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**Understandings of Homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand and how they  
Impact a Local Response:  
A Case Study of The People's Project in Hamilton**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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## Abstract

Administrative and census data documented the increase of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand between 2006 and 2018. At the same time, homelessness increased in significance as a social issue. In 2009, the first New Zealand definition of homelessness was published by Statistics New Zealand. In 2013, a rigorous definition of severe housing deprivation was conceptualised by New Zealand academics. However, New Zealand governments ignored these definitions as the basis for formal recognition and enumeration of homelessness, leaving questions around the composition of homelessness in New Zealand open to debate.

Informed by academic literature on understandings of homelessness and government responses to homelessness in Australia, Canada and the United States of America, this thesis examines governmental understandings and public sector considerations of homelessness in New Zealand between 2008 and 2018. It traces the influence of New Zealand central governmental understandings of homelessness on the response to homelessness at a local level in Hamilton city. Using The People's Project in Hamilton as a case study, this research evaluates some of the challenges and opportunities of coordinating a system-wide approach and Housing First response to homelessness in the New Zealand context.

Results from a systematic review of academic and grey literature, and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from both public sector agencies and The People's Project, reveal nuanced geographies of homelessness at national and local scales. The dominant political discourse employs limited meanings and constrains understandings of homelessness. As a form of cultural signification, this political discourse coalesced with locally specific factors inform a response to homelessness in Hamilton. The political ambivalence of Housing First provided an opportunity to both remove the visible presence of homelessness in Hamilton, and for The People's Project to drive systems disruption with public sector services. Lack of a central government mandate limited efforts at the local level in Hamilton for the public sector to respond to homelessness.

The findings of this research confirm that a consistent understanding of homelessness is instrumental in supporting an effective response to end and prevent homelessness. As the New Zealand Government implements its first ever homelessness action plan, it is imperative that central government implement all of the necessary changes to ensure public sector systems support rather than hinder local efforts in response to homelessness. Crucially, the government needs to ensure that whatever policy settings are put in place are responsive to New Zealand specific manifestations of homelessness.

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## List of Abbreviations

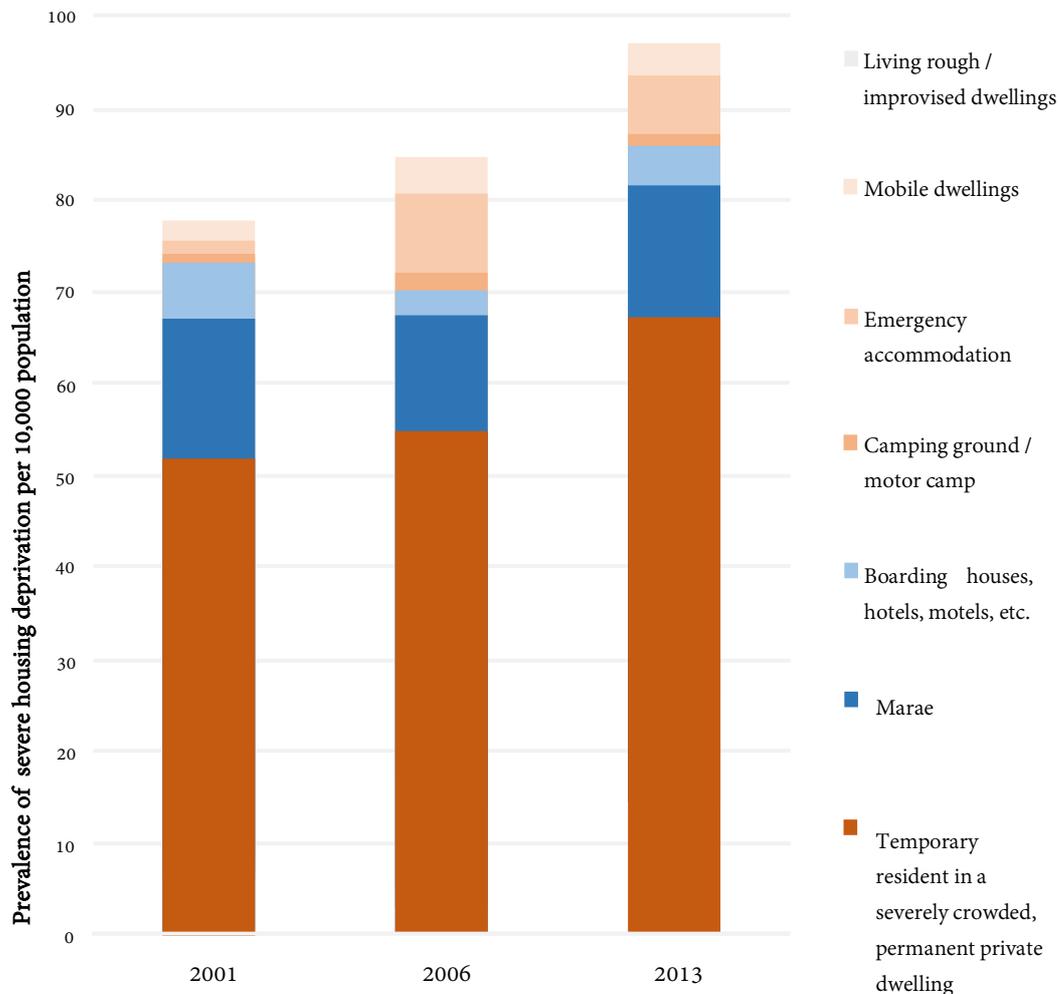
HF	Housing First
HHIG	Hamilton Homelessness Interagency Group
HNZC	Housing New Zealand Corporation
HPS	Homelessness Partnering Strategy
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
IDI	Integrated Data Infrastructure
KWIC	Key Word In Context
LAMAH	Lack of Access to Minimally Adequate Housing
MBIE	Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment
MEH	Multiple Exclusion Homelessness
MHUD	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NHHA	National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
NHI	National Homelessness Initiative
NHS	National Homelessness Strategy
NIDEA	National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis
NPAH	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PHF	Pathways Housing First
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis
RCT	Random Control Trial
SHD	Severe Housing Deprivation
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
TPP	The People's Project
USA	United States of America
USICH	United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
VISPDAT	Vulnerability Index Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool
WPR	What is the Problem Represented to be

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale

Globally, the number of people designated as homeless is increasing. In countries with a traditionally strong welfare state, the withdrawal of social assistance, the historical neglect of indigenous populations and the introduction of neoliberal policies have contributed, in varying ways, to increased levels of homelessness (Zarocostas, 2005). In New Zealand, a country which has had a significant welfare tradition, these same events as described in Zarocostas (2005) have unfolded and homelessness is growing and at an accelerated rate. According to data published by Statistics New Zealand and administrative data documented by agencies providing emergency accommodation, the prevalence of severe housing deprivation per 10,000 population increased 9% between 2001 and 2006, and 15% from 2006 to 2013 (see Figure 1.1 below). Based on 2013 national census data, Amore (2016) estimated that approximately 41,000 people were living in a state of homelessness, including 4,197 living rough, 8,447 inhabiting emergency accommodation and 28,563 staying in severely crowded or unsuitable dwellings.

In early 2008, New Zealand's Minister of Statistics and Minister of Housing acknowledged the absence of a statistical definition of homelessness that might be employed by parliamentarians and government agencies. The Ministers agreed that to facilitate consistency and equitability across enumeration procedures, policy formulation and services planning, government agencies would develop an agreed definition of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). In July 2008, members from Statistics New Zealand, Housing New Zealand Corporation and the Ministry of Social Development formed a working group to develop a definition. Introduced by Statistics New Zealand in 2009, the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness stated that homelessness comprised of "[l]iving situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing" (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, pp. 6-7).



**Data sources:** Statistics New Zealand and emergency housing providers

Figure 1.1 Prevalence of severe housing deprivation per 10,000 population by living situation, 2001-2003

Taken from “Severe Housing Deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand: 2001-2013” Amore, K. (2016). *He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago, Wellington*, p.10. Copyright 2020 by Dr Kate Amore. Reproduced with permission.

Despite the increase of homelessness in New Zealand and Ministerial recognition of the value of having a formal definition of homelessness, the Statistics New Zealand meaning was not embedded in policy or used consistently in practice. For example, following the announcement of its definition, the Minister of Statistics was advised that the recent definition was unable to be enumerated within Census considerations because homelessness was too complex an issue to be captured in one question or measure. Given such ‘complexity’, only relevant information for some categories of homelessness was collected via census questions relating to usual residence and dwelling type (Mackey, 2010). The absence of a formal definition for homelessness that is legitimised in policy does not remove the presence of homelessness; rather, the

definitional gap effectively makes homelessness invisible and, in so doing, inhibits coherent policy responses to housing deprivation (Gilbert, Henry, & Jacobs, 2012).

Despite Statistics New Zealand's inability to enumerate homelessness from the published definition, the development of the definition provided a catalyst for non-governmental agencies and organisations to reinvigorate discussion about the nature of understandings of and responses to homelessness in New Zealand. Central to these discussions was Amore, Viggers, Baker, and Howden-Chapman (2013) critique of the lack of a theoretical foundation in the Statistics New Zealand definition. Firstly, Amore et al. (2013) argued that the definition fails to explain what the four classifications of homelessness have in common. Thus, Amore et al. (2013) questioned what being without shelter, staying in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household, or living in uninhabitable housing shared as defining homelessness. Secondly, drawing on the typology of the European Observatory on Homelessness and Housing Exclusions (ETHOS), Amore et al. (2013) challenged the working groups framing of homelessness as existing at the intersection of deprivation in three housing domains (physical, legal and social). Amore et al. (2013) argued that the working groups application of this framing within the Statistics New Zealand published definition failed because the classification of homelessness as uninhabitable housing is only deficient in the physical domain of housing. In order, in part, to resolve this deficiency, Amore et al. (2013) developed a conceptual and operational replacement of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness (Amore et al., 2013). Employing the idea of 'severe housing deprivation' rather than 'homelessness', Amore et al. (2013, p.7) explained that severe housing deprivation refers to "people living in severely inadequate housing due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing (LAMA)." This definition of severe housing deprivation remains, at the time of writing, the most up-to-date published definition of homelessness in New Zealand. However, despite its conceptual robustness, and its operational alignment with census and administrative data, the notion of severe housing deprivation was critiqued as being 'too broad' to be of analytic value (see Bennett, 2016; Smith, 2013b).

In New Zealand, the absence of an embedded formal definition has continued to coincide with the absence of a national policy framework guiding a response to homelessness. As New Zealand researchers have argued, this lack of a policy framework has resulted in ad hoc and fragmented responses to homelessness at both national and local levels (Amore & Aspinall, 2007; Richards & Pahau, 2009). With no

central government agency tasked with specific responsibility for addressing homelessness, homeless individuals and families are reportedly left without shelter even after having sought help from government agencies (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2015). Whilst New Zealand's national housing policy, which provides state housing as well as an accommodation supplement, was effective in preventing high numbers of street homelessness (Collins, 2010), a recent narrowing of government criteria for welfare services has caused people with complex issues to "fall through the cracks" of bureaucratic accountability (Banks, 2012). Additionally, for those who do fit the criteria to receive support via government welfare services, the standard assistance response is to provide clients with the minimal provision of basic services and levels of social service intervention.

Limitations of the existing welfare services system to deal effectively with homelessness were identified in a report released by the New Zealand Productivity Commission (NZPC) in August of 2015 (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015). In considering ways in which to improve the effectiveness of social services in New Zealand, the NZPC (2015) commented that the existing system does not adequately respond to the needs of New Zealand's most disadvantaged individuals and families. While not explicitly cited by the NZPC (2015), "most disadvantaged" includes the homeless. In the report the most disadvantaged is used to describe those who fall into quadrants C and D of clients in New Zealand social services. The report outlines that these groups include those who have multiple and complex needs and some of whom who have high needs and low capacity to navigate services. Homelessness is an expression of such extreme vulnerability, and is the symptom of disadvantage across welfare, housing, health, justice and educational outcomes.

In New Zealand, social services cover a wide range of activities that aim to improve people's outcomes. The government is but one provider of social services, and social services are "only one influence among many that determine people's outcomes" (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p. 5). The New Zealand Government delivers quality services to millions of mainstream New Zealanders "satisfactorily through the familiar service silos of the government agencies" (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p. 2). This situation is, however, significantly different for those whose "needs are inter-dependent" and where "treating some needs but not others is likely to be ineffective" (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p. 2). The 'service silos of government agencies' are detrimental to ensuring effective service provision to

people with multiple and complex needs, such as those experiencing homelessness. Fragmented service provision is problematic because a single agency does not have the capacity to “recognise or respond effectively to the interconnections between the outcomes it is seeking and those sought by other agencies” (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p. 7).

Being the main funder of social services, and having statutory and regulatory powers, the New Zealand Government has significant influence over the policies and actions of social service agencies. This “architecture of the system” determines who has the “authority, information, capability and incentives to make and implement decisions that maximise social returns” (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p.9). Two system architectures are relevant to the delivery of social services in New Zealand. The first, top-down control, which is common in some social service sectors does not work well for clients with multiple and complex needs. Top-down control requires decision making to be held by the relevant Minister or Chief Executive of a given agency. Under top-down control, prescriptive service specifications control risks and hold others accountable to the outcomes of service provision. For example, under top-down control where the government contracts third sector or community organisations to deliver a service, that service agency is responsible for the outcomes of their service provision. Top-down control is appropriate when “standardisation and scale efficiencies are important”; however, such architecture reduces coordination between agencies and limits “adaption to client needs and local circumstances” (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p.9). The second form of system architecture, devolution, transfers decision making power and responsibility to autonomous or semi-autonomous organisations. Devolution located decision making with organisations whose staff have more direct contact with affected communities than do senior agency executives. Such immediacy enhances understanding around the culture of the clients being served and the appropriateness of service provision options. Though devolution can mobilise and empower local resources and local innovation, “it is not a panacea. . . [and] if not well thought through, can dilute accountability and dampen the spread of innovation” (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p.10). The NZPC (2015) concluded that the social services system in New Zealand could be greatly improved using devolution, if it is complemented with centralised national standards and regulations. Furthermore, the NZPC (2015) suggests that relevant client data be shared across agencies in order to support the integration and tailoring of services for clients whose needs “span a number of government and provider silos”

(New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p. 15). The absence of shared social service provision mitigates against the delivery of effective support for New Zealanders. Service siloing has particularly negative consequences for New Zealand's most vulnerable citizens; this is because such individuals, including those who are experiencing homelessness, often have complex needs.

The top-down structure that exists in the New Zealand Government's response to homelessness contrasts to devolved systems in place in such countries as Australia and the United States of America (USA). These countries have policies that outline who is responsible for responding to homelessness and legislative mechanisms that require the collection of data at local and national levels. Data collected across multiple scales is employed to enumerate the temporal dimension of homelessness and to distinguish between the transitionally, episodically and chronically homeless. These three categories of homelessness highlight the heterogeneity of experiences of, and possible policy responses to, homelessness (McAllister, Kuang, & Lennon, 2010). The success of multi-scale data collection in countries outside New Zealand suggests that it would be beneficial to connect definitions of homelessness to work undertaken by policy makers and service providers, and to the collection of official statistics on the homeless population (Wyly & Hammel, 2010).

In contrast to a lack of national-level coordination and response to homelessness in New Zealand, The People's Project (TPP) in Hamilton provides a community-wide response to homelessness. TPP is based on the Pathways Housing First (PHF) model. Founded by psychologist Sam Tsemberis in the early 1990s, PHF clients are offered direct access to permanent scattered site rental housing and attached support services. The predominant "Pathways" version of the Housing First (HF) model is inspired by five key elements: rapid access to permanent housing; consumer choice; separation of housing and treatment; a recovery orientation; and community integration. HF practices a harm-reduction approach by prioritising stable housing over abstinence from substance use (Inciardi & Harrison, 2000). Housing First is considered by the media, practitioners and political leaders to be socially progressive when compared to traditional "Treatment First" models of service delivery (Baker & Evans, 2016). These existing models, which dominate central government social welfare services in New Zealand, require detoxification and sobriety before individuals are given access to services such as independent housing (Padgett, Gulcur, & Tsemberis, 2006). Taking a HF approach, TPP prioritises housing security; once housing is secured, attention

turns to the provision of wrap-around services that address the issues that led to the client's homelessness (The People's Project, 2017). In its collaboration with TPP, Hamilton City Council (HCC) was the first New Zealand city council to support the implementation of a comprehensive HF approach (Pierse et al., 2019). Thus, while the Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) in Wellington adopted some of the "rudimentary principles of Housing First" (Cairncross, 2017, p. 1) over a decade ago after their director met with Sam Tsemberis, HCC and TPP embraced this approach to an extent that TPP's response is often cited by government officials as being an exemplar of a HF approach. Since TPP's inception in Hamilton in 2014, various HF programmes have been implemented throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. The extent to which these adhere to PHF varies.

Although HF has proliferated beyond the USA over the last two decades (Baker & Evans, 2016), commentators have acknowledged that not every HF model has adopted the core elements of PHF. As Johnson, Parkinson, and Parsell (2012) explain, there are numerous models of service provision that identify with PHF, many of which focus on particular aspects of the overall PHF approach. HF models have changed as they have been applied outside their original location, with place-specific characteristics influencing the nature of relations between HF principles and locality-specific welfare payments, health and social services, and practitioner cultures (Baker & Evans, 2016). By highlighting spatial differences in the adoption of HF principles, Baker and Evans (2016) expose the "messy middle ground" of approaches and responses to homelessness. The "geographic nuances" of homelessness and responses to homelessness are given explicit consideration by DeVerteuil, May, and von Mahs (2009) in their call for researchers to engage with the complexity of responses to homelessness on the ground. Furthermore, DeVerteuil et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of accounting for the work of actors whose actions and efforts in response to homelessness can incorporate sometimes contradictory combinations of coercion and care. As Baker and Evans (2016) explain, the combination of coercion and care may be understood to refer to the prevalence of "space between relentlessly hostile scenarios and the equally problematic notion of a purely supportive and compassionate approach" (p. 29) toward homelessness.

Through engaging with the "true authors" of homeless geographies in Hamilton and focusing on the process and practice of homelessness governance, analysis of TPP provides an opportunity to consider how the contradictory and ambivalent conditions

within which responses to homelessness are enabled and constrained. Based on the differing views about, and responses to, homelessness in New Zealand, this thesis has two interconnected aims. The first is to explore how the concept of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand is understood and used within literature, and by policy makers and service providers. The second is to employ TPP in Hamilton as a case study through which to understand the way that homelessness is conceptualised and acted upon by public sector services at a local level. The case study also provides an opportunity to explore one of the ways in which HF has been implemented in the New Zealand context and to consider some of the challenges and opportunities of introducing HF in a policy environment where homelessness has remained on the margins. Antecedent to this exploration of the recent understanding of homelessness in New Zealand is a history of social housing conditions and policies that have shaped manifestations and interpretations of homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand. The following section provides an overview of this history of social housing in New Zealand, tracing how homelessness emerged as a major policy problem after decades of being largely ignored as a policy issue.

## **1.2 How and why Homelessness Emerged as a Major Policy Problem in New Zealand**

### **1.2.1 The New Zealand policy context 1970's - current**

The nature and extent of homelessness in New Zealand has changed drastically over time as New Zealand transitioned from a country of high home ownership to a country where lack of access to adequate and affordable housing, to rent or buy, has become a common experience for an increasing number of New Zealanders. There was a relative lack of “absolute” or visible homelessness in New Zealand up until approximately 2010. Researchers attributed this “literal invisibility”, or the low numbers of people literally living on the street, to the right of New Zealanders to access housing and welfare assistance (see Leggatt-Cook, 2007). This “cultural invisibility” is the assumption that, due to the widespread provision of housing and welfare assistance in New Zealand, those who are homeless are homeless by choice (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Given evidence of cultural invisibility, homelessness has tended to remain on the margins of policy and has largely been out of the public eye as a social issue in New Zealand. The overview of housing policy, housing research, social housing trends and the status of homelessness in New Zealand given in this chapter provides a context within which to explain how, for many decades, homelessness eluded policy recognition by

governments. The following overview also outlines the unfolding of government recognition of homelessness between 2016 and 2019.

### 1.2.2 Housing policy and social housing in New Zealand

This section provides a brief overview of the history of housing support and housing policy in New Zealand. This history identifies the context of processes that contribute to severe housing need, severe housing deprivation and homelessness in New Zealand. In 2013, the Salvation Army described New Zealand's housing policies as a residual policy area, as the "wobbly pillar" of the welfare state and as a left-over policy concern (Johnson, 2013a). The Salvation Army presents the case that in New Zealand, policy settings for housing support from the two main political parties have been based more on political preference than on evidence-based policy practices (Johnson, 2013b). Although New Zealand governments continue to spend a significant amount on housing assistance for low-income households<sup>1</sup>, the Salvation Army describes the government's response to New Zealand's housing problems as "underwhelming" (Johnson, 2013b, p. 8). Thus, despite insubstantial but "showy housing legislation", under-resourcing, an inability to get the right type of housing in the right areas, and a need to change the way in which the housing market is organised, access to affordable and adequate housing remains a serious and ongoing problem (Johnson, 2013b, p. 30). These housing outcomes stem from policy focus on home ownership, with social or state housing (commonly called "public housing" in New Zealand) long assuming the "role as a tenure of last resort for those unable to access housing from the private market" (Murphy, 2014, p. 898; see also Leggatt-Cook, 2007).

