

# **THE VICTORIAN SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SECTOR**

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# Presentation objectives



- Greater understanding of the social housing sector in Victoria and how it supports the Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) and people without a home.
- An understanding of how allied sectors can work together to achieve positive outcomes for the people using our services

# What is homelessness?



# Definition



Australian Bureau of Statistics definition: when a person's current living arrangement:

- Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or
- if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations

Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islanders, and refugees into Australia, may also experience what's known as "spiritual homelessness".

Homelessness affects 24,000 Victorians on any given night.

## *'Homelessness' is much more than 'Houselessness'*

### **Australian Human Rights Commission:**

Fundamentally, homelessness is about lack of connectedness with family, friends and the community and lack of control over one's environment.





“What is homelessness? It means not having a home. There is no such thing as homeless people – they are people who do not have a home”

**- John Kenney, PESP member**

# The causes of homelessness

What may be some of the structural causes of homelessness?



# Structural causes of homelessness

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Housing costs
- Employment
- Affordable housing crisis





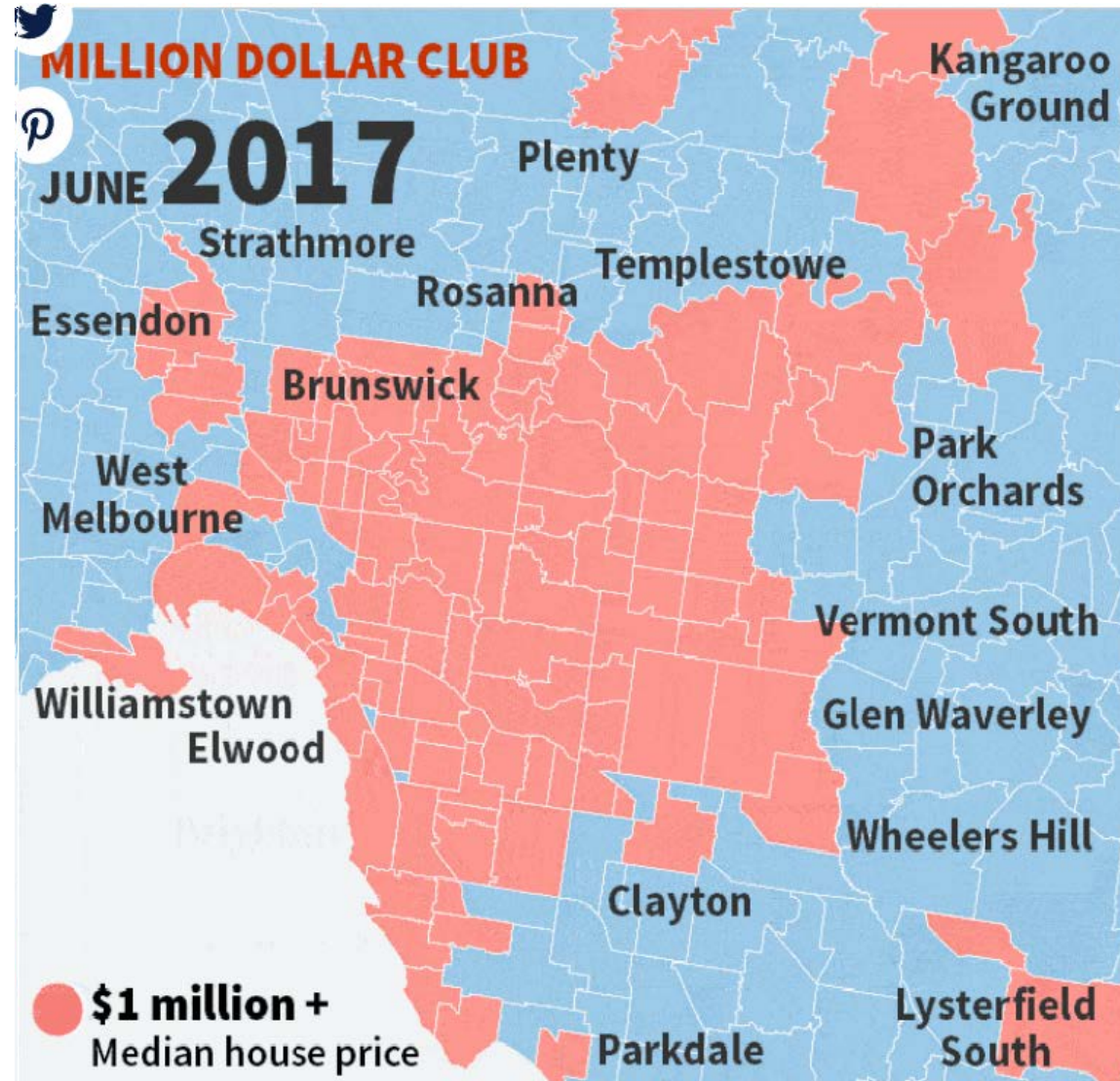
# Housing affordability

- The median house price in Melbourne in March 1980 was \$40,800
- In June 2017 it was \$822,000

From March 2016 to March 2017, house prices in Melbourne increased by **15.9%**



