

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Dr Bruce Watson, DEd (Melb)

**Organisation Name:**

**Your position or role:**

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::**

Public housing, Housing affordability, Services, Employment, Rough sleeping, Indigenous people, Family violence, Mental health

**What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :**

Concerned citizen

**Are there any additional themes we should consider?**

But most homelessness policies work on the premise that the homeless person has to sort those problems out first before they can get permanent accommodation.

Give them a home first.

### YOUR SUBMISSION

**Submission:**

Most homelessness policies work on the premise that the homeless person has to sort those problems out first before they can get permanent accommodation. Give them a stable home first.

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:**

Most homelessness policies work on the premise that the homeless person has to sort those problems out first before they can get permanent accommodation. Give them a stable home first.

### FILE ATTACHMENTS

**File1:** [5e1ff43a375ba-Submission to Legislative Council.pdf](#)

**File2:**

**File3:**

**Signature:**

Bruce Watson

# **Submission to The Legislative Council's Legal and Social Issues Committee**

End homelessness rather than just manage it.

**Dr. Bruce D. Watson, DEd (Melb)**  
**16th January, 2020**

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IF YOU CONTINUE TO  
THINK LIKE YOU'VE  
ALWAYS THOUGHT,  
YOU'LL CONTINUE TO  
GET WHAT YOU'VE  
ALWAYS GOT. HOW'S  
THAT WORKING OUT  
FOR YOU?

# HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING PROBLEMS REACHED CRISIS POINT IN ALL EU COUNTRIES – EXCEPT FINLAND

1. IN FINLAND, LONG TERM PROGRAMS FOR REDUCING HOMELESSNESS OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS HAVE PROVEN THEIR VALUE AND HOMELESSNESS IS IN STEADY DECLINE.
2. This has been achieved by focusing on the provision of permanent, affordable housing, and providing specialised support for the most vulnerable people.
3. The “Housing First” scheme gives homeless people stable accommodation to end homelessness rather than just managing it. A social enterprise provides housing to Housing First. It involves a wide partnership of people: the state, volunteers, municipalities and NGOs.
4. As soon as someone is homeless, rather than muddling along with various services that may eventually result in an offer of accommodation, they get stable accommodation and needs-based support for homeless people instead of temporary accommodation in hostels or in emergency shelters.
5. Permanent housing means an independent rental flat with an individual rental contract.
6. First people do not have to earn their right to housing by proving their capability to manage their lives. Instead, they are provided with a stable home and individually tailored support.

7. Increasing the supply of affordable rental housing was a critical part of the approach. Finland used its existing social housing, but also bought flats from the private market and built new housing blocks in order to provide homes.
8. There is ample evidence from many countries that shows it is always more cost-effective to aim to end homelessness instead of simply trying to manage it. Investment in ending homelessness pays back, to say nothing of the human and ethical reasons."
9. Having a permanent home can make solving a range of health and social problems much easier.
10. The savings in terms of the services needed by one person can be more than the costs that would result from that person being homeless.
11. Part of the approach of Housing First is that a sense of community is very important. For instance, when a new housing block is built, much work is done in the local neighbourhood at the same time. That includes keeping the local community informed through open house events, encouraging residents to interact openly with the local community.
12. The key things are affordable housing and support. Extra funding that the state has allocated for flats and services has been an incentive for the municipalities to implement Housing First.

13. Tenants pay rent and are entitled to receive housing benefits. Depending on their income, they may contribute to the cost of the services. The rest is covered by the municipalities. They provide the support themselves or buy support from other service providers, mainly from the NGOs.
14. Stable living conditions enable the use of mainstream services instead of using expensive emergency services. This saves money in the long term.
15. It did require work to be done on attitudes. For example, the unconditional housing was hard to accept by some people in NGOs which had previously been working with different set of values. New services and methods of help have been developed to match the multiple needs of individual tenants.
16. In Finland this has been a national strategy, not a local project.



Image: Housing First

Details and Resource: <https://ysaatio.fi/en/housing-first-finland>