Changes in housing policies significantly affected the manifestation of homelessness in New Zealand. Building on earlier work, Murphy (2014) identified three distinct phases of these changes. The first phase, driven by a National-led Government in the early 1990s, was defined by the implementation of neoliberal reforms, which, in emphasising "market provision, economic efficiency and consumer choice" positioned the provision of social housing as entrenching welfare dependency (Murphy, 2014, p. 898). In order to counter such dependency, the *Housing Restructuring Act 1992* was introduced. This legislation established Housing New Zealand, a crown-owned entity

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<sup>1</sup> In the report, Johnson (2013) notes that "state support for the rental market is significant by international standards" (p. 53). Approximately 35% of the private rental market is supported by the state; when including social housing this figure rises to around 40% of those in the rental market being supported by the state.

responsible for managing the commercialisation of state housing, facilitating the abolishment of income-related rents, and, introducing market rents for state housing (Murphy, 2014; Woolley, 2014). In addition to these policy shifts, between 1992 and 1999 the government sold 11,000 state owned rentals to the private sector and withdrew the state-owned mortgage fund (Rankine, 2005). Although the government introduced an accommodation supplement to assist state tenants to meet new market-based rental rates (Murphy, 2014), this introduction coincided with a rapid rise in market rents; this combination of changed rental conditions and increased rental rates left many people worse off than they were prior to the introduction of the *Housing Restructuring Act 1992* (Woolley, 2014).

The second phase of housing policy identified by Murphy (2014) began with the election of a Labour-led Government in 1999 and a subsequent shift in policy emphasis towards social responsibility (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). The new Labour-led government reinstated an Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS) for state-sector tenancies, whilst retaining the accommodation supplement for private market tenants (Johnson, 2013b; Murphy, 2014). Housing New Zealand was renamed the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) by the government and was tasked with meeting the social objectives of social housing rather than just managing state-owned social housing (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). During this period (1999-2007), applications to HNZC for housing assistance remained high, with long waiting lists for social housing (Rankine, 2005).

Murphy (2014) identified that the third phase of housing policy was initiated by the re-election of a National-led Government in 2008. Promoting market-based solutions to housing issues, the National-led Government of 2008-2017 reframed state-provided social housing as transitional, only to be provided to those in need and for the duration of their need. The government also attempted to diversify the provision of social housing by moving stock and funding to such community-sector organisations as Habitat for Humanity, Accessible Properties and LinkPeople. This diversification had limited success, due largely to the insufficient funding provided by government for community housing providers to build housing. Furthermore, with the introduction of reviewable tenancies, many tenants were evicted or “transitioned” into a private rental market that offered poor-quality housing, poor stability of tenure, and provided poor social and health outcomes (Amore, 2019). The reviewable tenancies policy, introduced in 2011 and extended to all social housing tenants in 2014, assessed whether a tenant still had a need for social housing: “[i]f it was found that a tenant’s needs for social

housing had reduced, they would be placed into more suitable accommodation or helped to obtain independent housing” (McKenzie, 2020, p. 606).

Building on Murphy’s (2014) three-stage typology, which concludes in the early 2000s, it is possible to identify what may be considered to be a fourth phase of housing policy. Beginning with the election of a Labour-led Government (2017-current), this phase included the reinstatement of the IRRS such that it is available both for state housing tenants and for tenants of social housing provided by the community-housing sector. The government increased its investment in new builds with the development of quality, affordable housing for first homebuyers through KiwiBuild. The KiwiBuild policy aims to increase the supply of homes by having the government work with developers and manufacturers to facilitate new housing development. KiwiBuild provides for a reduction in risk in new developments by making land available for development and integrating affordable housing into urban development projects (KiwiBuild, 2020). In October 2019, KiwiBuild was merged with HNZC to become “Kāinga Ora-Homes and Communities,” the government’s housing and urban development authority (KiwiBuild, 2020). The focus of Kāinga Ora is to provide public housing, facilitate home related financial assistance, undertake urban development, and deliver the government’s build programme (Kāinga Ora, 2020). Work undertaken by staff at Kāinga Ora is complemented by the efforts of staff at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD). Formed in 2018, MHUD consolidated the housing policies, and funding and regulatory functions, previously administered between the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Treasury and the MSD (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020a).

### 1.2.3 Government inquiries into homelessness

Given New Zealand’s history of high home ownership rates, government research has tended to focus on serious housing need as opposed to homelessness. The earliest recorded government reporting of inadequate access to housing and housing shortages occurred in 1959 when the State Advances Corporation of New Zealand reported on increasing waiting lists for state housing and increased levels of overcrowding. In 1975, a year in which there was significant demand for housing, the Housing Corporation of New Zealand reported on the serious effects of the housing shortage and identified many situations of overcrowding (Bellamy, 2014). Whilst these reports signalled problems with housing issues in New Zealand, none made specific reference to incidences of homelessness.

The first notable reference to contemporary homelessness in New Zealand appeared in the Human Rights Commission's 1987 submission to the Royal Commission of Social Policy. In its submission, the Human Rights Commission (1987) argued that the New Zealand government was not taking all possible appropriate steps to deal with a growing problem of homelessness. This explicit identification of homelessness was not, however, accompanied by government recognition, a disjuncture that was evident in an ongoing focus on "housing need" over homelessness. For example, in 1988, Roberts argued that homelessness included those facing serious housing need and cited the National Housing Commission (1988)<sup>2</sup> report which explained that serious housing need was affecting 17,500 New Zealanders. In this case, the term "housing need" encompassed categories in the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness other than rough sleeping. This coverage indicates an understanding of homelessness as being synonymous with rough sleeping; homelessness does not, therefore, describe experiences of severe housing deprivation as occurring along a continuum.

In the early 2000s, increased academic and governmental discussions were accompanied by growing public awareness of homelessness in New Zealand. For example, a 2007 Methodist Mission (MMN) report pointed to growing public concern about homelessness (Bellamy, 2014; Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Though it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the growing publicity of homelessness, the MMN report, and the development of the 2008 working group tasked with developing a New Zealand definition of homelessness, in 2009 the first state-sponsored definition of homelessness in New Zealand was published. However, this definition had little impact at the time of its publication; there was limited awareness of the definition at the time. For example, in 2010, the Human Rights Commission (2010) cited this definition in reference to homelessness in New Zealand, but it took until 2011 for this definition to be explicitly cited in a report to government (New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness, 2011), and it was not until 2016 that a governmental inquiry into homelessness took place.

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<sup>2</sup> The National Housing Commission was established under the National Housing Commission Act of 1972. This Act defined the functions of the National Housing Commission, which included: to advise the Minister on all matters relating to the provision of dwellings in New Zealand; to inquire into and keep under review housing need of people in New Zealand; to undertake comprehensive assessment relating to housing in New Zealand; and encourage research into matters affecting housing policy (New Zealand Legal Information Institute, 2021).

In July 2016, National Party members of the Social Services Committee voted against a select committee hearing on homelessness because they believed their government already had a strong plan for dealing with homelessness. In response to this vote, members of the Labour, Māori and Green Parties initiated the Cross-Party Homelessness Inquiry (CPHI). The CPHI wanted to hear from people who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness, people who were working with the homeless, and any other concerned New Zealanders. The inquiry considered whether the Statistics New Zealand definition needed updating, evaluated evidence on the state of homelessness in New Zealand, and assessed what changes were occurring in homelessness and possible reasons for any changes. The inquiry also explored possible policy responses to homelessness and collected evidence on how homelessness is experienced by different groups (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, New Zealand Labour Party, & Māori Party, 2016). The CPHI received 482 written submissions and, over the course of four public hearings, heard 133 oral submissions. In reporting its findings, the CPHI recognised that “homelessness is no longer dominated by the stereotypical rough sleeper with mental health issues and is now more often a working family with young children” (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand et al., 2016, p. 2). The CPHI report also found strong support among submitters for the retention of the existing state-sponsored definition of homelessness as the definition recognised homelessness as much more than rough sleeping. Whilst recognising good community-based support for homelessness existed in “pockets of New Zealand”, the CPHI recommended that the government introduce a statutory commitment to reduce homelessness and create a national strategy to end homelessness. Such a strategy would be based on a whole-of-system approach to homelessness that involved “local government, service providers, community housing providers, homeless specific services, and Māori and iwi organisations” (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand et al., 2016, p. 13). This recommendation drew on evidence that large numbers of people continued to slip through the gaps in provision of government agencies (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand et al., 2016). The observations and recommendations of the CPHI were ignored by the National-led government of the time, with Ministers arguing that the use of severe housing deprivation statistics was a distortion of conditions because they included people who were not “truly” homeless (Bennett, 2016; Smith, 2013b)

Whilst the report of the CPHI was not the catalyst for change its members might have hoped, the Labour-led government that was formed following the September 2017

general election stated it was “committed to fixing New Zealand’s housing crisis” (Johnson, Howden-Chapman, & Eaquib, 2018, p. 2). This commitment was made manifest soon after the election when, in November 2017, the government commissioned an inquiry into housing, including homelessness. The report produced from this inquiry, “A Stocktake of New Zealand’s Housing” (Johnson et al., 2018) was intended as a building block to help the government make policy decisions concerning housing in New Zealand. The report gives an overview of the housing continuum in New Zealand and analyses the state of the real estate market in New Zealand. The report includes commentary on evidence of increasing homelessness in New Zealand and rising demand for state housing.

In relation to social housing, Johnson et al. (2018) report that the number of social housing dwellings managed by Housing New Zealand between 2008 and 2017 peaked in 2011 at 69,717 units. By June 2017, this total had fallen to 62,917 dwellings, the “lowest number of state houses in Crown ownership since 2000” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 27). The decline of stock managed by Housing New Zealand was partly caused by the social housing reforms of the previous government, policies which underpinned the replacement of over 3000 units and houses with both state and private sector housing. Between 2015 and early 2017, the stock of social housing owned and provided by non-Crown agencies rose quickly to approximately 20,000 social housing units. This increase was largely due to the transfer or sale of 7,984 state-owned units to non-Crown agencies; the proportion of New Zealand’s housing stock identified as social housing declined from 4% in 2008 to 3.4% in 2017 (Johnson et al., 2018). The decline in crown-owned state houses occurred alongside overall growth in the national housing stock.

The decline in the percentage of social housing in New Zealand’s overall housing stock coincided with an increase in demand for social housing. Johnson et al. (2018) explain that demand for social housing is difficult to measure accurately; the authors note that the social housing waiting list provides evidence indicating unmet demand. In 2017, demand for social housing reached an all-time recorded high, with 5,844 on the waiting list. Seventy percent of those on the waiting list were “Priority A” status for housing need. The highest category of housing need used by the Ministry of Social Development, Priority A, indicates that a client has extreme serious housing need<sup>3</sup>. Those assessed as Priority A doubled between September 2015 and September 2017.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2014, the Ministry of Social Development replaced Housing New Zealand in having responsibility for conducting the social housing need assessments. The Ministry of Social Development continued to use the “Social

This increase was partly the result of a 40% increase in the number of assessments being completed and a 58% increase in the number of households placed on the register. The validity of these figures as an indicator of social housing need is, however, problematic because they rely on the “administration of an application and a review process which might intentionally or unintentionally have barriers or biases to recognising all unmet housing need” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 28). Additionally, the waiting list does not contain records of the number of initial enquiries for housing assistance; it only records the number of assessments completed after an initial vetting process.

Johnson et al. (2018) identify homelessness as a key concern for New Zealand and as an indicator of the insufficiency of New Zealand’s housing system. The authors note that “MSD acknowledges that there are a significant number of homeless households, who are not on the social housing waiting list, but the scale of this problem is unknown” (Johnson et al., 2018, p.35). Drawing on census data, the authors note a significant increase in homelessness between 2006 and 2013. However, despite \$43 million of government funding being used for emergency housing, New Zealand did not have a “systematic recording or monitoring of homelessness on a month by month or yearly basis” (Johnson et al., 2018, p.35). Furthermore, no data or estimates exist for the floating population of those who cannot access or are denied government housing assistance. Drawing on data from a sample of community emergency housing providers, the authors identified that, for 2017, levels of homelessness outstripped the levels of available assistance. The turn-away rate ranged between 82% and 91%, where for every 10 homeless individuals who approached community emergency housing providers, only one or two could be accommodated (Johnson et al., 2018).

Johnson et al. (2018) identified two government responses targeted towards homelessness: funding for emergency housing and funding for HF. The 2008-2017 National-led government introduced emergency housing grants in response to its concern about rising levels of people living in cars and on the street. Between 2016 and 2017, 38,700 emergency housing special needs grants were provided, MSD increased the number of its housing needs assessments, and the waiting list of households on the social housing register rose 65% (Johnson et al., 2018). The government also provided

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Allocation System” (SAS) for the assessment of social housing. SAS criteria looks at the need of a client to move and tests a clients ability to access, afford and sustain non-government subsidised housing. The SAS is based on five criteria:affordability, adequacy, suitability, accessibility, and sustainability.

funding of \$16.5 million toward expanding HF in areas of high housing demand, as well as allocating funding for sustaining tenancies. Overall, Johnson et al. (2018) found that there is a need for a more modern and coordinated system of homelessness services than was in place in 2018.

#### 1.2.4 The low profile of homelessness in New Zealand

Whilst the academic literature published before 2010 provided evidence of the low profile afforded homelessness in New Zealand scholarship, few authors sought to explain this absence. Perhaps the most comprehensive and representative consideration of this absence was provided by Leggatt-Cook (2007). In their review of New Zealand homelessness research, Leggatt-Cook (2007) discussed why attempts to establish homelessness policy in New Zealand had failed and the reasons for the ongoing marginalisation of homelessness as a social issue. Leggatt-Cook's (2007) research is based on observations made prior to a decade-long housing crisis, which shifted the lived reality and context for homelessness in New Zealand (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015). Thus, Leggatt-Cook's (2007) work is an example of academic research that was set within a policy context in which homelessness was perceived by government agencies as being of little significance.

The most commonly referred to reason for the low profile of homelessness in New Zealand was the “cultural invisibility” narrative, where access to welfare and housing assistance in New Zealand led to the widespread belief that those who are homeless are only so by choice (May, 2003 as cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007). However, Leggatt-Cook (2007) highlighted other potential explanations as to why homelessness has received comparatively little government attention in New Zealand. One explanation revolves around the status of the individuals and groups that pushed for the government to make addressing homelessness a statutory obligation and the timing of these efforts. Thus, Leggatt-Cook (2007) explains that the New Zealand Housing Network's mid-1980s attempt to establish a statutory obligation to provide housing for the homeless, and Jim Anderton's tabling of the Housing Corporation (Homeless Persons) Amendment Bill in 1991, failed to receive government attention because they were initiatives that only gained support from the voluntary sector and they clashed with the government's neoliberal initiatives. More recently, governmental disregard for the National Coalition to End Homelessness' 2009 report and its recommendations for responding to homelessness in New Zealand provides another example of the rejection of the voluntary sector's call for government recognition of the social issue.

The low profile of homelessness in New Zealand prior to the second decade of the twenty-first century may also be explained through the lack of visibility of homelessness, both physically within public space and discursively within housing research. As noted by Leggatt-Cook (2007), “the perceived low numbers of street homeless people is a key reason for the low profile of homelessness in New Zealand” (p. 3; see also Kearns, Smith, & Abbott, 1991). However, despite evidence of high numbers of people presenting to government agencies with serious housing needs, various housing researchers continued to argue that census statistics indicated that New Zealand did not have a significant homelessness problem and that rates of homelessness had stabilised (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Thus, on the basis of statistical interpretation, homelessness continued to be understood as rough sleeping or “literal” homelessness. Such interpretation meant that homelessness was disguised within issues of serious housing need. In challenging this notion of low and stable numbers of homelessness, Leggatt-Cook (2007) drew on census statistics for “no fixed abode”, which reported 594 individuals in 1991 and 2,409 individuals in 2001. In addition to noting how these statistics showed an increase in, rather than stability of, “homelessness”, Leggatt-Cook (2007) also explained how totals were likely conservative estimates due to the difficulty of accessing and counting homeless persons.

Beyond research conducted within academia around the turn of the century, there was a general decline of research into housing need in New Zealand. For example, the National Housing Commission was abolished in 1988, and during the 1990s housing and housing need research declined, as the Ministry of Housing focused its research interests on the effect of the accommodation supplement (Leggatt-Cook, 2007). Indeed, the only significant housing research that continued during the 1990s was that which was undertaken within universities and, according to Thorns (2007 as cited in Leggatt-Cook, 2007), most of this scholarly work was not well connected to policy processes.

Leggatt-Cook’s (2007) work deserves detailed discussion because it is one of the few comprehensive accounts of the reasons for the low profile of homelessness in New Zealand during the 1990s and the first decade of the new century. In exploring the “invisibility” of homelessness, Leggatt-Cook (2007) highlights the ways in which statistical interpretations were employed to justify a lack of engagement with a growing homeless population in New Zealand. Thus, in an update on earlier work,

Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain (2015) observed that contestation around numerical data about the prevalence of homelessness in New Zealand was a “significant gap that had allowed the issue to avoid policy attention” (p. 16). Moreover, the absence of data influenced the lack of response to homelessness.

#### 1.2.5 Recent Government initiatives

Beginning in mid-2016, policies and plans began to be introduced as a response to awareness in the National-led Government that not everyone had access to safe and stable housing. For example, while the Special Needs Grant for Emergency Housing, which provided \$41.1 million to support around 3,000 emergency housing places a year, was not specified as a response to homelessness, its existence and framing signalled an important shift within government. Thus, the provision of the Special Needs Grant for Emergency Housing indicated government recognition that New Zealand’s housing and social housing system was no longer sufficient to provide for all those in need.

The first government response specifically framed as a response to homelessness was the announcement of funding for HF programmes. HF provides immediate placement in housing and subsequent tailored support to those who have been homeless for an extended period of time or those who face multiple and complex issues (see Section 1.3). Introduced under the National-led Government, initial funding for HF was announced in March 2017. This funding provided financial support for Auckland HF services. Subsequent funding was announced in the May 2017 budget, with \$16.5 million being allocated to high-need areas outside Auckland (McKenzie, 2020).

The initiatives of the National-led Government were advanced by the Labour-led Government elected in 2017. For example, as part of its recognition and response to homelessness in New Zealand, the Labour-led Government increased funding for the expansion of the sustaining tenancies initiative, provided \$16 million for increased social services, and allocated \$31 million to facilitate an increase in numbers of intensive case managers and service navigators. These initiatives were framed by government as additional measures to prevent and reduce homelessness, complementing the government’s existing investment in the HF programme (Sepuloni & Faafoi, 2019).

Although the most recent New Zealand Labour-led Government has extended the response to homelessness beyond funding for HF programmes, HF remains a central

component of the response of central government to homelessness. This focus emulates the approach taken by governments in countries such as Australia and the USA where HF remains a central component of policy frameworks and plans that respond to homelessness. While HF has been implemented in many places, significant variance remains in understandings of HF. Thus, Baker and Evans (2016) note that HF has been defined as a philosophy, a social movement, a policy approach, a style of service delivery, a precise model consisting of specific features, and as a family of loosely related models. The following section (Section 1.3) provides an overview of HF.

### **1.3 Housing First Literature Overview**

#### Housing First

Though the “origin of Housing First is neither clear nor singular” Pathways Housing First (PHF) is widely accepted as being the founding approach of HF as it exists in its current form (Baker & Evans, 2016, p. 27). Founded in 1992 in New York City, PHF pioneer Sam Tsemberis posited that HF programmes require consumer choice, recovery orientation, community integration and the separation of treatment and housing. PHF placed long-term homeless individuals experiencing severe mental illness into permanent scattered site rental housing. Thus, clients were placed in apartments in buildings scattered around New York rather than being limited to congregated sites. Clients were also offered access to ongoing flexible individual support (Greenwood, Stefancic, Tsemberis, & Busch-Geertsema, 2013). However, the rapid uptake of HF across the globe has produced a variety of HF programmes, some of which differ greatly from the founding model of PHF. These differences result from the varying local and national contexts in which HF is implemented, with different political ideologies, welfare structures, health and social service systems and practitioner cultures affecting and influencing the nature of HF (Baker & Evans, 2016). Given such spatial differences, the label of HF has been described as being vague and misleading (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015). Indeed, McLennan (2004) describes HF as a malleable construct where diverse actors have convened to advance their own interests and ideas. For Baker and Evans (2016, p.37), the “proliferation of Housing First-based approaches” is an example of “model drift”, a perspective which posits that HF should not be reduced to PHF and that understandings of what HF consists should “look at what is accomplished in practice” (Hennigan, 2017, p. 1434). The importance of such spatial specificity is highlighted by Anderson-Baron and Collins (2018a) who, in their discussion of conditions in Alberta, Canada, conclude that so few HF providers

seek to follow the PHF approach that “there is limited utility in expending further ink on measurements of fidelity; it is more productive to conceptualize HF as a varied and contextual set of practices that may bear only tangential connection to the archetypal Pathways model” (p.602). Whilst the operationalisation of the core principles of PHF vary among service providers, Anderson-Baron and Collins (2018b) argues that, despite such differences, HF operations share four key tenets:

- 1) Consumer choice in housing and service engagement;
- 2) Recovery orientation with support for clients’ goals and a harm reduction approach;
- 3) Community integration to reduce social isolation and stigmatisation;
- 4) Separation of housing and services so that clients are not required to pursue treatment once they are housed but may choose and will be supported to do so.

Within academic literature and public policy, HF has been identified as the leading approach for responding to chronic homelessness (Collins & Stout, 2020; Goering et al., 2014). Accordingly, for more than a decade, governments in many OECD countries have adopted HF as their “frontline response” to those homeless populations that are hard to house (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018b; Gaetz, 2013; Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015). Whilst the management of homelessness has taken many forms, the rapid spread of HF has been accelerated through a change in priorities, as governments in developed countries have sought to end rather than manage homelessness (Sparks, 2012). HF has also been part of the widespread adoption of 10 Year Plans (10YPS) through which governments aim to end homelessness by targeting the chronically homeless (Evans & Masuda, 2019). Governments have also promoted the economic benefits of ending homelessness, with a “business case” providing justification for utilising HF (Baker & Evans, 2016; Evans, Collins, & Anderson, 2016).