# Million-dollar suburbs



[Melbourne house prices: Million-dollar suburbs matched](#)

- Capital city rents have increased at twice the rate of inflation in the last five years
- Five years ago 1-in-5 rentals in Melbourne were affordable to someone on a low income
- Today only 1-in-20 rentals in Melbourne are affordable to someone on a low income



# How many people are homeless?

- Estimated 116,427 people experiencing homelessness in the 2016 Census
  - - up from 102,439 in 2011 (13.7% increase)
- There has been 28% increase in Australians aged 55+
- 40% of people experiencing homelessness in 2016 were aged under 25
- In Victoria, over 24,817 people homeless on Census night in 2016 (11.3% increase)

## Includes:

- people sleeping outside or in impoverished dwellings,
- sleeping temporarily with friends or relatives, staying in boarding houses, or
- staying in government-funded crisis or temporary accommodation or
- severely crowded dwellings

\*\* (MCG capacity 100,000)



# Myths surrounding homelessness

**Myth:** “People have chosen to become homeless”

**FACT:** People who are homeless have aspirations for a better life but are often caught in a situation beyond their control, making it difficult to find and maintain a home of their own. No one wants to be homeless, however the longer people are homeless the more likely they are to adapt to and identify with a homeless way of life. These people are said to be “chronically homeless”

(Chamberlain, C & Johnson, G 2007)

# Myths surrounding homelessness

**Myth:** “Most people become homeless because of drug and alcohol misuse”

**FACT:** Researchers have found that a majority of people experiencing homelessness who have substance use or mental health issues developed these **AFTER** they became homeless

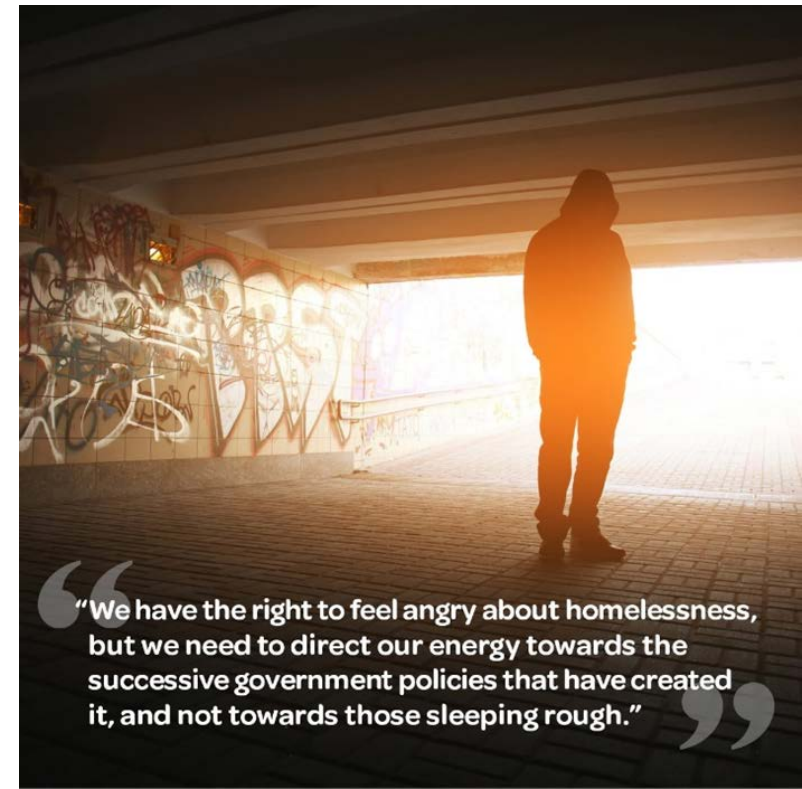
(Chamberlain, C & Johnson, G 2007).



