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# Report on Government Services 2019

PART G: PRESENTATION REVISED ON 27 JUNE 2019, RELEASED 22 JANUARY 2019

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## G Housing and homelessness

### Main aims of services within the sector

The main aim of housing and homelessness sector services is to ensure that all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing — a vital determinant of wellbeing that is associated with better outcomes in health, education and employment, as well as economic and social participation.<sup>1</sup>

### Services included in the sector

There are three main areas of government involvement in the housing and homelessness sector:

- [Social housing services](#) >  
Subsidised rental housing provided by not-for-profit, non-government or government organisations to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation through the private market.
- [Specialist homelessness services](#) >  
Direct assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including accommodation and other services.
- **Financial assistance** (private housing) — private rental assistance and home purchase assistance (not covered in the housing and homelessness chapters) as targeted payments to assist access to private housing and reduce demand on social housing and homelessness services.

Detailed information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of service provision and the achievement of outcomes for social housing and specialist homelessness service areas is contained in service-specific chapters.

**Note:** Data tables are referenced by table xA.1, xA.2, etc, with x referring to the chapter or overview. For example, table GA.1 refers to attachment table 1 for this sector overview.

✕ [Skip to data tables for sector overview](#)

### Government expenditure in the sector

Total Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure for social housing and specialist homelessness services was \$5.0 billion in 2017-18 (tables 18A.1 and 19A.1), around 2.1 per cent of total government expenditure on services covered in this Report. The

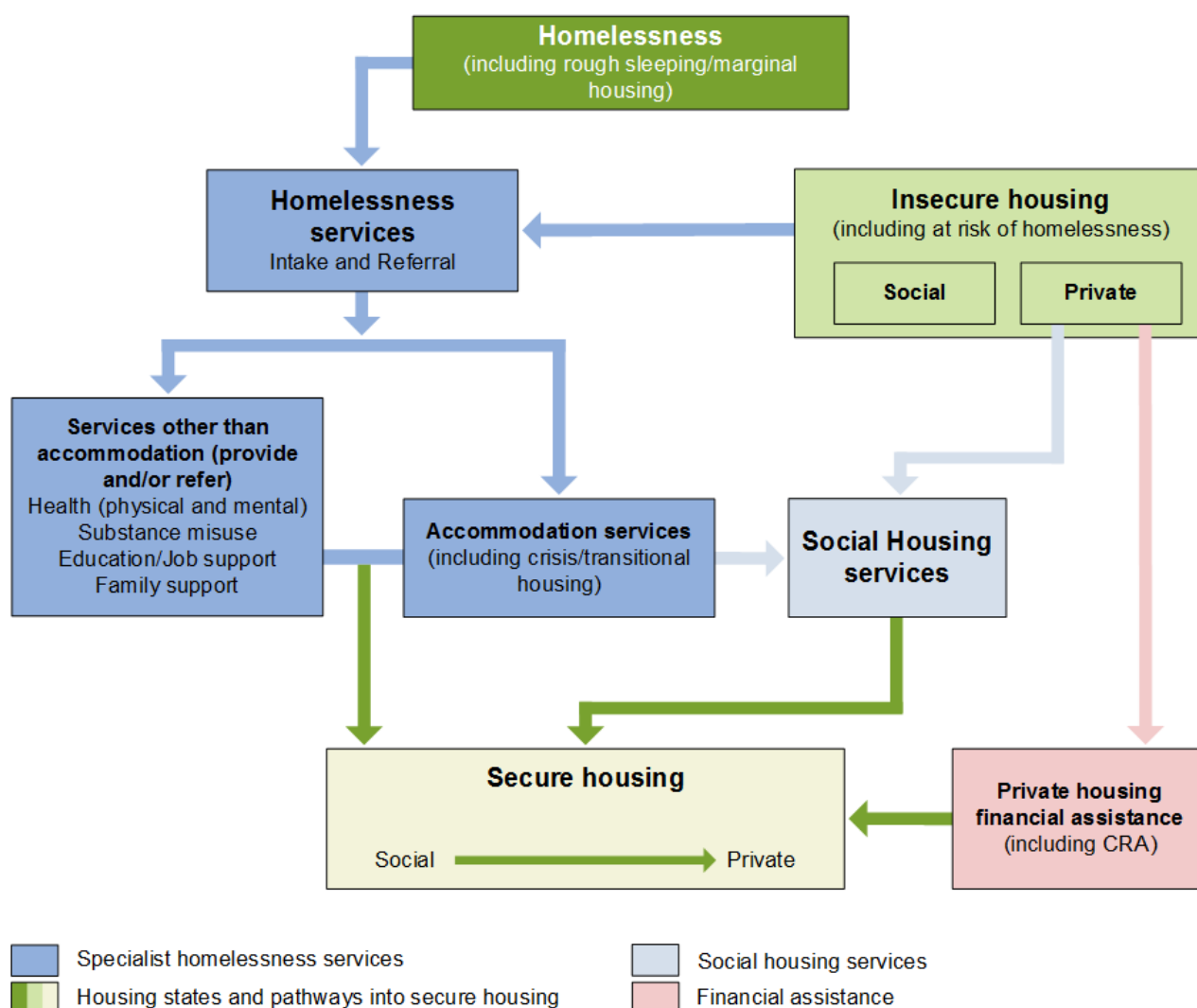
Australian Government share of this expenditure was \$2.0 billion in 2017-18 (table GA.1). Social housing services accounted for \$4.1 billion (table 18A.1) and specialist homelessness services for \$0.9 billion (table 19A.1).

