



## OFFICIAL

Dear Specialist Homelessness Support agency

Thank you for your efforts and continued support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to protect Victorians experiencing homelessness.

The commitment of the specialist homelessness sector in implementing a suite of new and innovative responses to keep people experiencing homelessness safe from COVID-19 has made a significant and lasting difference to the lives of those in need of secure accommodation.

As Victoria has reached its 80% double dose vaccination target, restrictions continue to be lifted across the state.

With more people vaccinated and as we move towards COVID normal, the hotel emergency accommodation program that was established last year will gradually phase down.

Earlier today, the Victorian Government announced over \$66 million in new funding to provide up to 250 eligible families and children already in hotels with safe, stable and secure accommodation and tailored wrap-around support. The eligible families will be supported to stay in emergency accommodation until their housing exit is identified as part of a Housing First response. The funding will also ensure that children from these families feel safe and get a stable home. We will communicate with you further about the imminent roll out of this exciting new program.

From 29 October 2021 homelessness agencies will work with singles and couples in hotels to identify suitable housing exit pathways, with exits beginning as soon as practicable and all clients to be exited before 1 February 2022. The gradual phase-down will also ensure clients have sufficient time to be vaccinated and are registered on a new Statewide By Name List for future service continuity.

Starting Monday 8 November 2021, hotel residents will also be required to pay up to 30% of their income as a co-contribution for their remaining stay in hotels. However, some clients receiving a Housing First response (i.e., H2H and the newly funded families program mentioned above) may contribute to accommodation costs that reflects their ability to pay based on their case plan and support needs. Housing options for the newly funded families program is expected to come online progressively between January - July 2022, enabling those eligible clients to exit the hotels into supported homes. H2H clients will remain in emergency accommodation until their housing exit is secured, with work well underway to achieve this outcome.

All clients staying in hotels will also have the option to participate in a new Statewide By Name list (BNL). The specialist homelessness sector has been advocating for a BNL for some time, and we look forward to working with you to develop this important tool and expand the suite of Housing First enablers.

The investment announcement also includes additional fixed-term funding for targeted homelessness agencies, predominately Access Points. This funding ensures that all singles and couples in emergency hotel accommodation get assistance to identify housing exit pathways over the next few months as the hotels program winds down, to avoid rough sleeping.

We strongly recommend that all clients, including families, get their vaccination and protect themselves and the broader Victorian communities from COVID-19. Significant efforts have already been made to vaccinate people in emergency accommodation. This effort will increase in the coming weeks to improve client access to COVID-19 vaccines as we progressively open up the state.

Council to Homeless Persons and the Departments of Health and Families, Fairness and Housing participated in a sector briefing on 29 October to provide direct feedback and answer queries regarding working in a COVID-19 safe way. We look forward to continue these sector discussions as we progress with securing safe accommodation for our affected cohorts.

More information regarding today's funding announcements, including roll out and eligibility, will be circulated to agencies as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your continued support to protect our most vulnerable and reduce the incidence and impacts of homelessness across the state.

Yours sincerely

**Ben Rimmer**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Homes Victoria

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