# Myths surrounding homelessness

**Myth:** “Homeless people are all criminals”

**FACT:** People experiencing homelessness are more likely to become victims of crime than a perpetrator (Walsh, 2007).



# The impact of homelessness

People without a home may experience:

- Trauma
- Loneliness
- Stigma
- Isolation
- A lack of belonging and identity
- Spiritual Homelessness





# PESP member experiences

- *“I was so lost. It was the wandering, the bumping around from place to place and knowing that I didn’t belong in any of them” – **Simon***
- *“My most vivid memory was the sense of total isolation from all others and the experience of coldness that chilled me to the bones” – **Allan***
- *“Feeling lost, like a number – Invisible” – **Sally***
- *“I was retrenched after 20 years of employment; lost contact with my workmates, drifted from my family and spiralled into depression” – **David***
- *“Isolation was extremely hard to get out of. I was scared, frightened and cold, always cold” - **Erika***



Being without a home forces people away from their family, friends, communities and social networks, and leaves people vulnerable to chronic ill-health, unemployment and social exclusion.

# Solutions



- Homelessness prevention
- Consumer involvement in design, development and review of the SHS
- Streamlined access to services
- Rapid re-housing (Housing First)
- Support to keep your home
- Affordable Housing Strategy



# Social Housing



# Social Housing



- Social housing is short and long-term rental housing that is owned and run by the government or not-for-profit agencies.
- This includes public rental housing, state owned and managed Indigenous housing, mainstream and Indigenous community housing and housing provided under the Crisis Accommodation Program.

# Public housing



- Rental housing that state and territory governments provide and manage
- Tenants pay no more than 25% of the total household income in rent
  - Includes wages and payments from Centrelink and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- There are currently approx. 62, 995 public housing dwellings accommodating 133, 492 tenants

# Community housing



- Secure, affordable, long term housing managed by not-for-profit organisations for people on low incomes or with special needs
- Locally managed
- Usually offer range of community regeneration/participation opportunities
- Tenants pay 25-30% of their income towards rent, and the Community Housing provider receives 100% of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)

# Community housing rights



- Tenancies in community housing generally continue until the tenant decides to leave or the tenancy becomes unsustainable.
- Community housing tenants sign a tenancy agreement. The agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of the community housing organisation (as landlord) and tenant.
- Tenants have the same rights under the Victorian Residential Tenancies Act 1997 as public housing tenants and private tenants.