HF is a housing-led model that provides housing to chronically homeless individuals with few conditions (Goering et al., 2011; Tsemberis, 2010). Designed to target the small cohort of the homeless population who are the hardest to house, the chronically homeless, HF is the antithesis of Treatment First approaches to rehousing. Treatment First options meet the needs of those able or willing to adhere to requirements for placement in permanent housing (Woodhall-Melnik & Dunn, 2015, p. 289). Rather than taking the graduated approach of Treatment First, where individuals have to display housing readiness (Padgett et al., 2006), HF is based on the premise that stability in an individual’s life can only be achieved through the provision of secure housing

(Tsemberis, 2010). HF was originally designed for the chronically homeless, individuals who often lived with severe psychiatric symptoms and complex health needs. The HF approach realises the need for a client-focused, harm reduction approach where access to stable housing is accepted as a basic human right and as a necessary precondition for the treatment of psychiatric conditions or addictions. One of the main rationales behind the utilisation of the HF approach is a “business case” that establishes the high public cost of dealing with the chronically homeless. Thus, in being designed to end rather than manage homelessness, HF provides an option that has the potential to reduce homeless people’s disproportionate use of health, social service and shelter resources (Baker & Evans, 2016; Evans et al., 2016).

Housing First - understanding and assessing homelessness through acuity

As adopted in the contemporary era, HF programmes have been informed by Kuhn and Culhane (1998) influential research on the chronic, episodic, and transitional categorisation of homelessness. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) explain that during the 1980s, in recognition of changing social profiles, researchers questioned homeless populations on the basis of background variables and the intensity of experience of homelessness. In analysing data collected through this research, researchers developed a homelessness profile according to chronic, episodic, and transitional patterns (see also Hopper, 1989; Jahiel, 1992). Identification of these three subgroups facilitated “textured understandings of the various groups and the implications of their backgrounds for issues of policy and service delivery” (Kuhn & Culhane, 1998, p. 209). Limitations in the modelling of causes, experiences, and effects of homelessness, however, produced difficulties in the interpretation of source data and associated problems in differentiating homeless subgroups. Furthermore, qualitative descriptions of subgroup characterisations and the absence of quantitative testing meant that groupings provided little benefit to policy and programme planners, analysts who favour quantitative evidence and modelling in the development of service plans.

Kuhn and Culhane (1998) compared clusters of shelter clients by such characteristics as ethnicity, gender, age, mental illness, behavioural health, and background conditions. The authors demonstrated the importance of understanding different clusters in terms of the background variables of participants. After determining the groupings of chronic, episodic and transitionally homeless, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) investigated whether the profiles were associated with certain background

characteristics. Their findings suggested that efforts to reduce homelessness would improve if agencies targeted interventions and services towards each cluster or group. For example, the authors questioned the sufficiency of existing safety nets' level of support for the transitionally homeless group, arguing that homeless prevention should be considered within the overall system of income, employment, health and housing supports. For the episodically homeless group, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) identified a need for structured housing opportunities that included health and social support services. This group experiences substantially less behavioural and physical health needs than the chronically homeless population and, therefore, short-term support and treatment measures were appropriate. For the chronically homeless, the shelter system acted as long-term housing rather than as an emergency response. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) identified this group as having significant behavioural and physical health needs. As such, despite the relatively small size of this group, the cost of the support services it required supported the value of carefully targeting intensive community-based supports. This approach would make available shelter spaces for those who required emergency shelter resources. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) concluded their research by noting that those shelter clients who shuttle in and out of shelters over short periods of time are best targeted and responded to differently from those who become "permanent fixtures" and require intensive support.

This recognition of different levels of need based on shelter usage and background variables is utilised within Coordinated Assessment and associated service prioritisation tools. Coordinated Assessment (CA) has been acclaimed by homeless service delivery providers as being a key element in efforts to assist the chronically homeless (Goodale, 2016; King, 2018). CA involves bringing together agencies and services to work in a coordinated system of services. As such, CA contrasts with programmes that require clients to navigate a myriad of potentially relevant services unassisted (Kenney, 2017; King, 2018). CAs are a central mechanism through which the allocation of housing and assistance is prioritised. The most common way through which CA is utilised within HF is through the use of the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). VI-SPDAT has become increasingly common; however, some practitioners continue to develop their own assessment tools based on the priorities and needs of their local community (King, 2018; Spence-Almaguer, Cronley, & Petrovich, 2013).

The VI-SPDAT is a “pre-screening or triage tool that is designed to be used by all providers within a community to quickly assess the health and social needs of homeless persons and match them with the most appropriate support and housing interventions that are available” (Community Solutions & OrgCode Consulting Inc, 2014 as cited in King, 2018, p. 13). As suggested by its title, the VI-SPDAT combines a vulnerability index (VI) with a service prioritisation and decisions assistance tool (SPDAT). The VI is a 35-item tool which, based on eight elements, creates a rank order from 0-8 of vulnerability or “health fragility” within a population of individuals experiencing homelessness. Within the VI, a rank of eight indicates the highest vulnerability (Kanis, 2008 as cited in King, 2018). SPDAT was designed to determine the appropriate level and type of housing intervention for an individual experiencing homelessness (King, 2018). Like the VI-SPDAT, the SPDAT has different versions for assessing individuals, families and youth. The SPDAT is an in-depth assessment conducted by trained staff that relies on the ability of the assessor to interpret a client’s responses and to confirm answers with evidence. The SPDAT is based on at least 15 components across mental and physical health and wellness, the use of medications and substance abuse, experiences of trauma, interaction with emergency services, and general life skills such as social interaction and budgeting. The components of the assessment are adjusted for the individual or youth versions, in which additional components are covered. The assessor utilises prompt questions and based on the client’s answers, and offers a score for each component from 0-4 (OrgCode Consulting Inc., 2015).

In order to prioritise the allocation of a limited supply of resources, the VI-SPDAT’s scoring system enables the separation of the most vulnerable individuals into appropriate levels of housing support. The scoring is categorised so that a score between 0 and 3 refers to a level of vulnerability that requires no intervention, a score between 4 and 7 identifies the client as requiring rapid rehousing, and a score between 8 and 20 equates with a need for permanent supported housing (Community Solutions & OrgCode Consulting Inc, 2014). King (2018) explains that the reliability of assessment tools is important because inaccuracy results in the incorrect capturing of an individual’s vulnerability and, by association, the potential misplacing of their need and level of prioritisation for services.

A rise in the uptake of HF approaches globally was a catalyst for academics to critique both the conceptual basis and practical expression of HF. From a practical standpoint, Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn (2015) critique the evidence used to champion the use of HF models. The authors argue that while there is sufficient evidence indicating the approach is successful in terms of housing retention, additional research is needed to determine whether the model assists in client recovery and whether it has relevance for those other than the chronically homeless. Furthermore, because of differences in social welfare and healthcare structures, Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn (2015) “caution against the use of American findings to advocate for Housing First in other countries” (p. 295). Furthering these ideas, Anderson-Baron and Collins (2018b) critique the extent to which practitioners can adhere to the core principles of HF programmes where there are shortages of affordable housing. Specifically, there is restricted capacity for programmes to adhere to core HF principles and there is ambiguity in providing client choice in housing markets characterised by shortages of affordable housing. Whilst policy environments may commit to ending homelessness and governments may translate this into support for HF, little effort is made to ensure an increase the supply of affordable housing (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018b). Moreover, the emphasis within HF is directed at personal failings or individual pathology (Sparks, 2012), a focus which means structural challenges are consciously overlooked (Harris, 2017). Indeed, Willse (2010) argues that HF works within rather than alters structural conditions.

Another significant critique focuses on the representation of HF programmes as being unambiguously socially progressive. As Baker and Evans (2016) explain, the melding of “explicit social progressivism with a bundle of attributes commonly associated with neoliberalisation”(p. 31) constitutes the “curious political contours of Housing First”(Stanhope & Dunn, 2011 as cited in Baker and Evans, 2016, p. 31). Although aspects of HF are socially progressive, such as the imposition of minimal behavioural conditions with the offer of permanent housing, other aspects, including the emphasis on individual pathologies and the rationale of intervention based on fiscal savings, align with neoliberalism. Furthermore, if the provision of permanent housing under HF is provided to only those deemed incapable of navigating the landscape of homelessness services, then “the chronically homeless subject serves to constitute the non-chronic majority as capable of caring for themselves” (Del Casino Jr & Jocoy, 2008, p. 195). In this way, Mitchell (2011) argues that by drawing attention away from the majority of those who, because of structural injustices within housing and labour markets, remain homeless, there is a need to be cautious around claims that HF

concepts have revolutionised the way homelessness is addressed. As Baker and Evans (2016) posit, there is a need to analyse the programme level intentions of HF against the policies and socio-economic regulations within which HF programmes exist. Such consideration is valuable, because whilst critics of HF point out the ways in which HF aligns with neoliberal imperatives, it is too simplistic to assume that HF programmes act for or against these (Klodawsky, 2013). Thus, Baker and Evans (2016) propose that through policy translation, it is possible to begin to understand the “ambivalent political contours of Housing First and their relationship to the changing terrains of homelessness governance” (p. 33).

#### Ten Year Plans (10YPs)

Ten Year Plans (10YPs) are a central tool through which HF has been positioned within government responses to homelessness. 10YPs have rapidly spread from North America to the rest of the world as authorities try to address past policy failures through the use of such policy systems as 10YP (Evans & Masuda, 2019). By targeting resources to those hardest to house, 10YPs purport to end rather than manage homelessness. This focus assists governments in their quest to reach zero homelessness within set timeframes and with increasingly limited financial resources (Evans & Masuda, 2019).

Scholars report that 10YPs were first utilised in 2003 in the field of homelessness when the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) conceptualised homelessness as the failure of systems. Prior to this conceptual shift, the federal government acted to manage and accommodate rather than end homelessness (Sparks, 2012). Thus, policies introduced in the 2000s shifted funding allocation mechanisms toward results-based outcomes which centred on service organisations producing quantifiable evidence they were successful in moving clients into permanent housing (Sparks, 2012).

With a focus on patterns of service use, government expenditure and quantifiable change, 10YPs may be understood to economize the politics of homelessness (Evans & Masuda, 2019). In this way, 10YPs may be regarded as an informal expression of neoliberal policy which reduces the visibility of chronic homelessness whilst entrenching market-based forms of discipline (Evans & Masuda, 2019). By targeting interventions toward a small subset of the homeless population, 10YPs have been criticised for merely smoothing “over the rough edges of a crisis ridden housing system”

whilst leaving shortages of affordable housing unaddressed (Evans & Masuda, 2019, p. 2). Critics argue that the calculations and statistical characteristics of iOYPs allow governments to steer the same political course as is already in place; by employing increased surveillance and discipline to manage homelessness according to individual pathologies, governments are able to negotiate around the homeless crisis (Harris, 2017; Hennigan, 2017).

### Systems Approach to Homelessness

A systems approach provides a focus within much literature concerned with homelessness. Literature addressing a systems approach highlights how, under current approaches, social policy is divided into diverse areas each with their own focus, departments and priorities. This approach compartmentalises the diverse needs of a person rather than addressing intersecting issues through a person-centred approach. Turner and Krecsy (2019) explain that lack of integration among agencies is one of the most commonly identified contributors towards homelessness. Thus, the siloing of key stakeholders, policies, government agencies, and community service providers generates fragmentation at policy, funding, organisational and service levels. With recognition that fragmented and disjointed policies, programmes and services are contributing to ongoing experiences of homelessness and housing instability, systems planning is increasingly being considered as a key approach in responding to homelessness (Turner, 2014).

According to Turner (2014), systems planning requires an understanding of all the components of a given system, how each component relates to each other, and the basic function of each component as part of a whole. By adhering to these requirements, system planning results in processes that ensure alignment across a system so that all the components work together for maximum impact. In terms of relevance to homelessness, Turner (2014) argues that the implementation of systems planning would require reorganisation of the service delivery landscape around HF principles. Such reorganisation would align the activities of stakeholders across diverse systems, thus moving towards the shared goal of reducing and preventing homelessness. If introduced successfully, systems planning has the potential to make a sustainable impact on homelessness, ensuring that HF is part of a coordinated strategy for responding to homelessness and the interconnected social issues that accompany homelessness. Turner (2014) provides seven key elements in achieving systems planning and system level integration: planning and strategy development,

organisational infrastructure, system mapping, coordinated service delivery, integrated information management, performance management and quality assessments, and systems integration.

Systems planning attempts to formalise taking a systems approach to homelessness. However, as Turner and Krecsy (2019) explain, whilst enhancing systems integration is important, it certainly does not provide the answer to ending homelessness. Furthermore, Turner (2014) notes that evidence about systems planning in homelessness indicates that coordination closest to the client is more effective than top-down structural integration for housing and health outcomes. Turner (2014) suggests that a combination of multi-level and multi-instrumental strategies and policy alignment be employed to enhance the success of system coordination efforts. Literature on systems planning provides a useful way to consider the understanding of homelessness in New Zealand as explored within this research.

#### **1.4 Aim and Research Objectives**

This research is part of the “Ending Homelessness” project, as funded by the 2016 MBIE Endeavor Fund. Whilst the project is focused on HF in New Zealand, this thesis considers understandings of homelessness within the New Zealand context and at the local level. Local scale analysis draws on evidence from The People’s Project response to homelessness in Hamilton.

This research explores the ways in which homelessness is understood by the New Zealand government and within the public sector of services. This research utilises The People’s Project in Hamilton as a case study to examine the consideration, understanding and response to homelessness by public sector staff at the local level, and the opportunities and barriers these provide for The People’s Project’s HF and community-wide approaches to responding to homelessness. Findings support the central argument that a consistent understanding of homelessness within government and across sectors is a prerequisite for the development of, and to support, an effective response to homelessness. In addition, the findings reveal how, in the absence of consistent recognition of homelessness within government, local actors are constrained in their capacity to fill the gaps of existing system failures. This research recommends topics that might usefully be considered by government within *The Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan (2020-2023)* to ensure the response to

homelessness in New Zealand draws on an effective and consistent understanding of homelessness.

#### Research Objectives

The thesis has the following research objectives:

1. Review academic literature on how homelessness is understood, how these understandings are developed and why understandings of homelessness are important for ensuring adequate, responsive and sustainable service provision for those experiencing homelessness.
2. Review the way in which homelessness is understood, defined and “framed” within Western countries in response to homelessness and to compare these policies and plans to the way in which homelessness is understood, defined, considered and responded to by the New Zealand government within grey literature and political discussions.
3. Explore how government social service providers consider, define, understand and respond to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton.
4. Review the way in which The People’s Project in Hamilton understands, defines and responds to homelessness.
5. Evaluate the opportunities and challenges The People’s Project faces and responds to in the current setting of government social service provision.

These research objectives are presented within the chapters in the form of research questions (see Table 1.1).

*Table 1.1 Research objectives and corresponding research questions*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Research question</b>
1.	How is homelessness understood and defined in international and New Zealand literature?
2.	How is homelessness considered, understood and responded to by governments overseas and in New Zealand?
3.	How do staff within the public sector consider, define, understand and respond to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton?
4.	How does The People’s Project define and respond to homelessness in Hamilton?
5.	What challenges and opportunities does The People’s Project face in the current setting of public sector service provision?

## 1.5 Research Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters (see Figure 1.2). Chapter One introduces the context of the research topic and the rationale for conducting this research. It outlines the research aims and objectives and presents a brief overview of the research and thesis structure. Chapter Two provides a literature review exploring the understandings of homelessness within New Zealand and international academic literature. The chapter explores understandings of homelessness through the three themes of definitions, conceptualisations and representations of homelessness. This provides a framework through which to understand the findings presented within successive chapters. Chapter Three presents the rationale, method and findings for an analysis and review of grey literature. In this chapter, government understandings of homelessness are understood using the literature from Chapter Two as a lens through which to understand the policies for homelessness in the USA, Canada and Australia. In addition, in the absence of a policy for homelessness in New Zealand, this chapter traces the New Zealand governments' discussions around homelessness for the period between 2008 and 2018 and explores the way in which these discussions present a particular conceptualisation of homelessness. Chapter Four sets the context for the utilisation of The People's Project in Hamilton as a case study. Chapter Five delves into the understandings and responses of government services to homelessness at the local level. The analysis presented in this chapter draws on thematic analysis of empirical data collected from interviews and from the document analysis conducted in Chapter Three. Chapter Six presents the findings of The People's Project understanding of and response to homelessness as evident in Hamilton. Building upon the understanding and response to homelessness by government services, this chapter also considers and presents the challenges and opportunities of implementing a HF approach to homelessness in Hamilton within the New Zealand policy context. Chapter Seven summarises the key findings and research contributions of the thesis, highlights the strengths and limitations of the research and provides recommendations for the direction of future research and for policy.

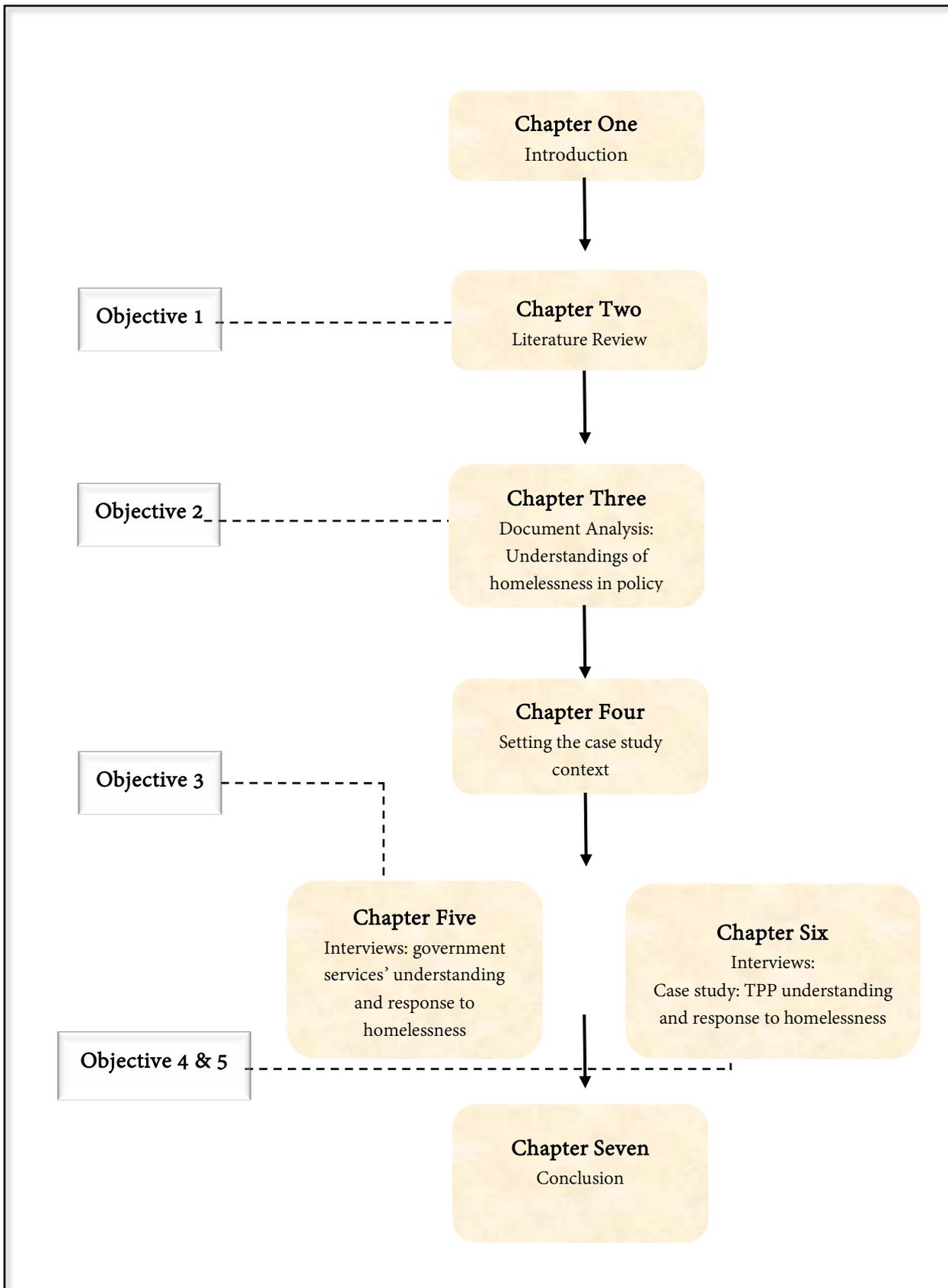


Figure 1.2 Research Design

# Chapter Two: Understanding Homelessness: A Systematic Review of Definitions, Conceptualisations and Representations of Homelessness

## 2.1 Introduction

There are a vast number of academic publications that address homelessness, with tens of thousands of results being returned in most database queries. The content of such publications extends from methodological considerations of enumeration, to biomedical research measuring the prevalence of disease within the homeless population, and to conceptual lines of inquiry that seek to understand homelessness policies across a range of scales (Pleace & Quilgars, 2003). The plethora of publications around issues of homelessness do not, however, include significant representation about experiences in New Zealand. Thus, there is a relative lack of academic research on homelessness in New Zealand, with there being only a select few studies that focus on the homeless population (see Amore 2013; Amore et al., 2013; Anderson & Collins, 2014; Hodgetts et al., 2011; Kearns et al., 1991; Leggatt-Cook, 2007; Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015). In addition to there being a lack of scholarly engagement with homelessness in New Zealand, there is also an absence of government consideration of possible responses to homelessness in New Zealand. The relative lack of scholarly and policy discussion regarding homelessness in New Zealand is a research gap explored within this doctoral thesis.

The objective of this systematic literature review is two-fold. Firstly, it provides an up-to-date overview of what is presented in academic literature about understandings of homelessness. To achieve this aim, the literature is narrowed through the use of specific search terms to focus on conceptualisations, definitions and representations of homelessness. In the context of governing homelessness, these three literature areas are particularly relevant in revealing something about how homelessness is understood. Conceptualisations identify homelessness in terms of the causes and the nature of homelessness. Definitional literature contains understandings of homelessness in terms of living situations and the different ways in which boundaries are placed to differentiate those who are homeless. Representational literature incorporates ideas about the role that descriptions of homelessness play in developing understandings around homelessness as well as the impact of these portrayals. Secondly, it provides an overview of academic discussions about the understanding of

homelessness in New Zealand. This systematic review has been conducted to answer the research question: how is homelessness understood and defined in international and New Zealand literature? The results of this systematic literature review will be used to interpret and analyse results of grey literature in Chapter Three, and they will inform the development and analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with social service providers in Hamilton, New Zealand.

