

ACT Homelessness Charter

This ACT Homelessness Charter — a Statement of Rights is intended to improve the circumstances of homeless people by raising community awareness and promoting a rights-based approach to homelessness service delivery. The charter is not a law, and the rights it sets out cannot be directly enforced in a court of law. It is a statement of values subject to the laws of the ACT.

The charter was developed by the Charter of Rights Working Group, part of the ACT Homelessness Committee that is made up of representatives from the community sector, and ACT and Commonwealth governments.

As people who live in the ACT we see that all of us should have housing that is secure and affordable; experience a reasonable standard of health and wellbeing, live in a safe and secure environment; have our private life respected; be treated with dignity; participate in and be consulted on matters that affect our lives; have the ability to seek justice if we are wronged or help if we are in times of difficulty.

Some people call them basic rights that we should enjoy. The ACT Human Rights Act is based on the equal dignity and freedom of all people in the ACT and gives legal protection for some of these basic rights.

People in the ACT can also find themselves homeless. We can become homeless for many reasons: financial hardship, unaffordable housing, escaping domestic violence, not having adequate living conditions, illness or breakdown in our relationships. Some people may prefer to live 'rough'. For most it's not a choice.

If we are homeless we retain the basic human rights afforded to the broader community. However, on becoming homeless the following rights become important. In fact losing our home means that they become even more important to us. If we are homeless there are other rights, which also become important.

People who are experiencing homelessness have the right of **inclusion**, rights to **dignity, respect** and **non discrimination**, rights to **safety** and **freedom**.

As a community, we must ensure that people experiencing homelessness are granted these rights so that they can reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community.

Inclusion

- The right to access facilities and services that meet basic human needs.
- The right to be consulted in the provision, development and use of community spaces.
- The right to receive clear and accurate information as well as help in completing and understanding any application procedures.
- The right to services that will provide secure, stable, short and long-term accommodation based on fair policies.
- The right to safe and secure public places.
- The right to participate in the planning, evaluation and development of those programs or projects that affect homeless people.
- The right to adequate levels of nutrition and food safety.
- The right to health services, income support, employment and education opportunities.

Dignity, respect and non discrimination

- The right to fairly based decisions and advocacy services.
- The right to give informed consent to share personal information and to withdraw that consent.
- The right to a response to homelessness that is neither punitive nor exploitative.
- The right to be free from discrimination including homelessness status, and help to exercise this right if discriminated against.
- The right to be shown respect and sensitivity to their culture.
- The right to make informed choices and determine their future.
- The right to enter into agreements free from any form of pressure.
- The right to make complaints and appeals along with getting a meaningful response.

Safety and freedom

- The right to live free from exploitation, violence and abuse.
- The right to use public spaces for shelter without discrimination.
- The right to have all rights upheld by public authorities.

a statement of rights