Australian Government expenditure on Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)<sup>2</sup> — the largest government private rental assistance program — was \$4.4 billion in 2017-18 (table GA.5).

## Flows in the sector

Paths into and through the housing and homelessness services sector vary widely (figure G.1). Drivers of housing instability and homelessness include market factors affecting housing affordability and household factors such as adverse personal, social and economic circumstances<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure G.1 Role of housing and homelessness sector services in pathways to secure housing**

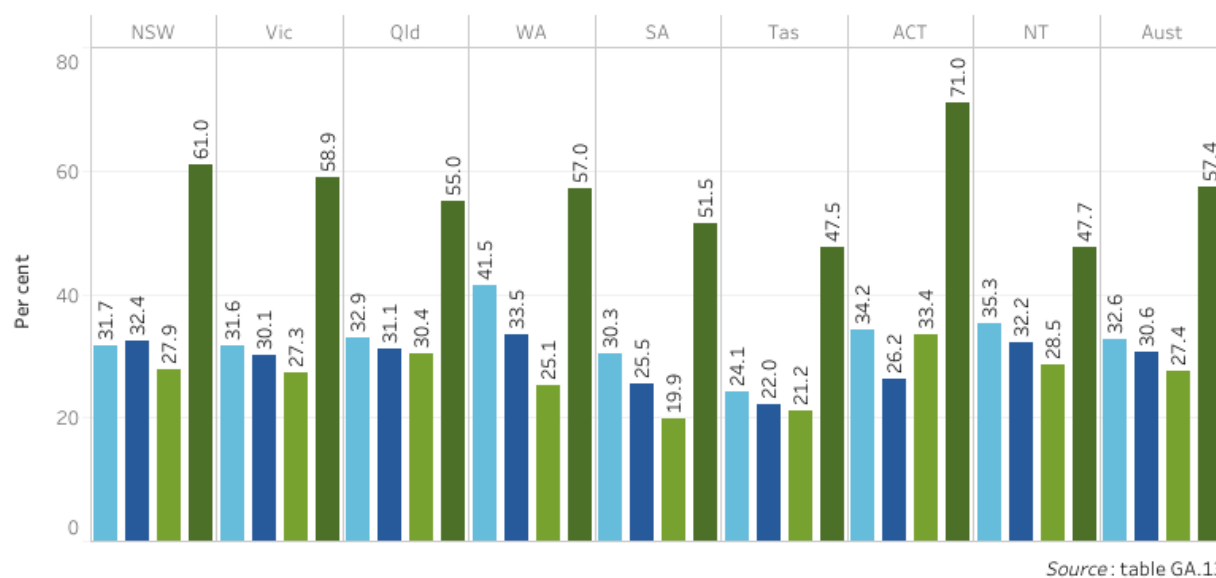


Low income earners are particularly susceptible to housing instability as market factors lead to higher private housing prices. 'Rental stress', defined as spending more than 30 per cent of gross household income on rent, is a measure of housing affordability for this cohort. In 2015-16, of the

25.3 per cent of Australian households renting in the private sector, 42.5 per cent were low income<sup>4</sup>. Of these households, 52.9 per cent experienced rental stress (table GA.3)<sup>5</sup>.

