

Homeless funding crisis

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NORTHERN Territory homeless services are turning away six people a day on average, the greatest proportion of whom are women.

The Territory has 12 times the national average rate of homelessness and St Vincent de Paul's NT chief executive Fran Avon said demand had grown to the point where their organisation had to turn away six people every day on average due to funding restraints.

"The funding is enabling us to offer services but we're just

Vinnies forced to turn away six people every day

finding demand is so great that we could provide accommodation for many more people," she said.

NT Shelter Executive Officer Peter McMillan said the Federal Government's funding structure was not meeting the high demand of need in the Territory.

"Under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) the Federal Government provides \$1.4 bil-

lion to the states and territories to fund homelessness programs," he said.

"The Northern Territory, which had a homeless population of 13,700 in the last census, receives about \$19 million under the agreement – eight times less than the \$157 million in funding Western Australia receives despite having a smaller homeless population of about 9000.

Mr McMillan said the fed-

eral funding was being distributed based on population and not need.

"It's a completely illogical situation and it needs to be changed," he said.

"The agreement lasts until 2023 but we need it to be renegotiated as soon as possible.

"We've got twice the level of unmet demand than the other states and territories have and three quarters of them are women who may be fleeing

domestic violence and are unable to get any crisis accommodation.

"Another issue is that in the NT we lose about 90 per cent of our homelessness funding which goes back to Canberra to repay historic debt on housing."

However, Housing Minister Gerry McCarthy said there was no Commonwealth debt attached to this program.

"The Northern Territory

Government believes this funding should be based on need," he said.

A spokeswoman from the Federal Government's Department of Social Services said the model that they used to allocate homelessness funding under the NHHA "recognises the variation in levels of homelessness across jurisdictions".

"The Productivity Commission will finalise a review of the NHHA by June 30, 2022," she said.

"Outcomes of this review will inform funding arrangements post June 30, 2023."