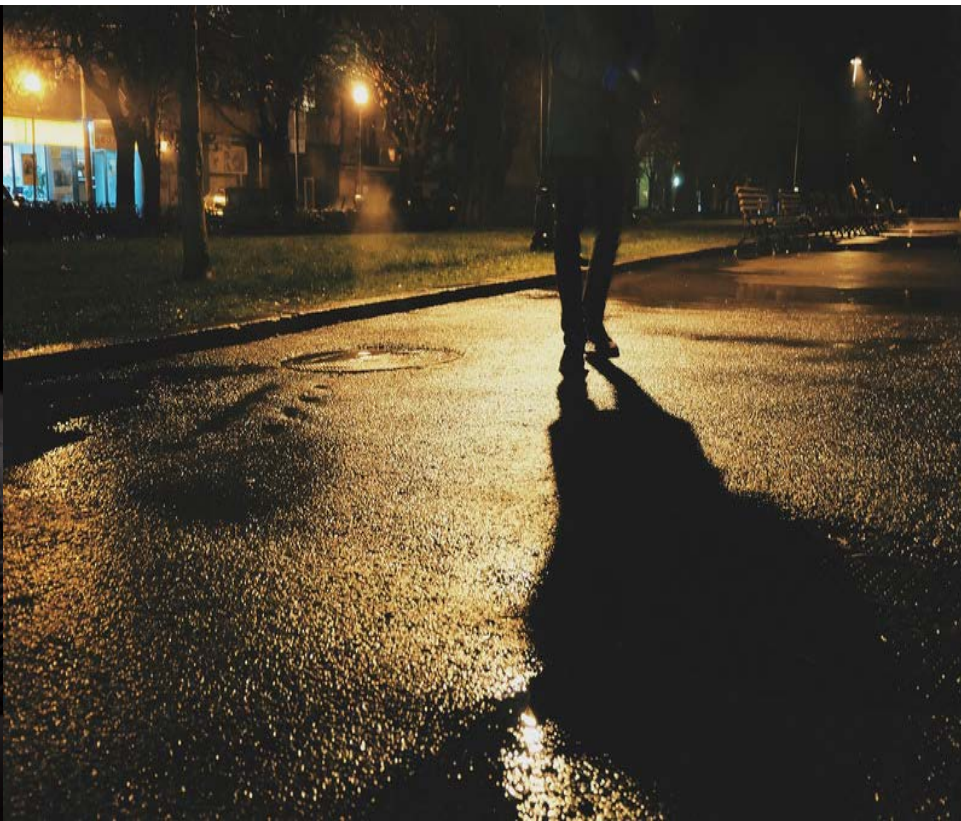
# Social housing in Victoria 2016–17



Housing type	Households	% of Total
Public housing	64,167	74%
Indigenous Community Housing	2,006	2%
Mainstream community housing	19,852	23%
Total	86,416	

August 2017

# The Homelessness System in Victoria



# Specialist Homelessness System



Specialist homelessness services support people experiencing homelessness and those who are in crisis situations or at risk of homelessness.

SPECIALIST  
HOMELESSNESS  
SECTOR

# The SHS in 2019

- The Australian and Victorian governments fund the Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) to help people find housing and get support if they need it.
- There are approximately 145 SHS services in Victoria.
- Some of these services provide [housing services](#) while other provide [support services](#).
- Over 2014–15 the Victorian specialist homelessness services worked with over 100,000 people – 36.9% of whom were under 24 years old.

# Specialist Homelessness System

The SHS acts as a vital safety net for some of the most vulnerable people in our community, as well as providing a direct response to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The key goals of the SHS is get people housed and help them maintain that housing:

Get a home. Keep a home.



# Specialist Homelessness System



An entry point model – ‘Opening Doors’.

# Specialist Homelessness System



The key roles in the SHS are:

- Initial Assessment Planning
- Support
- Tenancy Management



# Specialist Homelessness System



Housing services:

- Transitional Housing Managers (THMs)



# Specialist Homelessness System

Support services receive their referrals from entry point services

Support services work with people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

They may be:

- in crisis accommodation
- moving between families and friends
- staying in caravan parks or rooming houses
- sleeping rough
- without any accommodation.

# Specialist Homelessness System



- Support services
- Support services also deliver case management
- Case management involves helping someone address issues that are stopping them from achieving their life goals.

# Specialist Homelessness System



Local Area Service Networks (LASNs)

# Specialist Homelessness System



Response to youth homelessness:

- Youth specific entry point (Frontyard)
- 17 youth refuges (seven in the NWMR)
- Some specific youth programs (eg MCM)

# Specialist Homelessness System

## Response to family violence

The family violence system, made up of many different services working together to make women and children safer and hold people who use violence to account. The system includes:

- Specialist family violence services, including refuges
- Housing services
- Community legal services
- Police
- Magistrates' Courts and Family Courts
- Child and Family services
- Child Protection
- Men's referral services and men's behaviour change programs
- Corrections services

