

# Covid-19 Response Inquiry

14 December 2023

## Introduction

Australia provided a world leading response to supporting people experiencing homelessness during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. This was developed in consultation with health and homelessness experts and adapted good practice identified in other countries, such as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Covid homelessness responses addressed the greater risks faced by people experiencing homelessness of contracting covid, and of being impacted by Covid due to other health issues and vulnerabilities. It was critical that steps were taken to support people experiencing homelessness to help keep them safe and well during this period.

This approach was highly successful and the impact of covid for people experiencing homelessness was no greater than the general population and in some areas, such as vaccination, exceeded the general population targets.

This response included:

- Providing **temporary supported accommodation** for people sleeping rough and other people experiencing homelessness. This included mental health and other generalist supports.
- Developing and implementing **specialist covid-19 health and safety guidelines** for specialist homelessness services, based on global good practice and including additional resourcing for services to implement good practice.
- Developing and implementing a **collaborative response** across the specialist homelessness sector, health and other relevant government agencies to support specialist homelessness services and clients where there were positive covid cases to minimize the spread of covid and to support the health and safety of clients.
- Developing and implementing **tailored vaccination programs** in Inner Sydney and other key locations and across specialist homelessness services to ensure high vaccination rates for people experiencing homelessness.
- Developing and implementing a collaborative approach across specialist homelessness services, health and other government agencies to prevent the spread of covid-19 in **boarding houses** and to keep people living in boarding houses healthy and safe when positive cases were identified.

The response also included longer term commitments to supportive housing as the outcomes of providing temporary accommodation with support and issues related to overcrowding, lockdowns and virus spread further demonstrated the need for investment in social and supportive housing as a means to end homelessness and assist people to remain healthy and well in the context of a pandemic.

Further information can be found in the following articles and reports:

- [The year that changed everything](#) – Victorian homelessness and covid response - Council to Homeless Persons Victoria
- [Rental Housing and Homelessness Policy Impacts](#) – CityFutures Research Centre, UNSW Report
- [More Than Temporary? An evaluation of the accommodation of people sleeping rough in inner city Sydney during the covid-19 pandemic](#) – Centre for Social Impact, UNSW and Homelessness NSW
- [Covid-19 - District supports Boarding Houses](#) - Sydney Local Health District
- [Delivering Covid 19 vaccinations to vulnerable communities](#) – NSW Public Service Commission
- [Western Sydney, overcrowding and covid-19](#) – Sydney Morning Herald article

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