Of low income households that were CRA recipients in June 2018, 68.3 per cent would have experienced rental stress without CRA. With CRA, 40.3 per cent still experienced rental stress (figure G.2, table GA.13). Further information on CRA is presented in tables GA.5–GA.14.

Figure G.2 Proportion of CRA recipient income units with more than 30 per cent of income spent on rent, 2018



Data tables are referenced above by a 'GA' prefix and all data (footnotes and data sources) are available for download from the supporting material below (both in Excel and CSV format).

Select special needs group(s):

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Aged 24 years or under
- Aged 75 years or over
- All income units
- Disability support pension

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Disability support pension
- Aged 75 years or over
- Aged 24 years or under

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When housing instability cannot be addressed through financial assistance, social housing and/or specialist homelessness services may be needed. Pathways through these closely intertwined service areas vary greatly, often intersecting with other service areas, depending on:

- the mix and complexity of market and household factors driving the need for services
- the current housing or homelessness situation
- the service(s) provided
- the household's capacity to effectively utilise the service(s).

A temporary inability to access or maintain stable housing in the private sector may be addressed for some with the support of short or medium-term services. For others, ongoing housing stability may depend on long-term social housing tenancy. A smaller proportion of service users experience variable but persistent vulnerability to housing instability and homelessness. This is typically associated with a complex mix of adverse social and economic circumstances that affect the capacity of the household to maintain engagement with service providers and effectively utilise services. For the most vulnerable, limited progress toward a less insecure form of housing or

homelessness may require a range of service types, and may not be sustained. Further progress may be possible on later re-engagement with service providers.

Factors that increase the risk of homelessness and/or need for social housing can include physical and mental health issues, disability, alcohol and other drug misuse, unemployment, relationship breakdown and family or domestic violence. For example, reasons for seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in 2017-18 included mental health, medical issues or problematic substance use for 22.9 per cent of clients. Interpersonal and relationship issues was a reason for 53.4 per cent of clients, of whom 73.6 per cent identified domestic and family violence<sup>6</sup>.

Housing instability and homelessness can in turn increase vulnerability to adverse social and economic circumstances through, for example, poorer outcomes in education, employment and health, and increased risk of involvement with the justice system<sup>7</sup>.

## Download data tables

These data tables relate to the sector as a whole. Data specific to individual service areas are in the data tables under the relevant service area.

[Housing and Homelessness sector overview data tables \(XLSX - 126 Kb\)](#)

[Housing and Homelessness sector overview data tables \(PDF - 757 Kb\)](#)

[Housing and Homelessness sector overview dataset \(CSV - 60 Kb\)](#)

See the Sector overview text and corresponding table number in the data tables above for detailed definitions, caveats, footnotes and data source(s).

## Footnotes

1. Commonwealth Senate Economic References Committee 2015, *Out of reach? The Australian housing affordability challenge*, Canberra.
2. CRA is available to eligible low and middle income earners who receive a Centrelink payment and whose rental costs exceed set minimum amounts.
3. Stone W., Sharam A., Wiesel I., Ralston L., Markkanen S. and James A., 2015. *Accessing and sustaining private rental tenancies: critical life events, housing shocks and insurances*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited Final Report no. 259, Melbourne.
4. ABS 2017, *Household Income and Wealth, Australia, 2015–16*, Cat. no. 6523.0, Canberra.
5. Data for all low income rental households (i.e., public and private) are in table GA.2 and show that for all low income rental households the proportion is 44.2 per cent.
6. AIHW 2018, *2017–18 Specialist homelessness services annual web report*.
7. Bevitt, A., Chigavazira, A., Herault, N., Johnson, G., Moschion, J., Scutella, R., Tseng, Y., Wooden, M. and Kalb, G. 2014, *Journeys Home Research Report No. 6*, Melbourne: University of Melbourne.