## **2.2 Methods**

### **2.2.1 Systematic Literature Review Purpose and Process**

Typically, systematic literature review methods are utilised within health-related disciplines such as nursing, medicine and public health (Daigneault, Jacob, & Ouimet, 2014). However, they are increasingly utilised within the social sciences due to their comparative advantage over traditional literature reviews with respect to the validity of their conclusions (Daigneault et al., 2014). The key difference between the systematic literature review method typical within medical fields and the literature review that is traditionally used within the social sciences, is that a systematic review utilises specific protocols and procedures that can be replicated by other researchers. Whilst systematic literature searches within the social sciences are increasingly being used, Perry and Hammond (2002) clarify that it is not always appropriate or practical for the methodology to be followed strictly in social science research. This is particularly the case when the focus of the research does not rely on data or results from randomised control trial (RCT) studies. Rather, when a systematic literature review is aimed at identifying and exploring contrasting theoretical or conceptual evidence on a topic, it is appropriate to utilise a strict systematic process for collecting articles and to take a qualitative approach in assessing their findings (Grant & Booth, 2009; Snyder, 2019). Given these concerns, the systematic review conducted for this research was designed and reported using an adjusted form of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement. The PRISMA statement, provides the minimum set of items to be reported for within systematic reviews and meta-analysis (PRISMA, 2015). The PRISMA statement was developed by a group of 29 review authors, methodologists, clinicians, medical editors and consumers in 2009 (Liberati et al., 2009). PRISMA is an internationally recognised 27-item method that is designed to ensure the highest standard in systematic reviewing. This research uses only 11 of the 27 PRISMA reporting items due to the qualitative nature of the inquiry (see Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1 PRISMA statement items and adjusted method items

PRISMA 27 Item Checklist	Adjusted Method
<p>1. Title 2. Abstract/ Structured Summary</p> <p><b>Introduction</b> 3. Rationale 4. Objectives</p> <p><b>Methods</b> 5. Protocol and registration 6. Eligibility criteria 7. Information sources 8. Search 9. Study selection 10. Data collection process 11. Data items 12. Risk of bias in individual studies 13. Summary measures 14. Synthesis of results 15. Risk of bias across studies 16. Additional analyses</p> <p><b>Results</b> 17. Study selection 18. Study characteristics 19. Risk of bias within studies 20. Results of individual studies 21. Synthesis of results 22. Risk of bias across studies 23. Additional analysis</p> <p><b>Discussion</b> 24. Summary of evidence 25. Limitations 26. Conclusions</p> <p><b>Funding</b> 27. Funding</p>	<p>1. Title</p> <p><b>Introduction</b> 2. Rationale 3. Objectives</p> <p><b>Methods</b> 4. Eligibility criteria 5. Information sources 6. Search 7. Study/Research selection</p> <p><b>Results</b> 8. Study/Research selection 9. Study/Research characteristics</p> <p><b>Discussion</b> 10. Summary of evidence 11. Conclusions</p>

## Information Sources

During the initial scoping of literature, any articles identified as relevant to the line of inquiry of the systematic literature search were included as “additional records”. An electronic search for journal articles and books was made within the Web of Science and the ProQuest Social Sciences databases. Within each database, two sets of searches were conducted. The first search conducted was intended to return international results, whilst the second search conducted was intended to be New Zealand specific. That is, the international results would include those where the topic of study fell outside of New Zealand and the New Zealand specific search would include those results where New Zealand was the topic of study.

### Search

For the international search set, the core search terms *definition*, *representation* and *conceptualisation* were utilised in truncated form and in combination with the term *homeless*. As shown in Table 2.2 (below) the asterisk is utilised as a wildcard symbol, which retrieves more complex variations of the term given. For example, *defin\** will return results for define, definition, defining, defined and defines (Steele, 2019). For the New Zealand specific search set, the terms employed were *homeless* and *Zealand*. The core search terms were excluded given the relative lack of literature about homelessness in New Zealand; a broad search was likely to return a wide set of results for New Zealand, some of which may implicitly discuss understandings of homelessness, despite this not being their focus. In addition, unlike other systematic literature searches, this did not include synonyms for the term homeless. This decision was both pragmatic and informed by the demands of my research topic. First, choosing not to use synonyms reduced the number of possible search results, with this approach excluding articles that did not use the term homeless but did discuss such subcategories of homelessness, such as rough sleeping. Second, by ignoring synonyms the focus is intentionally placed on how homelessness is understood as a continuum, as opposed to just how particular subcategories of homelessness are understood.

Table 2.2 Queries used within database searches

Search Query Used Within the Databases
1. (homeless* AND defin*) OR (homeless* AND represent*) OR (homeless* AND conceptuali*)
2. Homeless* AND Zealand

The language selection was limited to English and within both databases the widest date range was chosen. In other words, the earliest result returned in each database was utilised as the start point of the search and the end date of 24 May 2018 was applied manually. Within the Web of Science database, the subject or discipline of each result returned was indicated by a category. Only categories relating to subjects that had previously been identified as relevant to the research topic and question were retained (see Table 2.3 below). These subjects capture the range of social science fields in which homelessness was known to be considered within and of which were relevant to the research inquiry. However, this same selection was not relevant as an input into the ProQuest Social Sciences database as this already returned the relevant social science subjects within the results.

Table 2.3 Web of Science categories included within the search

<b>Web of Science Categories Included within the Search</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Demography</li> <li>- Economics</li> <li>- Environment Studies</li> <li>- Ethics</li> <li>- Geography</li> <li>- Health Policy Services</li> <li>- History of Social Sciences</li> <li>- Humanities Multidisciplinary</li> <li>- Philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning and Development</li> <li>- Political Science</li> <li>- Psychology Social</li> <li>- Public Administration</li> <li>- Social Issues</li> <li>- Social Science Interdisciplinary</li> <li>- Sociology</li> <li>- Social Work</li> <li>- Urban Studies</li> </ul>

### Research Selection

The selection of results to be included and excluded for full text review was conducted manually through a review of the title and abstract of each search result returned. Here, the title and abstracts were evaluated for content, as well as the presence and number of times in which a keyword appeared. In terms of the content, an item was retained if it included information about the way in which homelessness is understood in terms of definitions, representations or conceptualisations. Items were excluded if they were biomedical and did not include discussion of the understanding of homelessness as described above. Results were also excluded if a study described or provided its definition of homelessness with no discussion around why that decision was made.

### **2.3 Results**

The international systematic literature search returned 1046 records from the database search; 26 additional records were identified from these, and 75 records were retained for analysis (see Figure 2.1). The New Zealand systematic literature search conducted returned 71 records from the database search; four additional records were included from previous research conducted, and 19 records were retained for analysis (see Figure 2.2).

This section of the chapter summarises the findings from the systematic review regarding conceptualisations, definitions and representations of homelessness in terms of what the literature has to say about understandings, of homelessness. The New Zealand literature is then reviewed and the need for an in-depth and systematic review of homelessness by the New Zealand government is discussed.

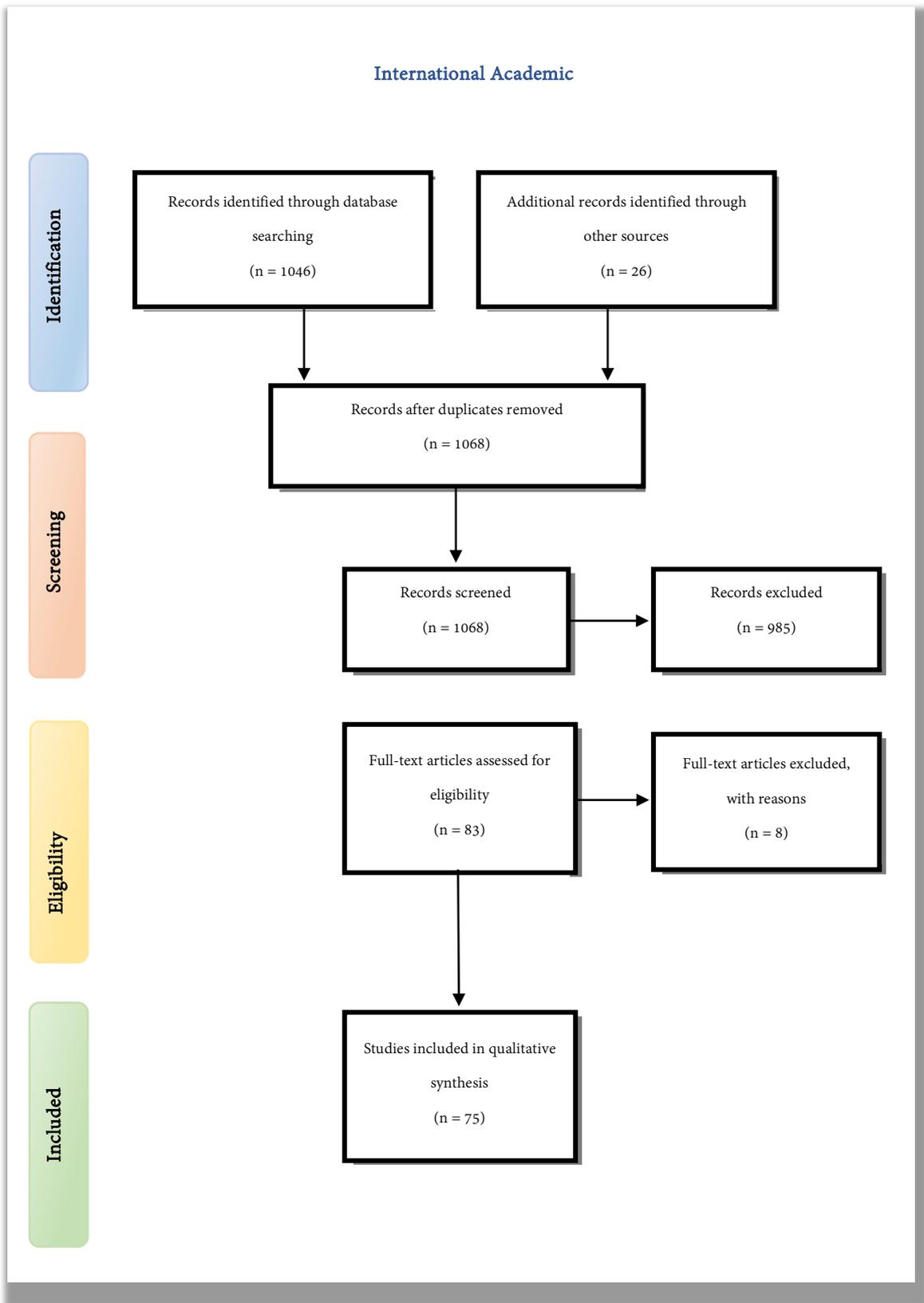


Figure 2.1 Systematic International Academic Literature Flowchart

## New Zealand Academic Literature

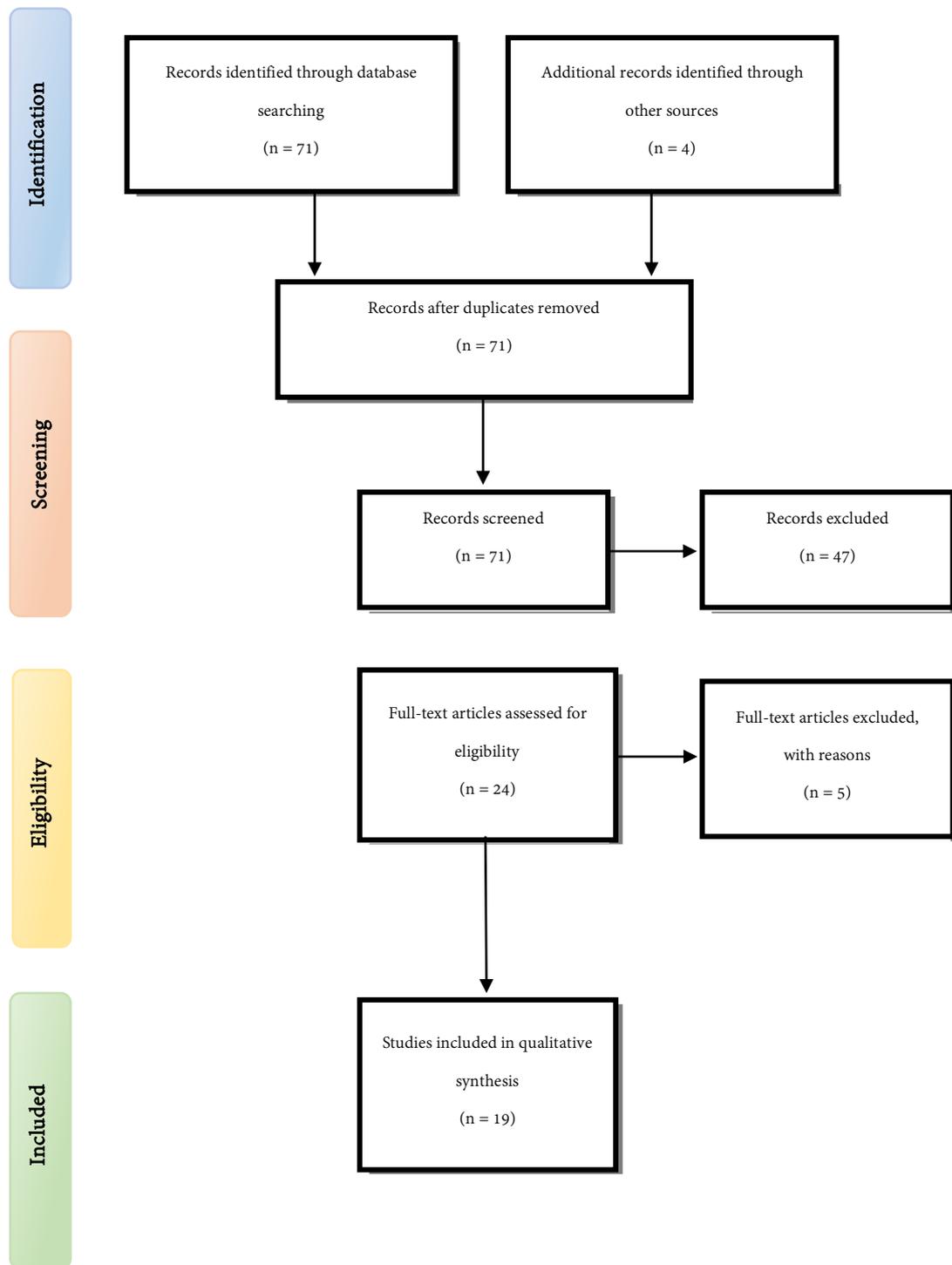


Figure 2.2 Systematic New Zealand Literature Search Flowchart

### 2.3.1 Conceptualisations of homelessness-theoretical approaches to causation

Conceptualisations of homelessness are the understandings that people have about homelessness, the nature of homelessness and how it is caused (Cronley, 2010). They refer to the societal understandings of homelessness. A number of ontological approaches have contributed to furthering understandings of homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Positivist, realist and interpretivist approaches have been used within the field of homelessness in order to explain the causes. Drawing on Hume's theory of "constant conjunctions", the positivist approach understands the causes of homelessness through the search for patterns of observable, "statistically significant correlations between variables" (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 2). In other words, factors associated with homelessness can only be understood as causes of homelessness if there is a perfect match between their presence and the experience of homelessness. This approach can be seen within homelessness research that focused on measuring aspects of the homeless population whereby characteristics of this population were over interpreted as causes. In critiquing the positivist approach, interpretivists suggested that analysis should move away from a focus on observing and measuring aspects of homelessness as if they were objective facts. Rather, they posit that analysis should concentrate on understanding the meanings that are applied to the social world and social phenomena, such as homelessness. In terms of causation, there is both a "strong" and "weak" social constructionist approach. The weak approach holds the view that there is an underlying social and material reality that is being mediated through social and cultural processes, whilst the strong approach views reality as the product of different ways of seeing (Fitzpatrick, 2005). In critiquing of the interpretivist/social constructionist approach, realists question whether this exploration around the meaning attached to homelessness is an alternative or additional exercise when investigating the causes of homelessness. However, like constructionists, realists are critical of positivist approaches to social science and agree that construction of meaning plays a central role in social research. Unlike constructionists, realists insist that there is an underlying social and material reality. Whilst realists would agree with constructionists that definitions of homelessness are socially constructed and have real impacts on policy making, realists would "maintain that the housing and social conditions they refer to have real existence whether or not they are defined as constituting homelessness" (Fitzpatrick, 2005,p. 8).

The realist approach to homelessness draws on Giddens' theory of structuration where the duality of structure is central. Within this theory, "social structures are constituted

by human agency but at the same time enable and constrain social action” (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 9 see also ; Neale, 1997). Rather than the structure versus agency dichotomy used to explain the causes of homelessness (as discussed in the following section), the realist approach to the causation of homelessness maintains that structural forces make it likely for certain people to become homeless in any given set of circumstances. However, because personal circumstances are not predetermined, and because larger structural forces operate at different levels, the influence of individual and structural-level causes of homelessness vary. Within the realist ontology, explanation of social phenomena such as homelessness are not “mono-causal and deterministic” (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 21). The central ontological assumptions of the realist approach are that there is no single cause of homelessness but a series of less proximate causes. Within this, causal factors can operate at a range of levels and no one level of causal factor is “assumed to be logically prior to another” (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 21). Furthermore, neither sufficiency (the causal factor always leading to homelessness) or necessity (a causal factor having to be present) is assumed. The most dominant theoretical approaches taken within the field of homelessness are the social constructionist approach and the critical realist approach. The literature from the review argued that research utilising the social constructionist approach has furthered understandings of how homelessness is perceived by key social actors and the impacts that these understandings have on policy intervention, and that the critical realism is the “most promising theoretical approach to take account of the full range of potential causal factors” (Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 23).

Conceptualisations of homelessness matter because they are the understandings about homelessness and how it is caused. Conceptualisations frame the definition of homelessness, debates about homelessness, and are used to inform the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies (Cronley, 2010). Theoretical approaches presented around the causation of homelessness are both reflected within and challenge the different ways that the causes of homelessness have been understood within Western society. The following section moves away from theoretical approaches of causation and looks at the key ways in which causes of homelessness have been understood and the conceptual considerations of definitions.

### **2.3.2 Conceptualisations of homelessness discussed in the literature**

The literature on conceptualisations of homelessness presents two sets of information. Firstly, the literature traces changes in the way that causes of homelessness were understood. Secondly, the literature discusses the conceptual considerations around

which definitions might be based. With regards to understanding the causes of homelessness, literature traces the shift from structuralist or individualist understanding of homelessness toward “new orthodoxy” conceptualisations that understand homelessness to be caused at the nexus of the two former conceptualisations.

Homelessness as interpreted through the structuralist viewpoint is informed by a political economy perspective, which draws on questions of power and control over economic resources. Within this perspective “homelessness is portrayed as a fundamental and inescapable product of the political economy of housing markets”(Wyly & Hammel, 2010, p. 5). This explanation of homelessness as being an outcome of structural forces was challenged during the 1970s and 1980s, with scholars moving to position homelessness as being a consequence of individual decision making. The shift from structural to individual conceptualisations of homelessness was in line with international political shifts that took responsibility for social welfare away from governments and placed it with the individual (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010). According to Gowan (2010), the designation of homelessness as being the fault of the individual may be positioned in relation to two individual characteristics: individual sinfulness, which refers to homelessness as a moral offense requiring punishment and exclusion; and individual sickness, which views homelessness as the consequence of mental illness and/or addiction requiring treatment. This shift from structural towards the individualist conceptualisation of homelessness resulted in policy responses that targeted the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. These responses were based on the belief that state intervention in the housing market was not necessary because the market provided sufficient choice and opportunity for individuals to avoid homelessness (Lee et al., 2010; Wyly & Hammel, 2010). This policy shift “left marginalised persons almost completely disenfranchised with little or no resources” (Green, 2005, p. 4). This general approach to understanding homelessness that divided the individual and structural causes as based on the “largely discredited notion of a strict agency/structure dichotomy in sociological theory” (Fitzpatrick, 2005 p.5) gave way to the “new orthodoxy” in understandings of homelessness.

The new orthodoxy perspective on the causes of homelessness, which integrates the individual and structural causes, is now dominant within literature on homelessness (Lee et al., 2010). It recognises that individual factors, such as disabilities and family dynamics, make those experiencing personal difficulties vulnerable to the structural

causes of homelessness (Lux & Mikeszova, 2013). The new orthodoxy perspective on the causes of homelessness has meant that the homeless population is accepted as containing not only male, alcohol-dependent transients, but also women, children, youth, elderly, migrants and people from marginalised ethnic groups (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). Historically many of these “new” homeless may have been excluded from social assistance (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). Furthermore, the implication of conceptualising homelessness under this new orthodoxy is that the responses to homelessness are expected to target both structural and individual causes. Despite the dominance of the new orthodoxy in understanding the causation of homelessness, and its practical usefulness for policy, the approach has been critiqued by critical realists for its lack of explanation around what it is about the structural and individual factors that generate homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005). This perspective does not account for instances where homelessness occurs due to individual or structural causes only, is not accounted for.

The relevance of the new orthodoxy was brought into question by those scholars who advanced the “pathways” understanding of homelessness (see for example: Anderson, 2001; Fitzpatrick, 2005, 2012; Fitzpatrick, Bramley, & Johnsen, 2013; Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007) which emerged after the cross-sectional emphasis of the new orthodoxy approach (Clapham, 2005). Pathways analysis charts the progress over time of an individual or household through both housed and homeless living situations (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). This approach is a holistic analytical perspective that considers a range of aspects from people’s lives as contributing to their homelessness and contrasts with those conceptualisations that interrogate homelessness as part of a broad set of housing experiences. In particular, the Multiple Exclusion Homelessness (MEH) conceptual approach, which draws on the pathways model, locates an experience of homelessness in the context of an individual’s experience of deep social exclusion. Such exclusion includes experiences in institutional care, incidents of substance misuse and involvement in street culture activity (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). Within their research on MEH, Fitzpatrick et al. (2013) utilised the critical realist ontology in their approach to the causation of homelessness. Within this approach, a variety of interrelated causal factors explain MEH in any one case. Furthermore, in terms of the central question around what about the causal factors causes multiple exclusion homelessness Fitzpatrick et al. (2013), discovered that in most experiences, distress resultant from childhood trauma undermined an individual’s health and coping mechanisms in early adulthood. Substance misuse and poor mental health

then caused later onset MEH (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). Thus, through the use of the pathways perspective within critical realist ontology, the literature has accounted for the growing policy awareness of the relatively small group of homeless with multiple needs where homelessness and other domains of deep exclusion overlap.

