**Sample letter to your local Minister**

 *insert you address here*

Hon. *type Minister's name here*

Minister of *type department here*

*type address here*

15 May 2009

Dear Minister *insert Minister's name*,

This letter is to request your government to take immediate steps towards addressing homelessness across Australia. Australia is a rich country, yet there are over 1,100,000 Australian families (10% of Australian families) in housing stress, paying more than 30 percent of their income on recurrent housing costs. Rental rates are increasing while household incomes of rental families are decreasing. There is a gap of 85,000 dwellings to accommodate the housing needs of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. There is also 830,000 dwellings, 9 percent of the total Australian dwelling stock, that are unoccupied. ([www.qshelter.asn.au](http://www.qshelter.asn.au))

Homelessness results in social and economic costs to individuals, families, communities ad our nation. Homelessness forces people away from their family, friends and communities. It makes it difficult to maintain school or further study and leaves people vulnerable to long term unemployment and chronic ill-heath. People experiencing homelessness are often excluded from participation in the social recreational, cultural and economic life of out communities. Homelessness means that every day almost 1 in every 200 Australians live without their most fundamental human rights ([www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au))

The Australian Bureau of Statistics makes a special effort to include people experiencing homelessness in the Census. In 2001 and 2006 the Census indicated that on any given night at least 100,000 Australians are homeless. The Census also tells us where people experiencing homelessness are staying. Approximately:

o 44% are staying temporarily with relatives and friends,

o 20% are living in boarding housing and other temporary accommodation,

o 18% are sleeping rough on the streets of our cities and towns, and

o 18% find a bed in a homeless service system.

We acknowledge the funding of $6 billion which has been provided over the next three and a half years for the construction of new social housing with a further $400 million over two years for repairs and maintenance to existing public housing dwellings.

We would like to ask for five areas for our government to work on.

1. A holistic, comprehensive national action plan to prevent and respond to homelessness in Australia.

2. Realistic and sustainable funding models for homeless assistance services.

3. Children need to be recognised as users of homeless assistance services in their own right, and services funded accordingly to provide appropriate care and support for young people. Although 1 in 3 of those who access homeless assistance services are children, this is not currently the case.

4. Increasing funding for social housing for people with a disability. Social housing is an important provider of housing to people with disabilities. Australia-wide, 29% of public housing tenants have a disability ([www.qshelter.asn.au](http://www.qshelter.asn.au))

5. Increasing the overall funding for indigenous housing. Indigenous people are less likely to be home owners (34% cp. 68%), more likely to be in private rental (27% cp. 21%), more likely to be in public housing (20% cp. 4%), and more likely to be in community housing (9% cp. 1%) than Australian households generally. The government – owned and managed Indigenous housing sector has around 12,500 dwellings. There are over 10,700 applicants on the waiting lists for government owned and managed Indigenous housing. ([www.qshelter.asn.au](http://www.qshelter.asn.au))

We would also like to bring attention to homelessness services and the need for appropriate funding. The average daily number of requests for immediate accommodation that could not be met by homeless agencies was 289 in 2006 – 2007. the number of support periods in the form of accommodation provided to people experiencing homelessness by homelessness agencies is around 66,000 a year.

Thank you for considering this request. I would also ask that you respond and indicate the steps that your government will take to address homelessness in Australia.

Sincerely,

*your name*