# Specialist Homelessness System



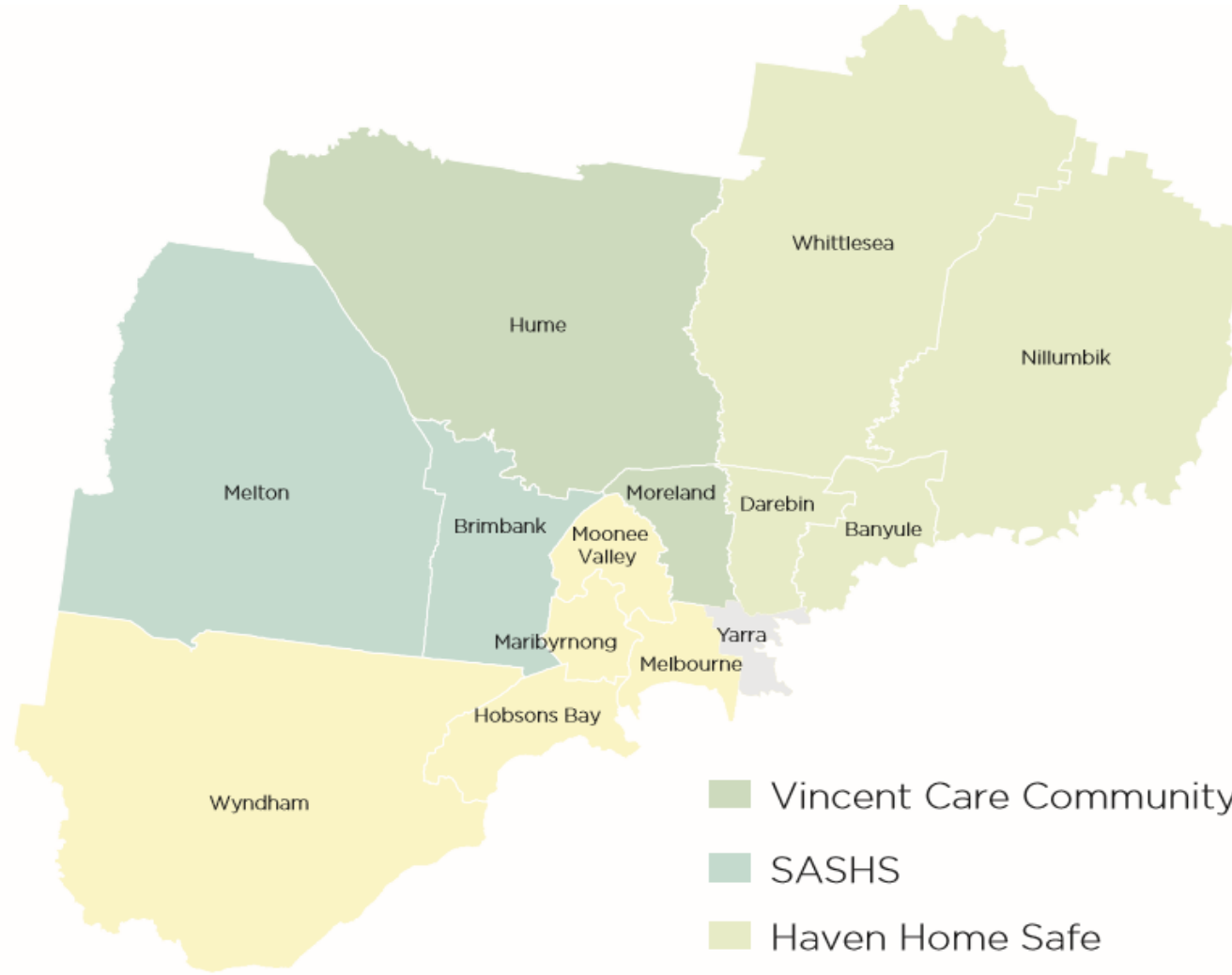
The parts of the family violence system that sit in the SHS are:

- Refuges
- Some specialist family violence services (often connected to refuges)
- Housing services



# The North West Metropolitan Region

- 5 generalist, 2 family violence and 1 youth specific access point services
- 5 transitional housing management services, managing 1,100 properties
- 50 homelessness support agencies providing 180 programs, targeted to: young people, single men, single women, families or cross target
- Housing Establishment Funds & Private Rental Brokerage Programs
- Capacity building programs such as FRMP, CEEP, Living Skills
- Tenancy Plus— support for public housing tenants at risk of eviction



- Vincent Care Community Hub
- SASHS
- Haven Home Safe
- Unison
- Launch Housing



## The NWMR Network Coordinators

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(Subscribe to e bulletin): [www.nwhn.net.au/subscribe](http://www.nwhn.net.au/subscribe)



