



Ending homelessness
in Brisbane one person,
one family at a time

Housing First - it works!

Building on the success of 50 Lives 50 Homes which resulted in 230 rough sleepers being housed over 4 years, a coalition of government and non-government agencies have set a goal to house 500 individuals and families over 3 years.

How are we going to this? By working together to use our resources within a **Housing First** approach which promotes linking people with affordable housing, healthcare and the community services they need to sustain their tenancy and improve their quality of life.

Housing First involves the rapid identification and provision of suitable, long-term housing, coupled with the necessary services that individuals and families require to maintain this housing. Crisis services can focus on getting people through a crisis and into housing or in many circumstances individuals or families can be diverted from the homelessness service system directly into a house with their own lease. Services collaborate to support people to meet their obligations as tenants and improve their quality of life through connection with services, friends and community.

This approach harnesses the power of **permanent, safe housing** to help people recover and heal from the trauma of homelessness. It gives them a safe space in which to address the issues that may be stopping them from living the lives they want.

Our campaign aims to prioritise the most vulnerable individuals, children and their families who are experiencing homelessness. It sets us a challenge to remove the often arbitrary barriers to housing and commit to service improvement so as to end each person's homelessness as quickly as we can.

There is extensive evidence for **Housing First** in the United States.¹ This evidence has shown that **Housing First** delivers better housing outcomes, while generally costing less than keeping people homeless. Keeping people

1. [National Alliance to End Homelessness 2007, Solutions Brief: National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), viewed 10 January 2014.
[Rynearson, S., Barrett, B., Clark, C. 2010, Housing First: A review of the literature, prepared for the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans](#), viewed 10 January 2014.

homeless represents a major drain on our health and community services, due to the physical and mental strain on people who have no safe space to live. People who have accessed permanent, safe housing make less frequent use of expensive, publicly funded services like emergency departments and prisons.

Evidence from Australia is growing and has demonstrated that this is a model that works well in our community and is delivering positive outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Brisbane has been leading the way through the investment into increasing the supply of housing, funding services, and great community support.²

There has been great progress since the initial 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign in 2010. Since this campaign began 230 people have been housed from the original register, with a housing retention rate of 84%.

We have also gained substantial knowledge of the housing and support needs of people experiencing homelessness.

People experiencing homelessness in Brisbane:

- Have spent an average of **6 years** homeless
- **30%** had a brain injury or a history of head trauma
- **7%** have cancer
- **67%** have a serious health condition
- **19%** have heart disease or arrhythmia
- **38%** are tri-morbid, with a co-occurring psychiatric and substance abuse disorder coupled with a chronic physical health condition.³

Housing is essential to end homelessness and to provide healthcare and community services to those who need it. For the most vulnerable individuals housing provides a place to be cared for and to die with dignity. For children and their families it provides a home and community to support their journey as a family.

Housing First allows us to respond in a respectful way that provides dignity as well as a foundation to build upon people's own aspirations, recover from trauma, build their future and be active citizens in our community.

500 Lives 500 Homes is a three year campaign to break the cycle of homelessness for families, young people and adults in our community who are homeless or vulnerably housed. By getting to know each person by name and surveying their individual health, housing and support needs, we can respond in the best way to each person and prioritise the most vulnerable people who are sleeping rough, or who are at risk of death.

500 Lives 500 Homes is a coalition of government and non-government agencies supported by the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council.

2. [Parcell, C., Tomaszewski, W. and Jones, A. 2013, *An Evaluation of Brisbane Street to Home: Final Report*](#), viewed 20 March 2013.

3. Brisbane Vulnerability Index Register (Micah Projects June 2010 – June 2013).