

## REDRESSING ABORIGINAL HOMELESSNESS ACCORD



This Accord was developed by the NSW SHS Aboriginal Reference Group in November 2017. It is intended to be an active guiding document. SHS providers are strongly encouraged to **sign up** to the Accord, **display** it in their organisations and **report on its implementation** to the SHS Aboriginal Reference Group

### National statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- In 2016, 23,437 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experienced homelessness. More than two out of three were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings, with just less than 10% 'sleeping rough'<sup>1</sup>.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 24% (61,700 people nationwide, 18,535 people in NSW) of those accessing SHS in 2015-16, up 16% from 2014-15.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2013, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-17 accessed SHS organisations nine times the rate of non-Indigenous children.<sup>3</sup>
- Aboriginal children enter out of home care at ten times the rate of non-Aboriginal children. At 30 June 2016, there were 16,846 Aboriginal children in out of home care.<sup>4</sup>
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait imprisonment rate (prisoners per 100,000 people): increased from 2,253 in 2015 to 2,346 in 2016. At the same time, the non-Indigenous imprisonment rate increased from 146 to 154 prisoners per 100,000.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2016, 162 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people died as a result of suicide. The death rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 23.8 deaths per 100,000 people, compared to 11.4 deaths per 100,000 for non-Indigenous people.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ABS 2016, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness*, ABS, Canberra, Cat no: 2049.0

<sup>2</sup> AIHW 2016, *Specialist homelessness services 2015-16*, AIHW, Canberra  
<<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2015-16/contents/client-groups-of-interest/indigenous-clients>>

<sup>3</sup> AIHW 2014, *Indigenous child safety*, AIHW, Canberra, Cat. no, IHW 127, p. 16

<sup>4</sup> AIHW 2016, *Child protection Australia 2015-16*, AIHW, Canberra, p. 52

<sup>5</sup> ABS 2016, *Prisoners in Australia*, ABS, Canberra, Cat no. 4517.0

<sup>6</sup> ABS 2016, *Causes of Death, Australia*, ABS, Canberra, Cat no. 3303.0

We, the undersigned members of the Specialist Homelessness Services sector,

- ✓ Acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Peoples of Australia
- ✓ Acknowledge the strengths and resilience of Aboriginal people
- ✓ Acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal culture and people to Australia
- ✓ Recognise that reconciliation has been initiated by Aboriginal people in the spirit of true partnership and acknowledge the Aboriginal Rights Movement in this context
- ✓ Recognise the importance of culture and the diversity of Aboriginal communities – in their language, kinship and rural, regional and metropolitan locations
- ✓ Recognise the importance of constitutional recognition and uphold the views expressed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- ✓ Acknowledge that since white settlement, the massacres and dispossession of cultural lands have been key contributors to homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that dispossession must be addressed as a matter of justice and we support all efforts that aim to meaningfully resolve rights to the land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- ✓ Acknowledge the historical trauma that Aboriginal people and communities have experienced and the impact this has on homelessness
- ✓ Recognise the migratory pathways that are caused by homelessness and dispossession
- ✓ Understand that homelessness and the impacts of homelessness are caused by and contribute to increased incarceration and removal of children from Aboriginal families
- ✓ Recognise that inappropriate social, education, employment and health policies, including housing and welfare policies, and a lack of service supports, continue to cause severe disadvantage and high levels of homelessness suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today
- ✓ Acknowledge a collective responsibility around these policies as their implementation requires the active involvement of community organisations. We believe that all government and non-government organisations must commit themselves to a reconciliation process that ensures a united Australia
- ✓ Recognise a need for better data representing issues from Aboriginal people
- ✓ Acknowledge that there are only four Aboriginal community controlled SHS organisations directly contracted by FACS. This must change. We need support for accreditation of Aboriginal community controlled and led services.

We commit to:

- ✓ Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples by taking a holistic and human rights approach to redressing Aboriginal homelessness
- ✓ Supporting Aboriginal community controlled housing
- ✓ Supporting Aboriginal young people and combatting youth suicide
- ✓ Promoting Aboriginal language and culture to assist with healing
- ✓ Providing greater support for rehabilitation and psychological health of people with complex needs
- ✓ Supporting reconnection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with their communities
- ✓ Supporting an increase in Aboriginal community controlled domestic and family violence services
- ✓ Working with Community Housing Providers, FACS Housing and partners to ensure that they deliver culturally competent services
- ✓ Working in partnership with Aboriginal specific services, e.g. Aboriginal Medical Services
- ✓ Building the capacity and resourcing the role of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to deliver services to Aboriginal communities
- ✓ Advocating for long term investment of resources and commitment to redressing homelessness – no pilots, empty promises, one off under resourced programs
- ✓ Recognising and valuing the skills of Aboriginal staff and supporting their career pathways and development, including setting and documenting Aboriginal workforce employment and retention targets across the sector
- ✓ Promoting cultural inclusion, participation, connectivity and safety, for example, through training and implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Competency Standards 2016. <http://bngspp.s3.amazonaws.com/live/files/dmfile/CHAP-Standards.pdf>

**Further reading:**

[Mapu Yaan Gurri Mapu Marrunggirr – Healing Our Way Forum Report](#)

[Uluru Statement from the Heart – Referendum Council](#)

[Closing the Gap](#)

[Bringing Them Home](#)