

20 January 2024

The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers
Treasurer and Member for Rankin
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Delivered by email: prebudgetsubmissions@treasury.gov.au

Dear Treasurer

Submission in support of an integrated poverty reduction plan for Australia

Introduction and background

Q Shelter is Queensland's peak organisation with a vision that every Queenslander has a home. We work to progress policy and investment ideas that address unmet housing needs and homelessness while also working to build system capacity to implement solutions.

We work with other state-based Shelters through National Shelter to progress proposals for policy and investment at the national level. As such Q Shelter supports the Budget Submission made by National Shelter.

This Submission is an additional contribution from Q Shelter proposing that the underlying conditions of poverty, homelessness and disadvantage are addressed through an integrated national poverty reduction plan for Australia.

From piecemeal to prevention: an integrated poverty reduction plan for Australia

While current efforts to address Australia's housing challenges are commended and acknowledged, the deeper structural causes of poverty in Australia could be prevented. As the Government has begun to examine the nature and extent of poverty in Australia as well as the cost of living challenges, there is an opportunity to embed an upstream approach to poverty reduction through replication of success factors in locations such as Ireland and Canada where poverty has been measurably reduced.

A poverty reduction plan at the national level would identify key roles for the States, Local Government, private sector, community services sector and the wider community. It would bring significant levels of coordination to efforts that reach beyond piecemeal relief through rebates and reductions to genuinely address the root causes of poverty to arrest the growing unequal distribution of incomes and wealth.

Of course, an integrated approach would include specific measures on income support, health, employment and economic participation, intensive family support, housing supply, food security and

prevention of homelessness. It could link to the Measuring What Matters Framework in Australia to track implementation and progress.

This is an opportunity for the current national government to adopt big and bold ideas for structural reform so that the many benefits of living in Australia are experienced more equally. Its express purpose would be to arrest deep social divisions through high-quality early life experiences, education retention, pathways to employment and economic inclusion, a housing and food guarantee, and socially cohesive communities where people are connected and contributing.

Proposal for Australia to adopt an integrated, multi-sectoral poverty reduction plan

Q Shelter recommends the following:

The Australian national government develops and implements an integrated poverty reduction plan with the following key characteristics:

- A definition of poverty that uses a percentage of median income as well as indicators of deprivation (as is the case in Ireland)
- Annual targets for poverty reduction
- Legislation to define poverty, set targets and outline how the initiative will be designed and governed
- Define the roles of other levels of Government as well as wider sectors such as the community services sector, private sector and broader community
- Include strategies and activities to address key areas such as:
 - Income support
 - Food security
 - Family support and prevention of adverse childhood experiences
 - Early education
 - Retention in education
 - Pathways to employment and economic inclusion
 - Community development and place-based responses to disadvantage and exclusion
 - Health and mental health
 - A housing guarantee through housing supply to achieve a healthy housing system (with targets for all tenures including social and affordable housing)
 - A nationally consistent approach to regulating the private rental market and a national approach to restructuring the private rental market to achieve significant institutional investment with a focus on security of tenure
 - Measures to improve homeownership rates in Australia
 - The prevention of homelessness
 - Digital inclusion
 - Prevention of postcode poverty through nationally agreed approaches to planning to achieve consolidation in areas of high amenity
 - Climate mitigation strategies that reduce energy costs
 - Cost reduction strategies for all utilities

- Specific measures to address the needs of population groups who are left behind including First Nations Australians.

Q Shelter has largely drawn on approaches adopted in Ireland and Canada because the strategies have been nationally led, and delivered through partnerships with other sectors and levels of government. They define poverty and they monitor and measure results. There are relevant elements to consider across both initiatives that could form the basis of an effective plan for Australia.

The link to housing and homelessness

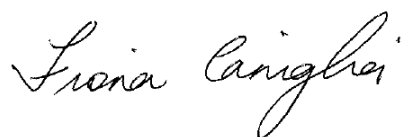
More integrated approaches to poverty reduction would include comprehensive approaches to addressing unmet housing needs and homelessness. Poverty reduction would also help to increase people's capacity to afford housing costs and therefore contribute to the prevention of homelessness and housing insecurity in the future. A more intentional approach to poverty reduction would be underpinned by a focus on prevention across a range of domains including housing insecurity and homelessness.

Contact

Q Shelter is available to discuss our proposal at any time by contacting Jackson Hills (Manager of Strategic Engagement and Policy) at Jackson.hills@qshelter.asn.au or fiona.caniglia@qshelter.asn.au.

Thank you for considering our input to the Budget. Prevention through systemic poverty reduction will reduce harm to people while also contributing longer term to productivity, participation, and social cohesion.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Caniglia
Executive Director

Resources:

[Canada Poverty Reduction Legislation](#)

[Canada Poverty Reduction Plan Update](#)

[Ireland's Roadmap for Social Inclusion](#)

[Q Shelter opinion piece on poverty reduction](#)