Another somewhat similar conceptual approach taken when understanding homelessness is the housing/homeless career or trajectory (MacKenzie & Chamberlain, 2003; Piliavin, Sosin, Westerfelt, & Matsueda, 1993; Robinson, 2003). However, the literature argues that the terms career and trajectory imply a downward spiral in homelessness or housing. Whereas the term pathways is more neutral and acknowledges the different ways homelessness is caused (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). The significance of taking a pathways or trajectory approach to homelessness is also that these options recognise that homelessness is not a static experience but a dynamic and sometimes long-term experience with varying levels of severity (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). As the literature around MEH highlights, this enables consideration for the severely problematic life events and the associated care and support needs required in response.

The literature on homelessness also presents perspectives on the broad conceptual framing around how homelessness is understood or claims around the ways the nature of homelessness may be viewed. Conceptually, definitions of homelessness are often framed in terms of “lack of home”; more recently, “spiritual” homelessness has also been conceptualised to account for Indigenous experiences of homelessness (Christensen, 2016; King, Abrego, Narendorf, Ha, & Maria, 2017). Within the systematic literature search, five articles specifically discussed definitions of homelessness in relation to understandings of home. This approach in defining homelessness is Durkheimian in nature as the concept of home does not exist without an understanding of homelessness (Wardhaugh, 1999). With this dialectical perspective, home is understood as a space that is inside, secure, certain and ordered. In contrast, homelessness is understood as an outside space, synonymous with uncertainty, risk and chaos. As Roche, Barker, and McArthur (2018) point out, living scenarios considered as homeless are constructed as inadequate based on the idea of an absence of a home. Veness (1992) in what is perhaps the seminal work on links between home and homelessness, critically evaluates the changing ideal of home, subsequent considerations of homelessness over time, and the way that the understandings of homelessness are “negotiated within the context of abstract idealizations and concrete working definitions” (p. 447). Veness (1992) argues that such negotiation is required to

make meaningful change in homelessness research. This change is of consequence because it is against the taken-for-granted ideal of “home” that definitions and the governance of the homeless population are derived.

Veness (1992) explains how ideas of home and definitions of homelessness have changed over time in response to significant social and economic crises. However, despite changing conditions, some attitudes towards homelessness remain. Specifically, idealisations of home still underpin and decide who the homeless would be and such idealisations still restrict and conflict with the realities of home for many in the contemporary context. For example, some who are classified as homeless may not accept that label as an adequate descriptor of their circumstances; despite the substandard conditions of their abode, where they reside still holds the meaning of home. In each case, the definition of homelessness is used to categorise those “whose daily habitats and habits” (Veness, 1992, p. 449) deviate from the understanding of home at the time. For example, in the 1970s residing in a group home or institution was considered as being “homed”, however by the 1990s these accommodation types were reclassified as “homelessness” (Veness, 1992). Whilst the literature suggests that homelessness represents the absence of home, Moore, Gerdtz, Manias, Hepworth, and Dent (2007) point out that to “suggest that homelessness is a total absence of feeling at home of place, culture and belonging, is to ignore both the inherent tensions in the concept of home and the presence of homelessness” (p. 147). Thus, Veness (1992) cautions that those definitions of homelessness that are informed by a consideration of meanings of home need to consider the “socially constructed arena in which [they] are formed and the subjective views of the individuals inside and outside this ideal” (p. 464). If such consideration is not given, home will remain a category reserved for those closest to attaining it and those in the position to define it.

A related conceptualisation of homelessness discussed in recent literature is the notion of spiritual and indigenous homelessness (see Anderson & Collins, 2014; Christensen, 2017; Habibis, 2011; Memmott & Chambers, 2012). A spiritual definition of homelessness was developed out of the need for both researchers and policy makers to avoid Eurocentric assumptions about home and homelessness when conceptualising and responding to homelessness. Thus, in their work in remote Western Australia, Zufferey and Chung (2015), highlight limitations of understandings about home and homelessness for residents of remote Aboriginal communities. Their findings suggest that for Indigenous Australians, alternative perspectives of home and homelessness

challenge dominant understandings of home as being a physical structure such as a house. Furthermore, they caution researchers' and policy makers' about the uncritical application of Western normative definitions of home when developing and applying definitions of homelessness. For Australian Aborigines, "who have camped on their land and country for thousands of years, definitions of home and homelessness are complicated by experiences of invasion, occupation and historical cultural traditions" (Zufferey & Chung, 2015, p. 17). Similarly, Anderson and Collins (2014) highlighted the specific importance of conceptualising homelessness in a way that accounts for Indigenous experiences of home and the central importance this has when defining homelessness. Whilst the literature around conceptualisations of homelessness offer useful insights into the way homelessness is understood and the causation of homelessness, definitions of homelessness are tools through which conceptualisations implicitly operate within policy. The following two sections provide an overview of the literature around definitions of homelessness, why they are important for understanding homelessness and key discussions within the literature.

### **2.3.3 Defining homelessness: why definitions are important tools for understanding homelessness**

Definitions of homelessness draw boundaries and provide descriptions (Schiff, 2003). They state what constitutes homelessness and describe the conditions in which homelessness is considered to occur. However, because definitions occur in a particular social settings, their accuracy depends on the evaluation and understanding of the social context within which they are developed (Schiff, 2003). Definitions of homelessness matter because they are both conceptual and practical devices, with one having an impact on the other (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001; Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992; Maesele, Bouverne-De Bie, & Roose, 2013). As such, a definition of homelessness is a social construct designed for instrumental purposes (Schiff, 2003). This instrumentality is evident because, conceptually, the definition is a tool used to frame the issue and to classify the population to be served (Arapoglou, 2004b). As Frankish, Hwang, and Quantz (2005) describe, the definition of homelessness has consequences for policy, resource allocation and the parameters used to measure the success of homeless initiatives. Given these consequences, there is much benefit to be gained from there being some degree of definitional agreement between academic and political communities (Frankish et al., 2005). Thus, because the production of exclusion and displacement of homeless individuals relies on ideology, the definitions upon which agencies develop policies, or local governments enforce regulations, have a

central role in the translation of ideology from the discursive into reality (Dooling, 2009). Furthermore as Cronley (2010) highlights, when homelessness was conceptualised from either an individualist or structuralist viewpoint of causation, the process of social construction contributed to public policies on homelessness that were based “less on empirically derived knowledge, and more on the public perception of homelessness” (p. 320).

In most contexts, “whether an individual is considered homeless depends to a great extent on the various ways in which homelessness is defined and operationalised” (O'Donnell, 2018, p. 336). This is because, in most cases, being labelled homeless is a prerequisite for gaining access to a homeless social service delivery system. Without fulfilling federal, state, or local eligibility requirements as included in definitions of homelessness, and thereby taking on the label of homeless, individuals cannot access publicly funded services that provide psychosocial, material and financial support to the homeless population (see also Springer, 2000). Given this conditionality, scholars argue that bureaucracies of public and non-profit agencies use the label “homeless” to construct the definition of need, and to design and implement the strategies through which such need should be addressed (Young, 1990). In defining homelessness, welfare and social service agencies not only characterise the populations to be served but also dictate the nature and scope of interventions available to designated populations (Takahashi, McElroy, & Rowe, 2002).

Given definitions affect both the enumeration and understanding of homelessness, scholars have highlighted how definitions shape policy approaches and responses (Fitzgerald, Shelley, & Dail, 2001; Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). This interest stems from recognition that estimates of the magnitude and extent of homelessness inform researchers' assessments of the causes and solutions to homelessness. This gives “policy makers [the] ability to argue for certain kinds of corrective measures” (Veness, 1993, p. 323). Regardless of who defines homelessness, the ability of policies to adequately address homelessness relies on the definitions incorporating recognition of the sets of issues preceding and accompanying homelessness. Such recognition draws on an understanding of homelessness as a dynamic process of experiences that occur along a continuum of living situations (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007).

### 2.3.4 Key discussions regarding definitions of homelessness

The socially constructed nature of homelessness, and the different manifestations of homelessness by place, ensure there is a longstanding assumption among scholars that reaching a single or universal definition of homelessness is impossible (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992; Cronley, 2010; DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Hopper, 1995). Understandings around the inability to have a single definition of homelessness are drawn from the relativist perspective, which argues that the boundary drawn between home and homeless is arrived at in a relative way. The social constructivist perspective and relativist perspective both theorise that it is essentially an impossible task to have one standard definition of homelessness applicable to different cultures and societies and to contexts characterised by divergent standards around what are acceptable living arrangements (Curtis, Corman, Noonan, & Reichman, 2013). Thus, Busch-Geertsema, Culhane, and Fitzpatrick (2016) suggest that their “Global Homelessness Framework”, has value only as a frame of reference for cross-national engagement if national and local definitions are positioned in relation to international action. The authors conclude that imposing a single ‘global’ definition of homelessness would be unhelpful because, in order to be useful, “a definition of homelessness must reflect, to at least, some extent the norm within that society” (p. 126).

Within relevant literature, definitions of homelessness are also regarded as highly political (Schiff, 2003). In other words, because they operate to frame the population, definitions of homelessness have ideological and methodological consequences (Williams & Cheal, 2001). Rather than reflecting reality, variance in definitions of homelessness express the different perspectives of commentators whose interests are served by either minimising or maximising the scale of the problem (Chamberlain, 2012; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001; Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992). Indeed, Daly (1996) reported that debates around definitions of homelessness were so dominated by political discussion that the concept became mystified, enabling homelessness to be “denied or dismissed as unwieldy, abstract or diffuse, even intractable” (p.9). Whilst the field of homelessness studies has experienced a proliferation of definitions and classifications, Amore, Baker, and Howden-Chapman (2011) and Amore (2013) have argued that relatively few authors have sought to publish a conceptually robust definition of homelessness. The authors observed that whilst many definitions comprise lists of living situations, they fail to refer to a clear theoretical rationale around what the different living situations have in common (Amore 2013).

One definition that has been regarded and promoted as “thoroughly well conceptualised” (Culhane, Metraux, & Byrne, 2011, p. 9) is the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) typology. The ETHOS model of homelessness and housing exclusion was developed in response to the Lisbon Treaty, which “placed the right of access to decent and affordable housing” in the policy arena for the 27 member states of the European Union (Edgar, 2012, p. 220). ETHOS was developed in an attempt to address the diversity of the experiences of homelessness, identify the ways in which national governments set policy frameworks for homelessness, and enable governments and the European Commission to monitor progress related to homelessness policy. As Edgar (2012) noted, the challenges ETHOS needed to address included member states recognising homelessness as policy issue and understanding homelessness as more than street homelessness. In accounting for the dynamic nature of homelessness across a diversity of housing market systems, welfare regimes and housing contexts, ETHOS sought to balance being conceptually robust whilst allowing for classificatory and typological adaptations.

Despite its stated goals, Amore et al. (2011) critique the ETHOS typology’s conceptual model and the subgroups identified within the typology. Within the ETHOS typology, three domains—the physical, social and legal—are considered as constituting a home or adequate living situation. Furthermore, living situations deficient in one or more of the domains are then regarded as housing exclusion or homelessness (Edgar, 2012). Amore et al. (2011) scrutinise the logic behind the division made in ETHOS between homelessness and housing exclusion, arguing that it is problematic to include being “at risk of homelessness” in a typology of homelessness and housing exclusion. The second criticism raised by Amore et al. (2011) is that ETHOS fails to take account of “why people are living in a situation that is inadequate for permanent habitation” (p. 25). In terms of the typology, Amore et al. (2011) found that it had a criterion where accommodation for homeless people was targeted whilst other kinds of accommodation, such as boarding houses and youth hostels, which do not explicitly target the homeless, but are nonetheless utilised as such, are not included. In defence of the criticism from Amore et al. (2011) that ETHOS is mutually exclusive but not exhaustive, Sahlin (2012) argued that operational categories “can hardly cover all relevant housing situations in all of the countries, all of the time” (Sahlin, 2012, p.229). Amore et al. (2011) argue that the conceptual shortfalls of ETHOS can be addressed through the inclusion of two conditions:

- 1) living in inadequate place of habitation (unless these are institutions); and

- 2) lacking access to minimally adequate housing (except those staying in accommodation targeting homeless people) (p. 230).

The lack of conceptual framing, the relativist approach to definitions and the influence of politics on operational definitions in terms of service provision reveals the importance of the development and use of conceptually rigorous definitions.

### **2.3.5 Representations of homelessness: why they matter and how they inform understandings of homelessness**

The development of a social understanding of homelessness is as much constituted by the act of representation, as it is the 'actual' experience of homelessness. (Gerrard & Farrugia, 2014, p. 2223)

Representations of homelessness constrain the possibilities for understanding and representing homelessness. (Middleton, 2014, pp. 321-322)

Representations of homelessness are the way in which homelessness and those who are experiencing homelessness are described or shown within the media, policy texts and other forms of communication targeted to the domiciled population (De Oliveira, 2018). Representations of homelessness are important because although domiciled or housed populations have some intermittent contact with those who experience homelessness, most have little in-depth knowledge or personal experience of homelessness (Lee et al., 2010; Schneider, 2014). Thus, representations influence the way in which society comprehends and reacts to homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Resende, 2016) and what the domiciled population knows about homeless identities (De Oliveira, 2018; Parsell, 2011).

Of the 35 articles that comprised the representation literature, eight items specifically investigated the representation of homelessness within media. Homelessness, and those who experience homelessness, are often the subject of public deliberations due to their presence within "representational spaces provided by the media, both on screen and on our pages" (Hodgetts et al., 2011, p. 1741). The literature contains arguments that the representation of homelessness in the media is an important avenue of recognition because it directly influences understandings of homelessness (Resende, 2016; Schneider, 2014; Toft, 2014; Tompsett et al., 2003; Torck, 2001). Consumers of media texts may use the dramatically portrayed stereotypes that align with their existing beliefs about homelessness, rather than exploring other perspectives on homelessness that offer complex representations (Phillips, 2000;

Tompsett et al., 2003). The visual representation of those experiencing homelessness are “mostly pictured through common discursive figures such as the urban poor, sad . . . or the filthy lazy vagabond lying on the ground” (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017, p. 11). Indeed, the repetition of stereotypical representations of homelessness establishes and stabilises what homelessness should look like and to what it ascribes (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). In this way, homelessness is described as a social problem that is partially discursive (Dooling, 2009; Resende, 2016); this discursive representation of homelessness influences how people perceive and react to social vulnerabilities (Resende, 2009, 2016). The collective impact that representations have collectively on the shaping of policy explains the value in being aware of the relationship between media coverage and public perception (Tompsett et al., 2003). Research identifies that the representation of homelessness within the media reinforces dominant ideologies that associate deviant behaviour with those who occupy marginalised positions in society. Media representations of homelessness also tend to reinforce neoliberal concepts of individual choice, a bias that makes it difficult to enact communal policy initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness (De Oliveira, 2018; Penner & Penner, 1994; Toft, 2014). Discourses of homelessness within the media have, therefore, dominated understandings of homelessness and “conveyed mainstream societies message around power, influence and authority” (Torck, 2001, p. 374).

Four articles within the total of 35 categorised focused on the representation of homelessness within policy. This literature recognises that the way in which policies represent social problems influences policy solutions (Kuskoff, 2018). Within policy, the governing of subjects is reliant on the process of problematisation (Bacchi, 2009), a process that requires that policy identifies those experiencing homelessness, or the experience of homelessness, as a problem that requires solving through policy intervention. Thus, those aspects of homelessness that are identified as a problem requiring policy intervention inform the policy response that takes place. Furthermore, literature notes how previously, programs or responses to homelessness represented understandings of homelessness that draw on dominant stereotypes and representations of homelessness (Bogard, 1998). Contemporary literature has moved debates away from the influence of stereotypes informing policy; rather, authors have come to recognise that hegemonic understandings of homelessness, and the discursive representation of these, constrain the ability of policy makers to tackle the problem of homelessness. By problematising homelessness in very specific ways, representations

ignore and silence the complexities and structural nature of the issue (Cloke, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000b).

One of the key texts identified within literature on the representations of homelessness in policy is Bacchi (2009) “What is the problem represented to be?” (WPR) approach. The argument made through WPR is that policy analysis begins by questioning how a problem is constructed and represented. This questioning affords understanding around how representations of the problem shape the scope of possible responses. Critically, the WPR approach asks, “What is left unproblematic in the representation of the problem?”; this question allows for consideration of the likely effects produced by the dominant representations. In relation to possible effects, scholars debating representations of homelessness explicitly question dominant social discourses of homelessness and consider how they shape and are shaped by social policies (Kuskoff, 2018). Authors posit that discourses may have a significant impact on the representation of homelessness, because “the act of naming and representing the social experience carries significant symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 105 as cited in Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016). In addition to influencing the way in which people in poverty are treated by politicians, officials and domiciled individuals (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010), derogatory representations evident in common discursive tropes transform an individual experiencing homelessness into a homeless person (Parsell, 2011). As Parsell (2011) explains, homelessness literature has helped maintain this all-encompassing homelessness identity, where groups or individuals are identified by their state of homelessness as if this homeless identity is a one-dimensional reality. In this way, representations of homelessness have resulted in homeless being viewed and understood either as problems, or as people with problems (Cloke et al., 2000b).

### **2.3.6 Predominant representations of homelessness identified in the literature**

The 35 items categorised as representations literature contained 22 articles that highlighted the negative representation of homelessness: 13 articles that discussed hegemonic narratives and the resultant othering of those experiencing homelessness; four articles that focused on visible homelessness as the defining representation of the social problem; and, six articles that addressed the spatial representation of homelessness. In addition, seven articles addressed the representational silences and six articles explored or challenged hegemonic representations of homelessness. Whilst the review of representations in media and policy addressed some of the discussions in this literature, the following sections provide additional explanation.

Thus, this section of the literature review examines dominant representations of homelessness and also considers the literature that explores challenges to the narratives presented within the hegemonic representations of homelessness.

When considering representations of those experiencing homelessness, authors generally conclude that there is a clear focus on the visibly homeless or “rough sleepers” who occupy the most extreme end of the continuum of homeless living situations. This focus on rough sleepers occurs in media representations as well as in policy documents, academic research and the psyche of the domiciled public. One way in which the focus on the visibly homeless within representations has occurred is through the ability to count this population. Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield (2001), who trace the power of numbers in discourses relating to homelessness, posit that the undertaking of rough sleeper counts has had important consequences for the understanding of homelessness. This is because rough sleeper counts have become the “popular defining representation of the problem” (Cloke et al., 2001, p.259). Despite that the literature widely documents how the use of numbers and statistics can be manipulated to support or challenge policy action, the use of rough sleeper counts has been the defining representation of homelessness, because they give the impression of objectivity (Cloke et al., 2001). Thus, rough sleeper counts offer the illusion of scientific objectivity. Furthermore, the use of rough sleeper counts reinforce the dominant discourse of homelessness as Other by “keeping invisible the working homeless” (Wright, 1993 as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p.698). Krumer-Nevo and Benjamin (2010) argue that this invisibility occurs because it protects “people in other class positions from anxiety, shame and dissonance triggered by the idea that there is no difference between them and the poor” (p. 696).

This focus on visible homelessness, and the subsequent invisibility of the working homeless and rural or suburban homelessness, may, in part, also be attributed to the spatial representations of homelessness, and the socio-spatial stigmatisation of homelessness. These geographic themes emerged within the literature dealing with representations of homelessness. As Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield (2000a); Cloke, Widdowfield, and Milbourne (2000c) explains, the predominant representation is of homelessness in urban places, which provide powerful images of a serious social problem belonging in urban landscapes. Subsequently, homelessness in rural places is physically and socially invisible and becomes marginalised in policy discourses (Fitchen, 1992). Most generally, the representation of homelessness in urban public

spaces is often framed within the socio-spatial stigmatisation of homelessness. In other words, socio-spatial stigmatization of homelessness “offers cues to society’s members that there are groups and places to avoid” (Takahashi et al., 2002, p. 305). Subsequently, socio-spatial stigmatization provides the rationale for the discipline of those who deviate from expectations of appropriate bodies and behaviours in public spaces; such discipline targets the lives of homeless who live out their private lives in public spaces.

“Through derogatory representations, the homeless have been portrayed as the embodiment of the negative identity they have been ascribed (Parsell, 2011, p. 442)”.

The most common observation made by academics is that representations of homelessness play a powerful role in disseminating the narrative of the homeless as poor urban Others (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017). Those experiencing homelessness are portrayed as different from others, they are classified as not playing by the rules, and they are described as being external to mainstream experience (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The creation of the Other also depends on an understanding of society as a bounded space from which rise conceptions of difference as distance and social problems as impediments arise (Davidson, 2013). Therefore, rather than seeing social problems as endemic to the whole of society, the bounded space metaphor “encourages a view of the mainstream as unproblematic, discursively placing social problems outside society” (Davidson, 2013, p. 219 ;see also Levitas, 2005). Subsequently, becomes the justification and rationale for inequality.

