duplicate the new services.”

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