# Key workforce activities in the Specialist Homelessness Sector



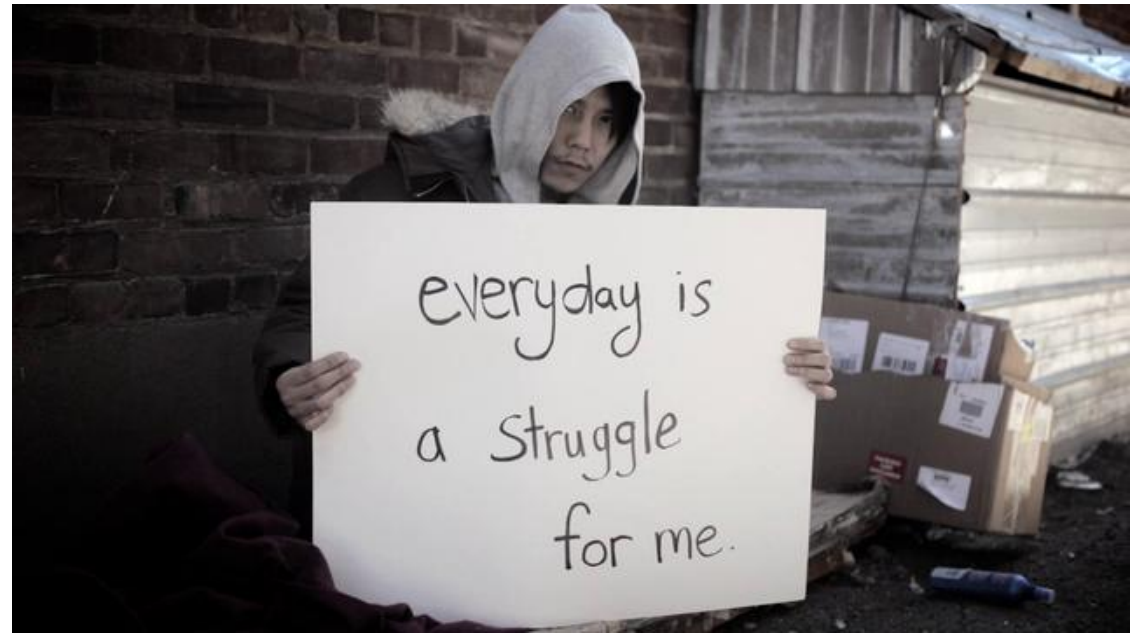
# Initial assessment planning IAP



- Role
- Responsibilities
- Challenges
- Skills required to be a good IAP worker
- Good outcomes

# Support

- Role
- Responsibilities
- Challenges
- Case management
- Skills required to be a good support worker
- Good outcomes