This stigmatisation of homeless as Other is reinforced through the discourse of conservative narratives. As discussed by Farrugia and Gerrard (2016), the conservative problematisation of homelessness works to reinforce dominant power relations (Bacchi, 2009). This perspective focuses on free choice, where homelessness is viewed as an alternative lifestyle, or an outcome of individual vulnerability, that may be traced to such factors as compromised mental health (Bunds, Newman, & Giardina, 2015; Garcia, 2008; Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010; Zufferey, 2014). This free choice approach has meant that representations of those experiencing homelessness have focused on psychological, moral, intellectual, behavioural or cultural characteristics of the individuals in question. Subsequently, the homeless are understood to be damaged, possessing exclusively negative characteristics, deficits and weaknesses of will (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). As research has demonstrated, the negative representation of the homeless as deviant occurs through the use of stereotypical images concerning dishevelled appearances such as “bag ladies” or “dirty middle aged

men with long beards” who may also appear to be drunk, on drugs or mentally ill (Parseell, 2011; Schmidt & Robaina, 2017; Torck, 2001). This representation also draws on the attachment of deviant behaviours and attributes to homeless people in particular spaces (Bunds et al., 2015; Resende, 2016; Toft, 2014). For example, Toft (2014) found that, in general, people with few material resources are often portrayed within the media as wearing dirty clothes, searching in bins for food and defecating in public places. Some other examples include the listing of drug paraphernalia alongside images of outdoor spaces filled with “deviant substances inhabited by people doing deviant things” (Toft, 2014, p. 798).

These negative representations translate into hegemonic understandings of homelessness. This means that the prevalence and repetition of negative representations establishes a regime that strongly influences understandings around what homelessness should look like and to whom the label of homelessness is then ascribed (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017, p. 101). Indeed, the prevalence and repetition of these understandings is such that they have become naturalised and accepted by the public as “truths”. Furthermore, these taken-for-granted understandings of homelessness work to separate the homeless from the housed. This outcome occurs through the depiction of those experiencing homelessness as one dimensional bearers of social disadvantage whose problems can only be explained through a conservative lens. The relationship between “power, discourse and practice”(Arapoglou, 2004a, p. 102) is also a common theme in the literature that discusses the representation of homelessness. Understandings of this relationship are based on the premise that powerful actors have the ability to shape public discourse, with this “shaping” having an influence on practices in response to homelessness. Notably, one “measure of the successful universalization of a particular representation is the extent to which it figures as a background assumption in a wide variety of texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 46 as cited in Resende, 2009).

As a consequence of the universalisation of a representation, representations of homelessness can become so ingrained that they evolve into meta-stereotypes, where those experiencing homelessness become aware of these domiciled cognitive representations of themselves (Panadero, Guillen, & Vazquez, 2015). Scholars have debated this conservative narrative that dominates representations of homelessness, recognising that “there are a number of silences in how homelessness is constructed and often these silences relate to structural explanations of homelessness” (Neale, 1997

as cited in Zufferey, 2014, p. 528). Stonehouse, Threlkeld, and Farmer (2015) found that the silencing of alternative conceptualisations of homelessness is prevalent in neoliberal and conservative representations of homelessness where a lack of attention is given to historical and structural factors (see also Schneider, 2014). Consequently, popular representations of homelessness silence any critiques of policies related to homelessness and “eliminate interrogation of the structural factors that contribute to the fact of homelessness” (Middleton, 2014, p. 326). Specifically, Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) posit that contemporary treatments of poverty and social exclusion as a technical problem have meant that homelessness researchers often regard structural inequalities as “extraordinary malfunctions of an otherwise unremarkable and unproblematic social terrain” (p. 274).

### *2.3.6.1 Challenging Hegemonic Representations of Homelessness*

Although a majority of researchers have focused on the stigmatising representations of homelessness, academics have begun to respond to the argument that homelessness be considered as a social construct (Schmidt and Robaina, 2017). Such an approach takes into account various interdependencies between an individual’s personal situation of homelessness and their manifold of entanglements with urban power relations. “Acknowledging that homeless people are holders of knowledge allows a rethinking of homelessness beyond representing an example or removal, an objectified number in statistics, a homogenised category or a symbol of urban poverty” (Schmidt & Robaina, 2017, p. 99).

Understandings of homelessness as a social construct challenge dominant discourses, presenting what may be regarded as ambivalent representations of homelessness (Bogard, 1998; Hodgetts et al., 2011; Kaplan, 2008; Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010; Schneider, 2014). The existence of these ambivalent frames reflects the distinct way in which society both views and represents homeless people as good or bad, deserving or undeserving (Torck, 2001). Schneider’s (2014) research on the comparison between domiciled discussions and media representations of homelessness concluded that not only are the homeless both sympathised and stigmatised, but that a sympathetic representation of homelessness can also be stigmatising. Schneider (2014) reports that sympathetic news accounts focused on the desperate situations of particular individuals but also promoted a view that individual factors, such as “mental illness, addictions, or personal incompetence, push people into homelessness” (pp. 241-242). Schneider (2014) also posits that sympathy may reinforce negative perceptions of

homeless people and, by doing so, recreates social structures of inequality. On one hand, people feel sympathy for homeless people and describe themselves as shocked if homeless people are treated in ways that seem to marginalize them. On the other hand, they feel upset and annoyed when homeless people behave in ways of which they disapprove. These two positions express “the long-standing, widely circulating division between the deserving and undeserving poor” (Schneider, 2014, p. 243).

These competing conceptions of homeless people as deserving and undeserving overlies each other in complex ways. Krumer-Nevo and Benjamin (2010) discuss three narratives that counter the conservative understanding of homelessness and poverty. The first is the structure and context narrative, the most established of the three counter narratives. It argues that poverty is the result of a limited structure of opportunities which manifests through precarious employment, unhealthy and violent domiciles and environments, low quality schools and absence of political power. This focus on structure, policies and institutions makes alternative representations of people in poverty possible (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). Therefore, the power of this narrative lies in the recognition of the structural aspects of poverty and the discovery of the option that people in poverty do not differ in their values from those in the middle class (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The second narrative is the agency and resistance argument. This portrays people living in poverty as having the skills, power and will to be the agents of their own lives to resist poverty. However, these representations risk becoming unrealistic, an outcome stemming from the assumption that those who remain in poverty do not appropriately apply their skills. Therefore, the agency and resistance argument has a potential weakness in that it can be further employed in the “othering” of marginalised populations. The final narrative, of voice and action, is a mixture of the first two narratives, being premised on the idea that structural forces produce poverty but that those living in poverty are capable of active agency and forms of resistance. This narrative has three components: that the inclusion of people in poverty in the generation of knowledge about poverty may permeate public conservative discourse; the inclusion of a range of voices may work against the notion of people in poverty as being homogenous in their opinions and perspectives; and the shared generation of knowledge has much to as shared political action (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010).

### 2.3.7 Overview of the New Zealand literature on understandings of homelessness

In general, the New Zealand literature confirms the key discussions regarding conceptualisations of homelessness that are explored in the international literature. Such literature acknowledged homelessness as being complex and multidimensional (Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015), fluid (Spicer, 2017) and existing on a continuum of housing need (Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015; Peace & Kell, 2001; Thorns, 1989; Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998). Both early New Zealand literature and the contemporary New Zealand literature discussing Indigenous homelessness considered the concept of home as being an influence on the conceptualisation of homelessness, a focus evident through the development of such concepts as spiritual homelessness and metaphorical homelessness (Anderson & Collins, 2014; Kearns & Smith, 1994). In critique of the tendency for the utilisation of emergency-oriented responses to homelessness in New Zealand, Amore and Aspinall (2007) argued for the conceptualisation of homelessness within a public health framework. The public health model calls for collective action, understanding homelessness as 'touching a broad range of issues' that cross the domain of many sectors and areas of government (Amore & Aspinall, 2007). Within the public health framework, the response to homelessness focuses on three tiers of prevention: targeting structural causes; early intervention; and, providing emergency responses. Similarly, Pandit (2016) observed some of the current challenges of taking a social investment approach for social programmes in New Zealand. Within the social investment approach, which takes a cost versus benefit analysis approach, Pandit (2016) noted the challenges of a siloed public sector characterised by disconnected outcome frameworks and limited data analytic capability. What is absent from the New Zealand literature, and which features in the international literature on conceptualisations of homelessness, are discussions around the journey into homelessness as evident through the pathways approach, multiple exclusion homelessness and the homeless trajectory.

New Zealand academics emphasised the structural causes of homelessness through discussions about the housing market and the economy, while also noting that in New Zealand, public and government debates have focused on individualist explanations (Thorns, 1989) and that the general focus on rough sleeping ignores the larger population experiencing homelessness (Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015). Authors note how the response to homelessness in New Zealand, whilst generally providing only emergency relief, is characterised by an absence of policy or a strategic legislative approach (Amore & Aspinall, 2007). Subsequently, rather than understanding the

complexity of homelessness, responses to homelessness in New Zealand have been haphazard, disjointed and biased towards the provision of such survival-led responses such as the provision of food, temporary shelter and health care (Amore and Aspinall, 2007). Furthermore, research conducted by Leggatt-Cook and Chamberlain (2015) found that in New Zealand, homeless advocacy groups contend with competing discourses that construct homelessness as a housing issue or as an issue of social exclusion.

In terms of definitions of homelessness, academics acknowledge ongoing debate around how to define homelessness and the lack of consensus on a definition of homelessness in New Zealand (Anderson & Collins, 2014; Laurenson & Collins, 2007; Spicer, 2017; Thorns, 1989). Amore et al. (2013) posit that the inability to define homelessness reveals the lack of conceptual rigour on which definitions are based. Homelessness scholars specifically highlight that the New Zealand public, government officials and service providers continue to struggle to source an adequate definition for effective response to homelessness. This struggle is due, in part, to devising a definition that is fully adequate in capturing the complexity and variety of opinions around, homelessness (Spicer, 2017).

Most critically, the work of Amore et al. (2011) makes a significant contribution to considering a conceptually adequate definition of homelessness. In furthering their earlier work, Amore (2013) observed the pattern for definitions of homelessness within the academic literature that avoid developing a robust concept of homelessness. Amore (2013) noted how one consequence of this avoidance had been the development of definitions that reflect popular perceptions or simply default to what can be measured. Amore (2013) argued that it is the requirement of a conceptual definition to be strict and explicitly conceptual. This is because “the definition of a definition is stating exactly what a thing is or what a word means” (Amore, 2013, p. 223). Therefore, at the risk of accepting “any old view that tickles our fancy” (Philips, 1990, p. 43 as cited in Amore, 2013), Amore (2013) argues that it is the responsibility of academia to develop a rigorous and sound conceptualisation of homelessness.

Subsequently, one avenue of research pursued by academics in New Zealand has been critique of the ETHOS definition of homelessness. Amore et al. (2011) argue that the ETHOS typology is one of the few definitions of homelessness based on “an articulated theoretical foundation” (p. 19). Given this robustness, the authors employed ETHOS in

the development of a conceptually grounded definition of homelessness, “severe housing deprivation” (Amore et al., 2011, p. 19). In seeking to adopt aspects of ETHOS, Amore et al. (2011) identified two shortcomings in the ETHOS definition. Firstly, it lacks a clear rationale for the threshold between those who are homeless and those who experience housing exclusion. Secondly, it fails to account for why people are living in a situation that is inadequate for permanent habitation (Amore et al., 2011, p. 25). Whilst it is not the focus of this literature review to consider the conceptual validity of the definition and typology of homelessness, this review acknowledges the importance of practitioners having access to a theoretical foundation and conceptually grounded definition of homelessness.

Within the literature, three New Zealand developed definitions of homelessness are documented. These three definitions include a definition developed in the 1983 review conducted by Housing New Zealand, the definition developed in 2009 and published by Statistics New Zealand, and the 2013 definition of severe housing deprivation. Beyond these definitions, a two-tiered definition of homelessness, literal and incipient homelessness, featured within earlier New Zealand academic literature (Kearns & Smith, 1994; Kearns et al., 1991; Kearns, Smith, & Abbott, 1992). The incipient homeless are individuals who are living across a range of situations such as temporarily living in others homes, in accommodation they cannot afford, in dwellings from which they are in danger of being evicted, and in places that are not adequate dwellings (Kearns et al., 1991). These inadequate dwellings include cars, garages, sheds and caravans. In 1991, this group of incipient homeless were framed as being “housed but without a suitable home” (Kearns, 1991, p. 369). By the early 2000’s, authors identified that the term homelessness was used by government, researchers and service providers to refer to rough sleeping, street dwelling *and* invisible or incipient homelessness (Laurenson & Collins, 2007). However, no scholars commented on the government’s use of either the term or definition of homelessness following the changed nature of homelessness that preceded the decade long housing crisis.

Concerning the role of a definition of homelessness, it is noted in the New Zealand literature that the development of a definition does not provide the basis for policy formation or action. This is because the operationalisation of a definition requires the development of criteria for “minimum standards” of what is deemed to be adequate housing. The development of such criteria is a subjective decision rather than an objective assessment (Thorns, 1989). Furthermore, even with the existence of these

criteria, the matter of who is responsible for developing a code of practice generates questions as to whether or not housing need and homelessness is an issue that should be legislated (Thorns, 1989). In their analysis of definitions and classifications of homelessness, Amore et al. (2011) posit that the usefulness of a definition lies in its ability to accurately identify and classify the homeless population in such a way that it may be used for the development of policy that can respond to different manifestations of homelessness. Whilst the 2009 definition attempts to capture some of the complexity of homelessness, Spicer (2017) argues that a definition of homelessness needs to be complemented by lived understandings.

In terms of representations of homelessness, the New Zealand scholars touch on some of the core discussions presented within the international literature. Namely, it is acknowledged that the representations of homelessness in the media are used by domiciled individuals to understand a complex problem with the visibly homeless having become the defining representation of homelessness in New Zealand (Hodgetts et al., 2011). The prominent usage of visible homelessness within the media and discussions around homelessness has helped create conditions in which those experiencing homelessness are Othered as deviant, immoral, criminal, dirty, diseased and irresponsible (Hodgetts et al., 2011; Laurenson & Collins, 2007; McGovern, 2012; Witten, Kearns, & Carroll, 2015). In concert with international literature, New Zealand authors also provided nuanced understandings that challenged the hegemonic representation of homelessness. For example, through their research on social distancing, Hodgetts et al. (2011) found that both media coverage and public opinion “promoted both proximity and dispersion” (p. 1742). Through their influence on understandings of homelessness, domiciled individual’s views of the homeless showed both sympathetic and stigmatising depictions of people experiencing homelessness. The sympathetic view understood homelessness to be both people who are “just like us but as having suffered misfortune”, whilst stigmatizing depictions construct the homeless as “unlike us” (Hodgetts et al., p. 1742). Thus, in cases where hardship is acknowledged, a sympathetic view of homelessness results, and when difference becomes the centre of discussion, stigmatising representations of homelessness occur (Hodgetts et al., 2011). The academic literature contains much discussion of the negative representation of homelessness within New Zealand; only two of the articles contained sympathetic accounts that depicted the homeless as vulnerable, mentally ill, unfortunate and subject to structural injustice (see Hodgetts et al., 2011; Laurenson & Collins, 2007). Analysis indicates that the New Zealand literature fails to discuss the

role of representations within the dynamic of “power, discourse and practice”. As such, there is a lack of acknowledgement that homelessness is partially a discursive problem and that there is a relationship between representations of homelessness and policy.

#### **2.4 Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed debates in the academic literature about definitions, conceptualisations and representations of homelessness and the role that they have on the understanding of homelessness as a social issue. This literature review found that conceptualisations of homelessness equate to the ways in which the nature of and causes of homelessness are understood. Two theoretical approaches featured dominantly within the literature on the causation of homelessness. The social constructionist approach provided for furthering understandings of how homelessness is perceived by key social actors and the impacts these perceptions have on policy response. The critical realist approach conceptualised how to take account of the full range of potential causal factors of homelessness. Moving beyond the polarised idea that homelessness is caused by either structural or individual circumstances, literature confirms that academics have reached agreement on the new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness. However, for some scholars, the pathways conceptualisation of homelessness offers a more complex account of the causation of homelessness that reaches beyond the structure and agency approach to homelessness.

The academic literature contains observations that definitions of homelessness are conceptual and practical tools used to frame the homeless population and their access to services. Literature on definitions of homelessness includes identification that definitions often comprise lists of living situations and fail to draw on clear theoretical rationales around what these living situations have in common that determines their categorisation as homelessness. Regardless of the theoretical approach taken, social constructionist or critical realist, authors highlight the need for definitions to be situated within the context and time within which they were developed. This is because homelessness is defined against societal standards of what constitutes adequate housing.

The literature concludes that representations of homelessness influence the ways society comprehends and reacts to homelessness. Representations of homelessness were identified as the way in which homelessness is described and shown within any

form of communication. Visible homelessness was identified as the dominant representation of what characterises homelessness, and the general pattern of derogatory representations of those experiencing homelessness is recognised within media. Consequently, the prevalence of representations of homelessness through a conservative narrative sometimes results in the silencing of the complex and structural nature of homelessness.

Analysis of the three literature areas confirmed that service provision and policies in response to homelessness are inevitably embedded with understandings of homelessness. Whilst the New Zealand literature emphasises the structural and new orthodoxy conceptualisations of homelessness, there is also recognition that public and government debates have focused and relied on the individualist conceptualisation of homelessness. Additionally, government, service providers and the public have been unable to garner consensus on an appropriate definition of homelessness, despite three published definitions. The limited ability of academic definitions and conceptualisations of homelessness in influencing the government's understanding and governance of the homeless population in New Zealand may, in part, result from the way in which homelessness is represented and subsequently understood. Thus, there is scope to investigate the representation and problematisation of homelessness by the New Zealand government and the role this representation plays in the dynamic of power, discourse and practice; in effect, how understandings of homelessness are translated into the governance of the homeless population.

Whilst New Zealand academics comment on aspects of the way in which homelessness is understood within a governance context, no in-depth review of this currently exists. Chapter Three reviews the way in which homelessness is understood, defined and framed within other Western countries policies and plans. It also reviews the way in which homelessness is understood, defined, considered and responded to by the New Zealand government, as is evident within grey literature and political discussions.

# Chapter Three: A Systematic Review of Grey Literature - The Understandings and Governance of Homelessness in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States of America

## 3.1 Introduction

Policy has for too long, marked a distinct break between theoretical insight and political action. And yet if we are to reorganise the spaces of care for homeless individuals, we must interrogate how the policy practices of government discursively manage homeless subjects. . . . [U]nless we begin to deconstruct the discursive foundations of homelessness policy we will not be able to provide an equitable system of services (Del Casino Jr & Jocoy, 2008, p. 195).

As expressed by Del Casino Jr and Jocoy (2008), the way in which policies frame homelessness has a direct influence on systems and deliveries of relevant services. Furthermore, evidence shows that the construction of homelessness within policy is most effective if it aligns with theoretical insight and political action. Counter to these beliefs, New Zealand is marked by the absence of a central government policy regarding responses to homelessness (Human Rights Commission, 2010). One consequence of this absence is that responsibility for responding to homelessness is unclear. Furthermore, despite informal bureaucratic acceptance of two published definitions of homelessness, understandings of homelessness remain open for debate and interpretation among government officials and politicians. Opportunities for ongoing debate contrast with norms in societies such as Australia, Canada and the USA, where policy frameworks guide the parameters of understanding, the formal meaning of homelessness within government, and how government funded services respond to homelessness.

The systematic review detailed in this chapter explores considerations of homelessness within grey literature and political discussion within New Zealand, and within national policy strategies in Australia, Canada and the USA. The way in which homelessness is understood within each country is discussed in relation to the governance of, and the response to homelessness. This chapter addresses the research question: how is homelessness considered and understood and responded to by governments overseas and in New Zealand? In New Zealand, the published definitions

of homelessness, despite their academic rigour, are not necessarily accepted or utilised consistently within government agencies and by politicians. The significance of the definition of homelessness is explored below.

### 3.1.1 Why definitions are important conceptually

The key role of a definition is to enable the examination of social objects in a conscious and systematic way, rather than defaulting to everyday or common-sense ideas about an issue (Amore, 2019; Danermark, 2002). Thus in relation to definitions, Roche et al. (2018) explain that homelessness is a concept used to categorise society's disadvantaged by defining their living scenarios as homeless according to socially and culturally constructed ideas of materially inadequacy. In other words, a definition of homelessness is important conceptually as it acts as a framing device that shapes knowledge of a problem or population, and in so doing, influences responses to the problem or population.

As identified in Chapter Two, through their published work, academics assert that the absence of a standard definition of homelessness is an outcome of the heterogeneity of the homeless population and the different politically constructed ideas about the nature of the problem (Cloke et al., 2001; Reid, Speed, Miller, Cooke, & Crofts, 1998). One of the core disagreements among academics about defining homelessness is where to draw the distinction between homelessness and housing need (Cloke et al., 2001). This tension stems from the existence of different ideas or norms regarding minimum housing standards. This variation makes it difficult to reach widespread agreement as to “which housing situations should be included in the definition of homelessness” (Springer, 2000, p. 447). These considerations highlight the socially constructed nature of homelessness, a condition evident in the way in which definitions of homelessness vary from place to place and change over time. Whether a relativist perspective or critical realist perspective is taken, conceptualisations confirm that definitions of homelessness have been, and continue to be, socially constructed, meaning they are subject to such influences as public opinion, media representations, and political agendas. The roles of such influencing factors has led some academics to conclude that, in the absence of an adequate theoretical perspective, “the apparent endless number of practical definitions is evidence that the concept of homelessness is meaningless” (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992, p. 293; see also Watson, 1986).

### **3.1.2 Why definitions of homelessness matter**

Definitions of homelessness are important because they articulate who is considered as being homeless and who is not considered homeless. Thus, definitions of homelessness frame the issue and classify the population to be served within homelessness policy initiatives and services (Arapoglou, 2004b; O'Donnell, 2018). It is only through fulfilling federal, state or local eligibility requirements, and thereby taking on the label of homeless, that individuals can access the publicly funded services that provide psychosocial, material and financial support to the homeless population (Springer, 2000).

