

Draft Program – Wednesday 7 and Thursday 8 October 2026

Day 1 - Wednesday 7 October

Time	Session
9.00am	Welcome to the conference includes Welcome to Country. Opening Address – Josh Burns, Special Envoy for Social Housing and Homelessness
9.30am	Opening Plenary 1 Disrupting the narrative: First Nations Perspectives on youth homelessness This opening plenary will centre First Nations perspectives on homelessness. Sue-Anne Hunter, National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, will address the growing challenge of youth homelessness nationwide and the critical need to change the trajectory for First Nations young people.
10.30am	<i>Morning tea</i>
11.00am	Concurrent Sessions
	Concurrent 1 – Research in academia and in practice: working together for greater impact Research has too often been done to the sector and to people experiencing homelessness rather than with them. The session recognises that partnerships between academia, the sector and those with lived experience can be challenging on all sides and discusses how to jointly create research and impact that would not have been possible otherwise.
	Concurrent 2 - Zero Excuses: how Australian communities are ending rough sleeping Sydney, Northern Rivers, and Sunshine Coast share what it actually takes to end rough sleeping: breaking down silos, shared data, health embedded in homelessness responses and lived experience at the table.
	Concurrent 3 - Beyond the benchmark: Rethinking how we define severe overcrowding This session challenges whether a single definition of severe overcrowding captures the diversity of Australian experiences. Drawing on examples from the NT and NSW, it explores how overcrowding is lived, measured and responded to — and what a more context-responsive approach could mean for policy and practice.
	Concurrent 4 - Heard and respected: when young people's voices shape the response This session shares what happens when services genuinely listen to young people experiencing homelessness: youth-led advocacy that changed a government budget, Open Dialogue in Shepparton, and the deeper search for belonging behind every housing crisis.
	Concurrent 5 - Health where it's needed: partnerships bringing care to people experiencing homelessness When people can't reach the health system, the health system must reach them. This session will showcase what's possible when health, housing, and community organisations stop working in silos and start delivering care together — where people are.

Time	Session
11am	<p>Concurrent 6 - Safe and housed: women, violence and homelessness This session explores innovative responses — from meanwhile-use properties and pregnant women's support to keeping women safely in their own homes — that challenge how we prevent and respond to homelessness.</p>
12.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	<p>Concurrent Sessions</p> <p>Concurrent 7 – Dignity, culture and housing: First Nations perspectives on homelessness Mainstream responses too often fall short in assisting First Nations people who are experiencing homelessness. This session showcases what works when community leads: Aboriginal-led men's accommodation in regional NSW, culturally safe transitions from prison in Victoria, and closing the dignity gap for First Nations women.</p> <p>Concurrent 8 - Different lenses, deeper understanding: What do different disciplinary approaches offer? Australia's evidence base on homelessness continues to grow and evolve. To date, research has come from a relatively small number of disciplines and there is opportunity for more daring interdisciplinary research. This session showcases the different questions that open up when research applies different lenses to the same problem.</p> <p>Concurrent 9 – Disrupting the narrative: Disability, homelessness and a shifting NDIS landscape This session examines the intersection of disability and homelessness in Australia, exploring the challenges faced by people living with disability and considering how changes to the NDIS are shaping the support landscape for frontline services and the people they work with.</p> <p>Concurrent 10 - The right housing at the right time: reimagining systems for young people Too many young people are stuck in a cycle of crisis accommodation — not because solutions don't exist, but because systems aren't designed to end youth homelessness. This session shares lived experience leadership, Housing First pilots, and what a genuine continuum of youth housing actually looks like.</p> <p>Concurrent 11 - Seen and housed: LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse homelessness LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse people are disproportionately represented in homelessness yet often invisible in responses. This session explores affirming, inclusive practice that tackles compounding barriers, builds trust, and creates genuine pathways to safe and stable housing.</p> <p>Concurrent 12 - Smart support: AI and digital innovation on the homelessness frontline AI is arriving in homelessness services whether we're ready or not. This session shares real frontline experience — what works, what doesn't, and what services must get right around ethics, safety and effective implementation before going live with people who are already vulnerable.</p>
3pm	Afternoon tea