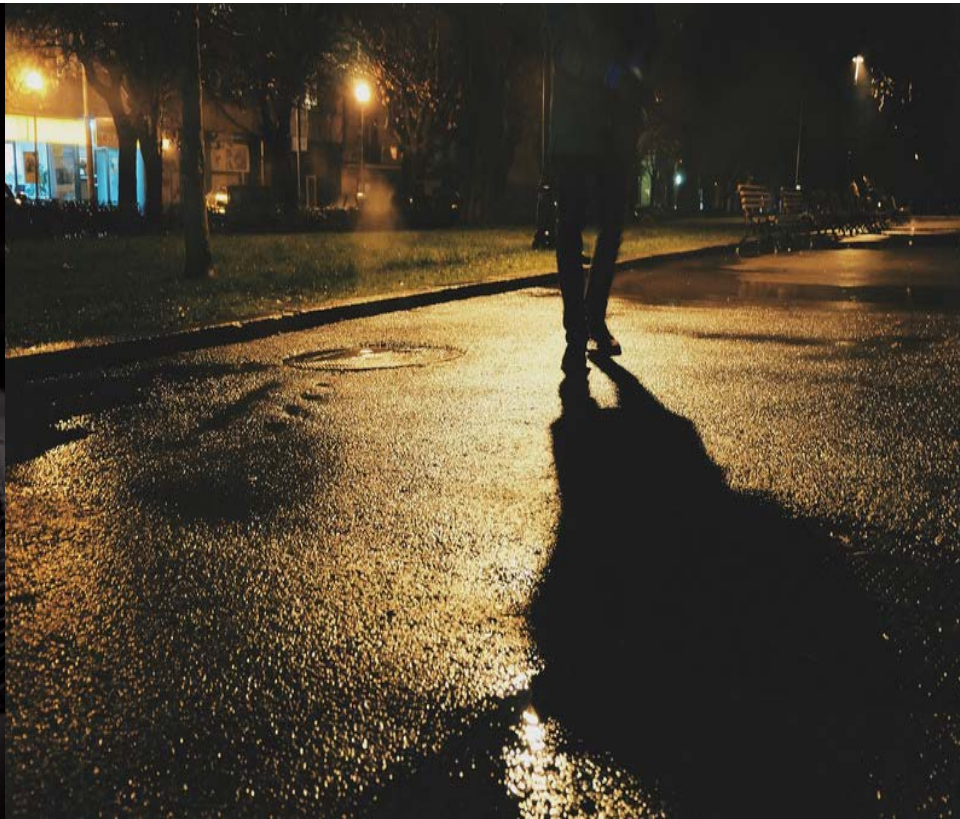


# Tenancy management

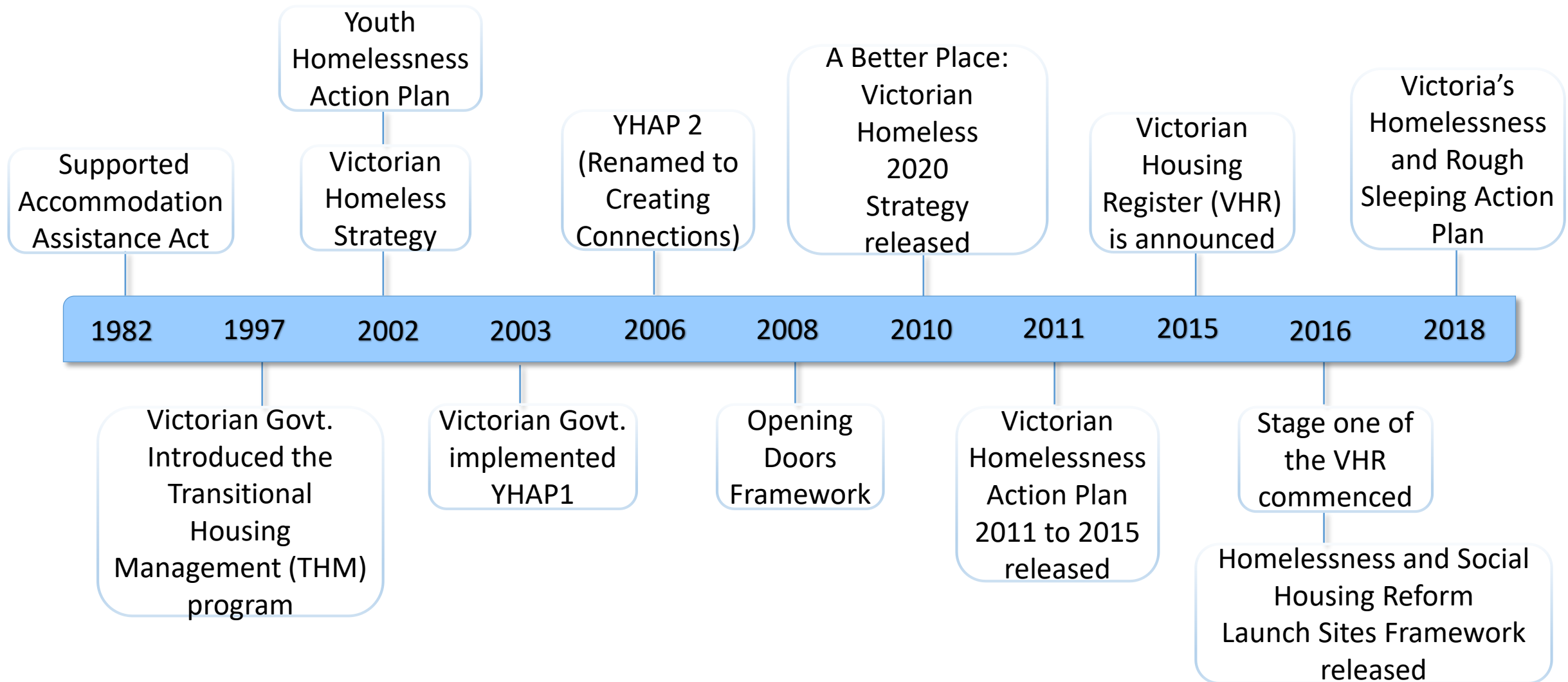


- Role
- Responsibilities
- Skills required to be a good tenancy worker
- Challenges
- Good outcomes