Definitions of homelessness upon which agencies develop policies, or local governments enforce regulations matter because they have a central role in the translation of ideology from the discursive into reality (Dooling, 2009). Therefore, the literature presents arguments that bureaucracies of public and non-profit agencies use the label of 'homeless' to construct a definition of need and to implement the strategies in accordance with their definition of need (Young, 1990). Thus, in defining homelessness, welfare and social service agencies not only characterize the populations to be served, but also dictate the interventions that should occur (Takahashi et al., 2002). A valid definition is needed for statistics to be produced and for welfare and housing policy to be well-informed and be reflective of real need. The statistics associated with definitions include those about both policy implementation and policy effectiveness. Relevant statistics also provide agencies with base-line data than can be employed when seeking to understand the causes and consequences of homelessness.

## **3.2 Methods**

### **3.2.1 Systematic review (purpose and procedure)**

Systematic reviews have been defined as “a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyses data from the studies that are included in the review”(Cochrane Library, 2020). Typically, systematic reviews have been utilised within medical fields of research in order to identify, evaluate and integrate the findings of individual studies that address a research question.

This systematic review does not collate and analyse data from studies that align with the questions that underpin this research. As noted previously such alignment is not

possible because researchers have not previously investigated the definition and understanding of homelessness by New Zealand government agencies. The absence of existing analyses directs this research to a focus on primary sources, material generated by private and public sector actors and agencies that are directly involved with homelessness in New Zealand. Whilst some studies have provided critical commentary around definitions of homelessness by governments outside New Zealand, this systematic review of grey literature is applied to the most recent policies and national plans that the governments in Australia, Canada and the USA are using to guide national level responses to homelessness.

### 3.2.2 Eligibility criteria

The selection of search results to be considered for the qualitative analysis were derived using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Given differences between the systematic search for New Zealand materials and overseas examples, two different sets of inclusion and exclusion criteria have been utilised. For the New Zealand systematic search, a search result is included if it met at least one of the following criteria:

- provided a definition of homelessness;
- made reference to a definition of homelessness (either through data or explicitly);
- made reference to a living situation(s) in reference to homelessness;
- described the characteristics of particular populations within the context of homelessness; and
- included a general discussion about the definition of homelessness in New Zealand.

A search result was excluded if it:

- employed the word homeless not relevant to any of the above criteria;
- fell outside of the specified date range;
- was not a text document; and
- was not relevant to the New Zealand context.

For the international systematic search, a result was included if it was relevant to the most recent national policy identified for the country AND if it met at least one of the following criteria:

- provided critical commentary on the most recent national policy in comparison to previous ones;
- provided the definition of homelessness relevant to the national policy;
- discussed the role of the definition of homelessness;
- provided descriptions of homelessness;
- described causes of homelessness;
- identified particular subgroups of the homeless population;
- discussed or provided an overview of the government's response/ governance of homelessness;

- discussed processes of data collection of those interacting with services funded under the government policy; and
- described who was responsible for responding to homelessness and providing services.

A search result was excluded if it:

- contained information previously collected;
- did not provide any discussion around the response or understanding of homelessness; and
- was not a text document.

### 3.2.3 Information sources identification and search

#### 3.2.3.1 *New Zealand*

For the New Zealand search, the information sources included documents produced by relevant government Ministries and organisations. Ministries and organisations were deemed relevant if they were responsible for social services, such as health, welfare, housing and justice, or if they were involved with government discussions in regards to homelessness. Different keyword searches were utilised within each information source in order to return relevant results as determined by prior knowledge and understanding of the role of each organisation, department and Ministry (see Table 3.1).

The initial rationale for examining understandings of homelessness by New Zealand government agencies stemmed from the observation of the inconsistent use of and regard for the published definition of homelessness. This definition, first published by Statistics New Zealand, provided the initial guide for the systematic literature search of New Zealand grey literature. The search began with Statistics New Zealand, an approach that was employed to understand the development of the definition of homelessness and to identify if other government agencies were involved in the development of the definition. Statistics New Zealand information showed that the Ministry of Social Development and the Housing New Zealand Corporation were members of the working group that developed the definition of homelessness. These two agencies were added to my list of relevant information sources. In addition, a search of the New Zealand Parliament website revealed discussions about homelessness by elected representatives, and a search of the Beehive website exposed understandings of homelessness within government press releases<sup>4</sup>. Analysis of these

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<sup>4</sup> The Beehive website is the official website of the New Zealand Government. It provides the latest media releases and speeches, responsibilities and initiatives, and information about major government initiatives and policies from Government Ministers (New Zealand Government, 2020). The New

websites indicated relevant information was available from the Ministry of Business of Innovation and Employment (MBIE), New Zealand Treasury, the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and Te Puni Kōkiri.

For the government agencies, departments or Ministries identified as potentially providing relevant sources, an initial search made it clear that the search terms of *homeless* or *homelessness* would not always generate appropriate information. This limitation occurs because homelessness is not employed by all government departments to describe individuals and families who do not have access to housing. As such, an effective search required the use of alternate search terms that were part of the wider landscape of housing provision in New Zealand (see “Keywords utilised for the systematic search” in Table 3.1). Such search terms were informed by a review of Hansard, the official transcripts of members’ speeches in the New Zealand House of Representatives, and the webpages of those government agencies, departments or Ministries involved in housing provision. Table 3.1 identifies the search terms identified from this review of Hansard and Ministerial webpages.

Within each website, where possible, the search parameters were limited to a date range extending from 1 January 2008 to 30 June 2018. This timeframe was chosen to encompass debates relating to the working group definition of homelessness, which was published in 2009. The 2008 start date was employed so as to capture initial discussions around the development of a definition of homelessness in New Zealand. The end date was chosen because between 2014 and 2018, homelessness became an increasingly significant topic of discussion within Government and the media. Moreover, New Zealand had a change of government from a National-led to a Labour-led Government in October 2017. In light of the different views these governments had on homelessness and social justice issues, the decision was made to capture these discussions as they took place within the early stages of the new government.

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Zealand Parliament website provides all official documents and records regarding all legislation and law which passes through parliament. Whilst the Beehive website offers the perspectives on matters of the Government’s administering of policies, law and legislation, the New Zealand Parliament website provides background discussions regarding the making of these policies, laws and legislation (New Zealand Parliament, 2016).

Table 3.1 Keywords and search terms used for the New Zealand search

Department, Ministry or Organisation	Keywords utilised for the systematic search	Justification of keywords	Number of documents/search results included (I) and excluded (E) from study.
Beehive <a href="https://www.beehive.govt.nz/">https://www.beehive.govt.nz/</a>	- Homeless		I: 27 E: 63
Department of Corrections <a href="https://www.corrections.govt.nz/">https://www.corrections.govt.nz/</a>	- Homeless		I: 5 E: 18
Housing New Zealand Corporation <a href="https://www.hnzc.co.nz/">https://www.hnzc.co.nz/</a>	- Social Housing - Social Housing Allocation - Social Housing Register - Overcrowding	Returned no searches when using the keyword homeless. The keywords used for the search were derived from HNZC role in providing social housing and recent discussions about the suitability of house sizes for clients.	I: 31 E: 357
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment <a href="https://www.mbie.govt.nz/">https://www.mbie.govt.nz/</a>	- Housing Need - Social Housing - Social Allocation System	Returned no search results when using the keyword homeless. The keywords used for the search were derived from government provision of social housing.	I: 9 E: 76
Ministry of Justice <a href="https://www.justice.govt.nz/">https://www.justice.govt.nz/</a>	- Homeless		I: 5 E: 62
Ministry of Health <a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/">https://www.health.govt.nz/</a>	- Homeless		I: 0 E: 15
Ministry of Social Development <a href="https://www.msd.govt.nz/">https://www.msd.govt.nz/</a>	- Homeless - Homeless definition - Social housing register + homeless - Social allocation system + homeless - Social allocation system + housing	Additional keywords and phrases were used due to the role of MSD in determining eligibility for social housing through the social allocation system.	I: 32 E: 124 <i>*47 missing results on the website due to glitch</i>
New Zealand Parliament <a href="https://www.parliament.nz/en/">https://www.parliament.nz/en/</a>	- <i>Homeless</i> AND (definition or defined or define or defining) OR (measure or measured or measuring or data or enumerate or enumeration or enumerating)	Due to the large volume of results returned, the filtering words of definition (+synonyms) or measurement (+synonyms) were used to narrow the search within results for homeless due to the large volume of results returned.	I: 122 E: 420 <i>*147 missing records &amp; 14 duplicates</i>
Statistics New Zealand <a href="https://www.stats.govt.nz/">https://www.stats.govt.nz/</a>	- Homelessness - Homeless definition - Measuring homelessness - Enumerating homelessness - Defining homelessness	Specified phrases such as defining homelessness and measuring homelessness (+synonyms) were used to create searches specified to search criteria.	I: 9 E: 52 <i>*285 missing records &amp; 15 duplicates</i>

<p>Te Puni Kōkiri  <a href="https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en">https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeless</li> <li>- Overcrowding</li> <li>- Sleeping Rough</li> </ul>	<p>Additional keywords of overcrowding and sleeping rough were used in order to cover topics technically deemed as homeless that are usually reported for Māori populations in New Zealand (but not necessarily worded as being homeless).</p>	<p>I: 16  E: 63</p>
<p>Treasury  <a href="https://treasury.govt.nz/">https://treasury.govt.nz/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homelessness</li> </ul>		<p>I: 4  E: 27  *70 duplicates</p>

### 3.2.3.2 Overseas Examples- Australia, Canada and the USA

The review of academic literature identified a number of countries as having strategies or policy frameworks for homelessness of relevance to this research. Of these, Australia, Canada and the USA were selected. Limiting the focus to these three countries was a pragmatic decision made to manage the amount of information to be processed. Australia and Canada were selected because academics have compared the policies of these countries with those of New Zealand especially in terms of experiences of homelessness for Indigenous populations (Anderson & Collins, 2014; Spicer, 2017). The USA was included both for its prominence in terms of academic publications in the field of homelessness, for the implementation of a legislative definition of homelessness, and as the originating site of a HF approach. The most recent government policy framework or strategy for homelessness for each of these countries was identified. A review of the policy framework or strategy of homelessness facilitated identification of relevant government Ministries, organisations or departments as potential sources of information regarding considerations, understandings and responses to homelessness (see Table 3.2 below).

The search for information within the international examples was less structured and less exhaustive than that employed for New Zealand literature. This alternate search strategy was employed because the countries chosen have policy frameworks or government strategies for responding to homelessness. Thus, the way in which each government considered homelessness could be understood without employing a systematic search of the grey literature. Furthermore, the way in which homelessness is considered and understood by each government is evident in the policy response or strategy (see Table 3.3). No timeframe was employed for the international literature search results; rather, the search employed the most recent policy developments available from each country at the time of the review (see Table 3.4). The search of relevant international websites concluded when analysis reached saturation, with no new information being evident.

Table 3.2 Relevant policies or strategies and sources of information for the international search

Country	Policy/ Strategy	Relevant Websites	Relevance
<b>Australia</b>	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) and 'The Road Home' White Paper on homelessness.	Australian Bureau of Statistics: <a href="https://www.abs.gov.au/">https://www.abs.gov.au/</a>	Developed statistical definition of homelessness, which is used in enumeration of homelessness in Australia. Data is used to track policy progress in Australia.
		Coalition of Australian Governments: <a href="https://www.coag.gov.au/">https://www.coag.gov.au/</a>	COAG head the response to homelessness in Australia. Various COAG agreements detail roles and responsibilities of each partner in delivering housing, homelessness and social inclusion programmes and interventions.
		Australian Institute of Health and Welfare : <a href="https://www.aihw.gov.au/">https://www.aihw.gov.au/</a>	Australia's leading health and welfare statistics agency. Statistics used to improve policies and services on health and welfare issues and topics, one of which is identified as homelessness.
<b>Canada</b>	Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and Reaching Home documents	Employment and Social Development Canada : <a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html</a>	Government Department leading and funding the HPS.
		*The Homeless Hub/ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness: <a href="https://www.homelesshub.ca/">https://www.homelesshub.ca/</a>	Homelessness-dedicated research institute characterised by a partnership between academics, policy and decision makers, service providers and people with lived experiences of homelessness.
<b>United States of America</b>	Homelessness Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act) and the 'Home,Together' federal government plan.	Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): <a href="https://www.hud.gov/">https://www.hud.gov/</a>	Member of the USICH (below) and responsible for the initial government response to homelessness, the 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act which included the creation of the USICH.
		United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH): <a href="https://www.usich.gov/">https://www.usich.gov/</a>	Independent federal agency that leads the implementation of the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness.

Table 3.3 Key search terms used for the international information sources

Website/ Information Source	Search Term
<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au/">https://www.abs.gov.au/</a>	definition of homelessness
<a href="https://www.coag.gov.au/">https://www.coag.gov.au/</a>	NPAH
<a href="https://www.aihw.gov.au/">https://www.aihw.gov.au/</a>	SHSC
<a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development.html</a>	homelessness partnering strategy 'Reaching Home'
<a href="https://www.homelesshub.ca/">https://www.homelesshub.ca/</a>	definition of homelessness
<a href="https://www.hud.gov/">https://www.hud.gov/</a>	HEARTH Act
<a href="https://www.usich.gov/">https://www.usich.gov/</a>	Home, Together

### 3.2.4 Data extraction process

Previewing is a key step when conducting an academic literature search. In general, academic previewing is based on reading abstracts to ascertain if an item has relevant content. Given the majority of results returned in the grey literature search were either web pages, news items, reports or publications, the presence of abstracts for preview was limited. Rather than rely on abstracts, an adaption of the keyword in context (KWIC) technique was employed to determine the relevance of each search result. The KWIC method was applied manually by using the search (Ctrl+F) function to identify the relevant keywords in the text. By reading a few sentences before and after the highlighted keyword, and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, I was able to establish whether the search result returned was relevant (Seale & Plack, 2010). For those records that were identified as relevant, the reference information was entered into an 'inclusions list' and the source material was saved within a folder for each government website. Additionally, the URLs of the records that were identified as irrelevant were entered into an 'exclusions list' for the relevant government website. For the results returned that were relevant for the research, an information document was created per government website which quoted all of the relevant discussions about homelessness under their corresponding URL and reference information.

### 3.2.5 Data items

For the New Zealand portion of the systematic literature search, the following data items were considered.

- **Definition of or reference to homelessness:** provides own definition of homelessness, or refers to a pre-existing definition of homelessness, or refers to

particular living situations in reference to homelessness, or describes characteristics of the homeless population.

- **Context:** the context within which homelessness is being discussed or mentioned.
- **Year and frequency of relevant mentions:** the years across which homelessness is being discussed, the focus of homelessness within a particular year and how many times it is discussed.
- **Relevant policy, programmes or initiatives:** the policy, programmes or initiatives in relation to which homelessness is discussed.

For the overseas portion of the systematic literature search, given the existence of government policy frameworks and national plans and responses, the following data items were considered.

- **Policy framework or national plan for homelessness** including information on who is responsible for carrying out the response to homelessness.
- **How homelessness is considered** in terms of the construction of homelessness as an issue or the way in which homelessness is framed within concerns around housing and welfare.
- **How homelessness is defined** within the policy or strategy, or discussions about limitations to the definition adopted or definitions developed or adopted for specific homeless groups.
- **The response to different kinds of homelessness** and discussions regarding limitations to the responses to different types of homelessness or the intended nature of reactions to homelessness.

### 3.2.6 Planned methods of analysis

Once relevant data was identified and collected from websites, content analysis was utilised as the method for data analysis. Content analysis is a method for studying textual data through the analysis of texts in terms of “the presence and frequency of specific terms, narratives or concepts” (Tonkiss, 2004, p. 367). Krippendorff (as cited in Bengtsson, 2016, p. 9) notes that content analysis is a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts, to the contexts of their use.” Within this research, specific procedures were used to make valid inferences from government texts about the ways to which homelessness is defined, understood and responded. As Weber (1990) explains, there is no single correct way of doing content analysis as researchers must judge what methods and approaches are appropriate for the specific

purposes of their investigation. One of the advantages of utilising content analysis is that, unlike such research techniques as interviews, data collection and analysis is not influenced by the researcher or the research subject (Weber, 1990). Rather, analysis occurs on pre-existing communication, which in the case of this research includes government policy documents, reports, information releases and transcripts of parliamentary debates. Another advantage to the content analysis utilised within this research is the application of both quantitative and qualitative operations on texts (Weber, 1990).

Due to investigative differences between the international search and the New Zealand based search, this research is both descriptive and exploratory. Thus, for the international search, where the governments concerned have specified their definition, understanding and response to homelessness within policy or legislation, the purpose of the research is descriptive (Bengtsson, 2016). Subsequently, a deductive approach to analysis is utilised where predetermined subjects were considered for analysis and qualitative content analytical techniques were utilised. Qualitative content analysis techniques present relevant data in the form of words or themes (Bengtsson, 2016). However, because the New Zealand texts were being read in a context characterised by lack of policy, the New Zealand research and analysis is predominantly exploratory in nature (Bengtsson, 2016). As a result, an inductive approach to analysis is utilised, with conclusions being developed from the text by incorporating new information through the lens of relevant concepts. Quantitative content analysis is employed through the presentation of frequency counts (Bengtsson, 2016).

The four stages of data analysis as outlined by Bengtsson (2016) were utilised as the general approach to content analysis. The first stage, decontextualisation, involved familiarisation with the data. This was achieved through reading through relevant texts discovered through the systematic search. Because the selection of texts for the international searches was predetermined according to their relevance as direct policy documents, decontextualisation was more relevant for the New Zealand texts where homelessness was discussed within a range of different contexts. Thus, for international texts, based on a deductive approach, coding lists were developed prior to analysis. The criteria on which lists were based is outlined in section 3.2.5. For New Zealand texts, a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning meant that in some instances, relevant codes were identified prior to analysis. For example, the two

published definitions of homelessness and the living situations used to describe homelessness according to *the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness* (Statistics New Zealand, 2009; 2014) were identified as relevant items prior to analysis. In other cases, codes were developed throughout the analysis process. For example, the way in which those experiencing homelessness are described, government responses to homelessness, and the framing or problematization of homelessness.

The second stage, recontextualisation, considered whether all aspects of the texts relevant to the research aims had been coded and whether unmarked text should be included. This was conducted through keyword searches within documents and took into consideration the relevance and depth of discussion for content around the keyword. The third stage, categorisation, involved extracting meaning from the data through coding text according to the aims of the study. For the international texts, the 'retrieval from coded text' technique was employed. According to this approach, the investigator searches through text to retrieve relevant portions that meet the requirements of eligibility criteria (see 3.2.2) and data items (see 3.2.5). In employing this approach, applicable text was found by retrieving sentences with the occurrence of a relevant word or category. For the New Zealand texts, a mixture of 'retrieval from coded text', and modified versions of 'word frequency lists' and 'KWIC' methods were employed. In relation to New Zealand literature, retrieval from coded text was utilised to find where published definitions of homelessness had been used or acknowledged. A modified form of KWIC lists were manually developed in order to consider the New Zealand Governments understanding around the relevance, and associated use, of the published definitions of homelessness. A modified form of word frequency lists collated totals of the living situations used to describe homelessness as categorised within the New Zealand definition of homelessness. These were also considered through the KWIC method in order to explicate the dominant understanding of homelessness in terms of living situations. Retrieval from coded text was used to find the ways in which the government described those experiencing homelessness and to consider what the government considered as its response to homelessness. Finally, compilation of the analysis involved evaluating how the findings corresponded to the literature on definitions, conceptualisations and representations of homelessness as outlined in the literature review chapter.

