Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Minister for Social Services  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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Dear Minister

I am writing to seek your support for efforts to restore funding to Homelessness Australia (HA). The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) works closely with HA through our organisations’ membership of the National Complex Needs Alliance (NCNA). NCNA’s member organisations include a range of national, state/territory and local groups focused on improving services and outcomes for some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged Australians. Homelessness is a key issue for people with complex needs and HA’s membership of NCNA is highly valued in this context.

As I’m sure you are aware, HA is the national peak body for homelessness in Australia, providing systemic advocacy for the homelessness sector. HA works in collaboration with homelessness assistance services, state and national homelessness peak organisations, other peak organisations (such as PHAA), government agencies and the broader community.

At the end of last year, a number of organisations – including HA - previously funded under the Housing and Homelessness Program had their funding cut by the Department of Social Services. Earlier in December 2014, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released the third annual report on the clients of specialist homelessness services across Australia. The report found that:

- In 2013–14 an estimated 254,000 Australians accessed specialist homelessness services—an increase of 4% from 2012–13.
- More clients sought support for assistance to maintain their housing tenure.
- The number of people seeking help for domestic and family violence increased.
- An estimated 26,655 clients had a long term health condition or disability that restricted their everyday activities.

From PHAA’s perspective, the need for funding to enhance the response to housing and homelessness at the national level is significant and HA is integral to the development of appropriate responses. Stable housing is one of the key prerequisites for good health and we are also concerned that there will be flow-on effects for the health budget in the longer term if responses to homelessness are not adequately prioritised.

We believe that HA has a lot to contribute to the Australian Government’s current efforts in this area. Projects and activities of particular value include:

- *Tune in now* (developed with beyondblue), an online tool for homelessness workers, to identify anxiety and depression in people who are at risk of, or homeless;
- HA funding of WESNET’s Cyber safety program which trains women on how to recognise if they are being stalked, and how to minimise risk when using technology;
- Homelessness Prevention Week, which raises the profile of services and educates the community about homelessness;
• The biannual National Homelessness Conference which, in 2014 attracted 500 delegates including frontline service workers, researchers, academics and representatives from all levels of government;
• HA research - utilising information and expertise from member organisations - providing comprehensive and unbiased information to government and services;
• Evaluation and information dissemination services informing capacity building, development of cooperative programs and the uptake of best practice in homelessness service delivery;
• HA is also currently developing a new national framework to end homelessness that could inform work being undertaken in relation to the Reform of Federation process.

PHAA believes that HA’s national leadership and sector networks are a valuable asset in supporting the Australian Government’s efforts in addressing homelessness. We hope that you are able to find a way to reinstate funding to this key national organisation.

Yours sincerely

Michael Moore
Chief Executive Officer
Public Health Association of Australia