# The Homelessness System in Victoria – Current Reforms



# Victorian Homelessness Policy



# Reform to Social housing and SHS



**September 2015**

Reforms to homelessness and social housing announced by the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing (and other portfolios), Martin Foley

Like other recent reforms it has a focus on:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Making the homelessness and social housing system work better for people



# Social Housing Reform



A key social housing reform is the Victorian Housing Register

The Victorian Housing Register has relevance for and impact on any service working with people who may want to apply for social housing  
People can now make online applications.

Support services can help people complete these applications

Support services can apply for an EPRIN number which means they can recommend clients for priority housing

# Reform to SHS



February 2018 – **Victoria's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan** is released

It describes the need for a continuum of service responses including:

- Intervening early (prevention)
- Providing stable accommodation as quickly as possible (resolving homelessness)
- Support to maintain stable accommodation (post homelessness)

It has a focus on person centred service delivery and outcomes

# Reform to SHS

Key issues and solutions highlighted in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan:

- People sleeping rough frequently struggle with an array of co-occurring issues that reinforce one another in complex ways
- An effective and responsive homelessness service system responding to rough sleeping requires a **multi-agency response**.
- Many of the issues that contribute to rough sleeping, and in turn, the range of individual needs that must be addressed to resolve it, **extend beyond the specialist homelessness and housing service systems**
- Other service systems – such as acute care, clinical mental health, primary and community health, disability, family violence, employment services and income support – may all **play a role in supporting individual recovery**

# Reform to SHS



Key issues and solutions highlighted in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan:

- A persons homelessness is **unlikely to be resolved when separate service systems address single issues in isolation**, or exclude or delay assistance to people because of the complexity of their needs
- To reduce the incidence and impacts of rough sleeping in Victoria, we **must recognise the inter-dependencies between the various types of assistance, treatment and support** that people require and therefore **work to provide that help in a holistic, multi-disciplinary manner**

# Reform to SHS



Key issues and solutions highlighted in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan:

- If we are to tackle rough sleeping effectively, **we must improve the way services are delivered** to people sleeping rough or who are at risk of chronic homelessness and rough sleeping
- Ultimately, **we must recognise rough sleeping as a cross-sectoral responsibility** and ensure that **the services people need to exit homelessness are delivered in an integrated, coordinated and client-centred manner**

# Reform to SHS



Two priority areas for prevention and early intervention were identified:

- locations beyond central Melbourne where many people first experience crisis leading to homelessness and rough sleeping
- justice, health and human service systems that have contact with people who are at greater risk of homelessness and rough sleeping

# Reform to SHS

Ultimately, **we need to find, engage and assist people who are sleeping rough more rapidly** to prevent any escalation of their situation and minimise risk of harm.

This includes allied services (eg AOD services) **proactively referring their clients who are sleeping rough to specialist homelessness services for assistance.**

We must also ensure that we routinely **assess people's risk of homelessness prior to their release or discharge from settings that are known pathways to rough sleeping** (eg prison and out-of-home care) – including inpatient health facilities (eg detox and rehab) – and provide suitable housing and support to those who need it.

# Allied sectors working together



## Key messages:

- Effective collaboration and strong connections/relationships between sectors is critical – it is our mutual responsibility to make this happen
- Workers need to really understand how other sectors and systems function so they make timely referrals that ‘stick’ – this is key to early intervention and prevention for both homelessness and AOD misuse
- There needs to be an understanding how AOD misuse (and other issues like mental health) intersect and exacerbate homelessness and vice versa – such an understanding informs both direct service delivery and system design



# PESP **positive** experiences



- “they treated me like any other person – not as someone different or damaged”
- “they knew that I didn't choose to be here”
- “to be treated with dignity not like a charity case”
- “I felt like I was given a hand up not a hand out”
- “when someone genuinely listened”





**THANK YOU.**

**Council to Homeless Persons**

**[www.chp.org.au](http://www.chp.org.au)**