Time	Session
3.30pm	Major Concurrent Sessions
	<p>Major Concurrent 1 – System wranglers It’s always tempting to ‘blame the system.’ In this session we hear from the people in charge of making homelessness systems work. Are sustainable system improvements being made or is meaningful change difficult to achieve? What can people actually make happen within existing silos and budgets?</p> <p>Major Concurrent 2 – Welcome to the Territory Australia’s Northern Territory is a wonderful and unique place. It also has high rates of homelessness, exacerbated by lack of urbanisation, disparate geographies and population mobility. New research and investment discussed in this session are changing what we know and how things can be done in NT.</p> <p>Major Concurrent 3 - When community leads: First Nations approaches to ending homelessness When First Nations communities lead, outcomes look different. This session shares practical models from across Australia — breaking the revolving door in the NT, building housing capability in the Pilbara, Youth Foyers, and a First Nations-led wellbeing approach in metropolitan Victoria.</p>
5pm	<i>Official Welcome Reception, Exhibition Precinct</i>

Thursday 8 October

Time	Session
7.00am	<i>Networking Breakfast – Wharf One</i>
9.00am	Welcome to day 2
	<p>Plenary 2 Big Ideas – homelessness prevention panel Preventing homelessness makes sense but we’re too busy responding to even start. In this ABC broadcast session, we hear from lived expertise, First Nations perspectives and people working to balance emergency responses with active prevention</p>
10.30am	<i>Morning tea</i>
11am	Concurrent Sessions
	<p>Concurrent 13 – Youth homelessness evidence in practice: Are young people experiencing homelessness ‘hard to reach’ Young people experiencing homelessness are not a uniform group and can often be ‘invisible’. Support, housing and health systems consistently fail to account for young people’s diversity and needs. This session considers how to move beyond the notion that young people are ‘hard to reach’ and considers successful approaches to creating conditions that allow us to listen and respond to young peoples’ needs.</p> <p>Concurrent 14 - Health where it's needed: bridging care and homelessness People experiencing homelessness can't afford to fall through the gap between health and housing. This session showcases what works — assertive outreach, medical respite, GP drop-in models, training future doctors, and national mortality data that makes the case for urgent, integrated action.</p>

Time	Session
11am	<p>Concurrent 15 - No shelter from the storm: homelessness and disaster response When floods, heatwaves and extreme weather hit, people without secure housing are most at risk. This session shares hard-won lessons from NSW flood recovery, Victoria's emergency response, and South Australia's Code Red and Code Blue framework — and what works on the ground.</p>
	<p>Concurrent 16 - People first: building a workforce that can go the distance Working in homelessness services is challenging. This session tackles workplace trauma, what Queensland workforce data tells us about retention, cross-sector practice at the housing-MHAOD interface, and why good practice frameworks too often gather dust.</p>
	<p>Concurrent 17 - From custody to community: rehousing women after prison Women leave prison into homelessness — not by accident, but by design. This session examines structural barriers, shares NSW reintegration housing outcomes, and makes a bold case for dedicated housing allocation to ensure criminalised women and girls have a place to call home.</p>
	<p>Concurrent 18 - Beyond the roof: community-led approaches to lasting housing stability A safe home is just the beginning. This session shares practical, community-led models — from culturally safe Aboriginal tools and Māori identity-based housing to regional co-living innovation and employment as prevention — showing what lasting housing stability looks like on the ground.</p>
12.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	Concurrent Sessions
	<p>Concurrent 19 - Preventing the fall: keeping people housed through rights and reform This session explores how legal advocacy, systemic reform, and economic evidence can stop people from losing their housing in the first place — addressing provider accountability gaps, renters' rights, and making the case for investment in early intervention over crisis response.</p>
	<p>Concurrent 20 - No wrong door: connecting mental health, AOD and housing on the ground When mental health and AOD needs go unmet, the revolving door keeps spinning. This session shares practical models that aim to overcome system silos — from harm reduction hubs and integrated AOD treatment in transitional housing, to cross-sector forums building real working relationships between housing and mental health.</p>
	<p>Concurrent 21 This session explores homelessness through a First Nations lens, examining the systemic, cultural, and historical factors that shape the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</p>
	<p>Concurrent 22 This session draws on the expertise of Australia's leading homelessness researchers, presenting current findings on the key issues facing the sector.</p>

Time	Session
1.30pm	<p>Concurrent 23 - Beyond crisis: reimagining homelessness systems that actually work</p> <p>This session examines what homelessness system reform really looks like — from Northern Territory's intake innovation and Perth's cross-agency coordination to questioning whether emergency shelter is still fit for purpose.</p>
3.00pm	<i>Afternoon tea</i>
3:30pm	<p>Plenary 3 - Changing the narrative</p> <p>Reframing the homelessness policy conversation will mean listening with compassion, allowing real stories of strength, perseverance, and community to shape responses. We reflect on the state of homelessness in Australia, the stories we are telling and what needs to shift</p>
5pm	Close the conference