### 3.2.7 Study selection

Table 3.4 International search results and inclusions

	Website/ Information Source	Search Term	Number of Inclusions
Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics	definition of homeless	n=30
	Coalition of Australian Governments	NPAH	n=6
	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	SHSC	n=5
Canada	Employment and Social Development Canada	Homelessness Partnering Strategy	n=14
		Reaching Home	n=4
	The Homeless Hub/The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness	definition of homeless	n=7
United States of America	Department of Housing and Urban Development	HEARTH	n=8
	The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness	Home Together	n=3

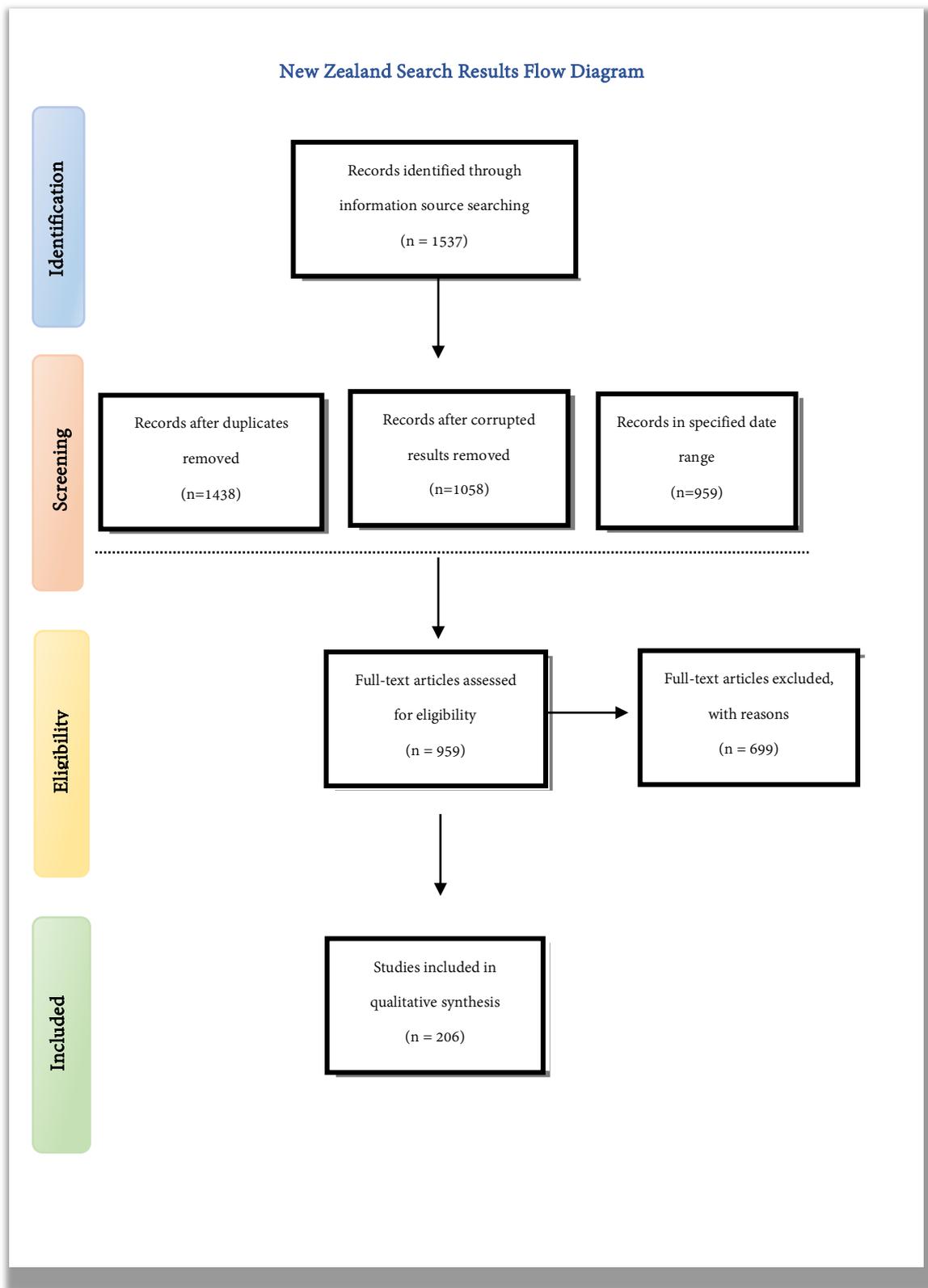


Figure 3.1 New Zealand Search Results Flow Diagram

### 3.2.8 Synthesis of results

#### 3.2.8.1 *Definitions of homelessness - New Zealand*

In New Zealand, there are two published definitions of homelessness. The first definition as published on the Statistics New Zealand website, was created by a working group comprising staff from the Ministry for Social Development, Housing New Zealand and Statistics New Zealand. The earliest discussions about the need for a definition of homelessness may be traced to 2008 and 2009, when the former Minister of Housing argued that an agreed definition was required “to help get an accurate picture of housing needs, we need to know how many homeless people there are in New Zealand, over time”(Street, 2008). These early discussions also identified that a definition was needed if gaps in official statistics were to be addressed. The resolution of such statistical omissions would help government and community groups “make well-informed decisions on the level and nature of homelessness in New Zealand” (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, p. 4). The Statistics New Zealand published definition of homelessness defines homelessness as “[l]iving situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing” (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, pp. 6-7). In 2014, Statistics New Zealand published an update to the definition, however, the definition itself was not changed. Rather, the report noted that the wording had been simplified (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). This report also noted that the definition is intended to be used by the Official Statistics System’s partners, the entity of which developed and enumerated severe housing deprivation in New Zealand (see below).

A more recent published definition of homelessness in New Zealand was developed and operationalised by Amore et al. (2013). Amore et al (2013) did not use the term ‘homeless’ because they felt that the term was burdened with stereotypes that evoke images of street homelessness; for Amore et al. (2013), the notion of homeless incorporated more than simply living on a street (Amore et al., 2013). Thus, rather than employing the term homeless in their definition, Amore et al. (2013) employed the phrase “severe housing deprivation”. Amore et al. (2013) introduced their definition as a response to the conceptual gaps of both New Zealand and international definitions of homelessness. Severe housing deprivation:

refers to people living in severely inadequate housing due to a ‘lack of access to minimally adequate housing’ (LAMAHA). This means not being able to access a dwelling to rent, let alone buy. Minimally adequate housing is that which

provides the basics in at least two of the core dimensions of housing adequacy – habitability, privacy and control, and security of tenure (Amore et al., 2013, p. 7).

Additionally, the definition of severe housing deprivation has been applied by Amore et al. (2013) to census and administrative data, creating the first numerical estimation of homelessness or severe housing deprivation within New Zealand. The definition of severe housing deprivation is recognised within New Zealand as bureaucrats and politicians have cited the statistics on severe housing deprivation when discussing the number of homelessness in New Zealand (for example see: Robertson, 2017; Shaw, 2016; Wall, 2016; Wood, 2018). The definition of severe housing deprivation provided by Amore et al. (2013) and its subsequent use in formal enumeration, suggests that this definition bridges the gap between academic expectations and policy practice. Both of the New Zealand published definitions of homelessness cover the spectrum of living situations considered as defining homelessness as presented within the academic literature.

These published definitions of homelessness are only referred to briefly on the government websites. As summarised in Table 3.5, the Statistics New Zealand (2009) definition of homelessness is mentioned in only eight documents published on government websites. Five out of the eight documents are from Statistics New Zealand, with two of the documents being from the development of the definition itself, and the other three being Statistics New Zealand documents discussing the potential of measuring homelessness within statistical collections. Reference to the New Zealand definition of homelessness appears once on the Beehive website; in the context of the pathways out of homelessness programme, prior to the development of the definition. The Department of Corrections documents and website include one mention of the New Zealand definition of homelessness. Appearing in 2013, this reference occurs in relation to efforts to define the living situations that are considered as homeless in the context of a collaborative approach to homelessness in Auckland. This collaboration, as led by Corrections and the Auckland City Mission included Police, Work and Income New Zealand, Housing New Zealand, Serco<sup>5</sup>, Te Puni Kōkiri, Mental Health Services and Community Drug and Alcohol Services. The same definition is included in a 2010 report from the Human Rights Commission that is available through the Ministry of Justice. No discussion or reference to the New Zealand definition of

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<sup>5</sup> Serco is the sub-contractor responsible for prison operations at Auckland South Corrections Facility (Department of Corrections, 2020).

homelessness evident in available resources of the Ministry of Health, the New Zealand Treasury, the Housing New Zealand Corporation, the Ministry of Social Development, Serco, Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment .

Similar to the Statistics New Zealand (2009) definition of homelessness, the definition of severe housing deprivation is mentioned only ten times across six of the sources of information canvassed within the search. Again, Statistics New Zealand provided the highest number of mentions. Here, however, two out of the three Statistics New Zealand documents that mentioned the definition were research reports related to the development of the concept of Severe Housing Deprivation. The third Statistics New Zealand result employs census content for 2018 as the context for the discussion of the relevance of the severe housing deprivation data to the New Zealand definition of homelessness. The Beehive website mentions the definition twice in reference to the 2018 budget, using data to frame homelessness in New Zealand as the worst in the OECD. The New Zealand Treasury also had two results relevant to the definition of severe housing deprivation. Despite the fact that severe housing deprivation comprises of a continuum of living situations, the first Treasury result in 2015 placed severe housing deprivation as the lowest category on the housing continuum within the context of the social housing reform programme. The second is a repeat of a document originally identified on the Beehive website; the 2018 budget speech that refers to severe housing deprivation data. Te Puni Kōkiri utilises the Severe Housing Deprivation data once to discuss the state of Māori housing in 2014. The 2018 budget factsheet provided by the Ministry of Social Development employs the severe housing deprivation data to refer to who needs to be housed. Finally, the Ministry of Justice includes a 2010 reference to the development of the Severe Housing Deprivation as the first application of an operational definition of homelessness.

In addition to the paucity of references to published definitions of homelessness on key New Zealand government websites, it is evident that available descriptions are subject to debate at the political level. As is evident from political discussions recorded in Hansard, there is confusion around whether an agreed definition of homelessness exists. For example, three years after the Minister of Statistics introduced a formal definition of homelessness to her colleagues (Mackey, 2010) the Minister of Housing in the National-led Government claimed that “there is no agreed definition of homelessness, and, by definition, it is actually difficult to capture this data because the

census is collected via people's addresses" (Smith, 2013a, p. 13786). Despite the bureaucratic use of the published definition of homelessness, the Minister questions the data derived on severe housing deprivation.

Hon Dr NICK SMITH: Can I firstly address the issue of the definition of homelessness. In the survey the member quotes, it is referred to as "severely inadequate housing". Sixty-five percent of those who are in that definition are in situations where there are too many adults and too many children in a household, and I note that that number grew very significantly under the previous Government. The second issue is whether I would consider people who are staying, for instance, in cabins or in emergency accommodation as being homeless. I would give them the definition of being in emergency housing. (Smith, 2013b, p. 11722)

The position of Nick Smith was supported by the Minister of State Services, Paula Bennett, who argued against groups such as those in emergency accommodation from being included within the definition of homelessness.

Hon PAULA BENNETT: I think, as I clearly stated, of that big number of 41,000 that the member bandies around, those are people who may be living in some unsatisfactory conditions, but they are actually not truly homeless under the definition as most people would see it. (Bennett, 2016, p. 14968)

Overall, within the New Zealand policy literature there is very little engagement with the conceptual debates that underpin the development of the definition of homelessness. The few references that cover this topic are restricted to the documents that develop the definitions of homelessness themselves (see Amore et al., 2013; Amore et al., 2016; Statistics New Zealand, 2009). Within political discussions, politicians do not engage with in-depth discussions regarding the definition of homelessness. This lack of engagement, and the denial of severe housing deprivation data as representing 'true homelessness', indicates a limited engagement between what is implemented within the policy field and advancements that have been made within academia. Whilst Schiff (2003) argues that it is possible to look at the use of definitions, and the position that they hold in order to see who holds the power to define and shape responses to homelessness. In a context where published definitions hold limited status, this review utilised and analysed the ways in which homelessness is discussed in order to gain insight around the understandings of homelessness in New Zealand.

Table 3.5 Mentions of the published definitions on government websites January 1st 2008 - June 30th 2018

	The New Zealand Definition of Homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, 2014)	Severe Housing Deprivation (Amore et al., 2013)
<i>Beehive</i>	Mentioned once in context of the <i>Launch of Pathways out of housing programme</i> the development of this definition is mentioned.(Street, 2008, April, 10)	Mentioned twice in context of the 2018 Budget Speech- the SHD data is referenced to when describing Homelessness in New Zealand as the worst in the OECD. (Robertson, 2018, May, 1)
<i>Department of Corrections</i>	Mentioned once when talking about the collaborative approach to homelessness in Auckland, reference to the subcategories used in this definition are used to describe what homelessness is (Department of Corrections, 2013, p. 12)	No results
<i>Ministry of Justice</i>	Mentioned once in the Human Rights in New Zealand report listed on webpage. Mentions the definition and the four living situations included in the definition(Human Rights Commission, 2010).	Mentioned once in the 'Human Rights in New Zealand' report listed on webpage. Mentions the application of the above definition to Census and Administrative data- providing the first estimation of homelessness in New Zealand (Human Rights Commission, 2010)
<i>Statistics New Zealand</i>	Mentioned five times. Once in the original document and once in the updated document on the New Zealand definition of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, 2014). Twice when discussing measuring housing quality and the possibility of using the GSS to measuring living situations under Homelessness(Statistics New Zealand, 2015a, 2018). And once when discussing census content. Identifies that the census produces no count of homelessness but collects some relevant data.	Mentioned three times. The two reports on Severe Housing deprivation are listed on the website (Amore, 2016; Amore et al., 2013). Also the 2018 census content discusses how SHD estimations have combined census and administrative data for the living situations that come under the 2009 definition (Statistics New Zealand, 2015b).
<i>Treasury</i>	No results	Mentioned twice, once in context of the social housing reform programme where SHD is identified as lowest category on the housing continuum and data is cited (Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, & The New Zealand Treasury, 2015). And once in Grant Robertson's 2018 Budget speech present on the Treasury website infers SHD data (Robertson, 2018, May, 1).
<i>Te Puni Kōkiri</i>	No results	Mentioned once in the context of a review on the current state of Māori housing, SHD data is used (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2014).
<i>Ministry of Social Development</i>	No results	Mentioned once in Budget 2018 housing initiatives factsheet utilised data from SHD in order to refer to who needs to be housed (Ministry of Social Development, 2018).

*\*Ministry of Health, Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, and the Housing New Zealand Corporation excluded from table due to returning no relevant results for either published definition*

### 3.2.8.2 *Definitions of homelessness – Australia, Canada and the USA*

In Australia, the initial federal government white paper on homelessness utilised a ‘cultural definition’ of homelessness in outlining the issue of homelessness (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992; Homelessness Taskforce, 2008) . The white paper outlined the Australian Government’s strategic response to homelessness. This cultural definition defined and categorised homelessness into three groups:

- Primary homelessness, such as sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling.
- Secondary homelessness, including staying with friends or relatives and with no other usual address, and staying in specialist homelessness services.
- Tertiary homelessness, including people living in boarding houses or caravan parks with no secure lease and no private facilities, both short and long-term.

A key outcome of the white paper was the development of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which was charged with creating the initial policy framework for responding to homelessness. This policy framework came in the form of ‘national agreements’ between the Commonwealth of Australia and the States and Territories. There have been three agreements that have provided the framework and funding to improve housing, housing affordability and homelessness outcomes in Australia the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) (see section 3.2.2.4). Since their existence, the national agreements have undergone a number of iterations. Under the national agreements, however, homelessness is not explicitly defined. Rather, in terms of policy responses, the 2018-2019 agreement utilised the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ definition of homelessness within the collection of data (see Table 3.6) (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2018).

The National Affordable Housing Agreement, and the accompanying report on specialist homelessness services, refers to the likelihood someone is homeless or at risk of being homeless. The Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) report provides data on the specialist agencies that provide services, assistance and support to those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In compiling the data, the SHSC categorise individuals designated as ‘homeless’ as those people who are rough sleeping, couch surfing or staying in accommodation that is intended to be short term and temporary. Relatedly, those at ‘risk of homelessness’ includes individuals living in

an institutional setting, in private housing, or in community or social housing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).

The SHSC division of clients into groups of homeless and at risk of homelessness was designed to align with the ABS 2012 definition of homelessness. There are, however, situations where housing categories do not align. For example, the ABS definition includes people living in severely crowded dwellings, but this is not addressed by the SHSC, an omission which means they are not identified by the SHSC as a separate group. Additionally, the ABS exclude some groups if they appear to have accommodation alternatives, such as students living in halls of residence. However, if, for example, students living in halls of residence become clients of specialist homeless service (SHS) agencies, they are included as being either homeless or at risk of homelessness. The definition of homelessness included in the Specialist Homelessness Service Collection report defines non-conventional dwellings as including living on streets, sleeping in parks, squatting, staying in cars or railway carriages, living in improvised dwellings or living in long grass (see Table 3.6 below).

Table 3.6 Definitions of homelessness used by the government in Australia, Canada and the USA

	<b>Definition of Homelessness</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<p>When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement is: In a dwelling that is inadequate or has no tenure, or their initial tenure is short and not extendable and does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations. More specifically they are considered to be homeless if they are living:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In an improvised dwelling, tent or sleeping out;</li> <li>2) In supported accommodation for the homeless</li> <li>3) Temporarily with other households</li> <li>4) In boarding houses</li> <li>5) In other temporary lodging</li> <li>6) In severely crowded dwellings (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).</li> </ol> <p>Someone living in either a non-conventional dwelling, or sleeping rough, or someone living in short-term emergency accommodation due to lack of other options (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019, p. 94)</p> <p>Homeless vs At Risk of Homelessness Homelessness includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No shelter or improvised shelter</li> <li>- Living in short term temporary accommodation</li> <li>- In a dwelling with no tenure and couch surfing</li> </ul> <p>At Risk of Homelessness includes: Renting or living rent free in public or community housing, in private housing or in an institutional setting (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).</p>
<b>United States of America</b>	<p>An individual or family who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lacks a fixed, regular and adequate night-time residence and includes a subset for an individual who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation AND who is exiting an institution where they temporarily resided</li> <li>2) Will imminently lose their primary night-time residence AND who have no subsequent address identified, AND who lack the support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and can be expected to continue in such a status due to chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence of childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.</li> <li>3) Unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition</li> <li>4) Are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or family member (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011).</li> </ol>
<b>Canada</b>	<p>Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it...Homelessness encompasses a range of living situations, organised here in a typology that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;</li> <li>2) Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;</li> <li>3) Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally.</li> <li>4) At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a, p. 9)</li> </ol>

Short-term and emergency accommodation includes refuges, crisis shelters, couch surfing, living temporarily with friends or relatives, insecure accommodation on a short-term basis, and emergency accommodation arranged by SHS. The Specialist Homelessness Service Collection report states that the definition it employs aligns closely with the cultural definition of secondary homelessness (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Therefore, in Australia a number of definitions are utilised within the responses to homelessness. Whilst the statistical definition of homelessness as provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is utilised for the collection of data within the NHHA, the cultural definition of homelessness is adopted for the collection of data within the SHSC.

Until the development and implementation in 2019 of “Reaching Home”, Canada’s most recent homelessness strategy, Canada’s homelessness policy context was similar to that of New Zealand in terms of the utilisation of a definition of homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018b). Namely, under the previous Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS), Canada only had a definition of chronic homelessness within its national homelessness strategy. Following an evaluation of the HPS, an advisory committee commented that the presence of a definition of chronic homelessness, and the lack of a definition for homelessness in general, resulted in significant underestimation and misunderstanding of the scale and nature of homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a). Importantly, in its evaluation of the HPS, the advisory committee argued that the lack of an agreed-upon, broad definition of homelessness created disadvantages in the accessing of HPS funds and services. Thus people who would commonly avoid mainstream homeless services, who were considered as hidden homeless, and who accessed other systems not directly targeted at homelessness often found it difficult to access appropriate services (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a). The advisory committee proposed the federal government build alignment around a common definition of homelessness. Moreover, the committee recommended that the adoption of a definition similar to the one outlined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness<sup>6</sup> (COH) would enable the federal government to build alignment within

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<sup>6</sup> The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) is one of the largest homelessness dedicated research institutes. COH is a research and policy partnership between academics, key stakeholders in policy, service providers and those with lived experience of homelessness. COH conduct and mobilise research that has an impact on solutions to homelessness (Homeless Hub, 2020) (The Homeless Hub, 2019).

the provision of services. This definition was outlined in the Advisory Committee report (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a ;see Table 3.6).

The USA is the one country included within this review where one legislative definition of homelessness is utilised within a national policy response. In the USA, the definition of homelessness originated within Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Act 1987 and is currently set within the operative Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act 2009 (HEARTH Act), which underpins federal legislative responses to homelessness (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011). Whilst Table 3.6 presents the definition of homelessness, the HEARTH Act (2009) also defines ‘at risk of homelessness’, ‘chronically homeless’ and ‘chronically homeless families’. The definitions of homelessness are important for record keeping requirements, data collection and management, and for establishing qualification for access to programme services.

One limitation of having a statutory definition of chronically homeless is that, despite potential inadequacies, alternative definitions are not permitted. Although service providers have sought permission to use the vulnerability index rather than the definition of chronically homeless in order to prioritise services, HUD, in the USA, argues that, because the definition is set within legislation, service providers are unable to use anything other than the statutory definition. In defense of statutory use, HUD states that the definition is purposively narrow to ensure that the limited resources are used to serve persons with the longest histories of homelessness and highest need (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). HUD has also advised funding recipients to take factors such as vulnerability into consideration when prioritising households for permanent supportive housing services (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). Service providers argue that because the definition only takes into account time spent homeless, those with the highest need are not necessarily always included. Debates around applicability highlight the limitations of statutory definitions to account for vulnerability.

The published definitions of homelessness in Australia, Canada and USA differ in the drawing of boundaries. Such definitional demarcation varies in light of the situations of people in institutions or exiting institutions, people living in structurally inadequate housing, and people in situations of domestic violence. For example, those who are exiting institutions are not included in the ABS definition of homelessness but are

considered as being at risk of homelessness within the SHSC. In the USA, the definition of homelessness includes those exiting institutions as homeless, particularly if the individual has no means to obtain housing. Within the Canadian definition of homelessness, those exiting institutions are classified as being “at risk” of homelessness. In relation to boundaries relating to “inadequate” housing standards, the Canadian definition recognises this as being “at risk” of homelessness; for the ABS “inadequate” housing is implied in the definition but does not exist as a specific living situation or category; and, the HUD in the USA positions this group as experiencing “housing insecurity” as opposed to being homeless. The HUD demarcation occurs because those who are poorly housed are directed to other HUD programmes and, if the poorly housed were included within the definition, it would undermine the purpose of having a statutory definition. Lastly, those experiencing or fleeing violence in the USA are defined as being homeless, while the definition in Canada includes them as at risk, and the ABS definition only includes this group if they are in a temporary housing situation and do not have accommodation alternatives.

### *3.2.8.3 Homelessness policy - New Zealand*

From the review of New Zealand grey literature, the only explicitly stated ‘response to homelessness’ acknowledged by the government was the HF approach that targeted those who are chronically homeless and who have multiple and complex issues (Twyford, 2018b). Notably, according to the then Minister of Housing and Urban Development, the HF response also targets the most disadvantaged homeless (Twyford, 2017). The specification of ‘the most disadvantaged homeless’ may seem arbitrary, but it indicates recognition that there are other types of homelessness beyond the chronically homeless. Despite this recognition, at the time of writing, the government’s only explicitly stated response to homelessness is the support of, and funding for, HF. Other related responses discussed within the same documents as HF, but not explicitly framed as a response to homelessness, include the Emergency Housing Special Needs grants. These grants provide funding for the placement of those who live in ‘insecure housing’ situations in motels and hotels. In an official press release about government support, it is explained that the Special Needs Grants for Emergency Housing are available “to people in urgent need so no one needs to sleep in a car” (Adams, 2017a); not once are these intended recipients of the emergency housing grants referred to as being homeless. Government discourse relating to the construction of state housing are also devoid of references to homelessness. Thus, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development explained that the building of state

houses is targeted toward those who are “forced to live in substandard or overcrowded accommodation”, rather than those who are homeless (Twyford, 2018c). As these examples show, the only strategies framed as a response to homelessness is HF, the focus of which is limited to the sharpest end of homelessness. Although those living in insecure housing, substandard housing or overcrowded accommodation fall within the published definitions of homelessness, these responses are not framed as being a response to homelessness.

#### *3.2.8.4 Homelessness policy – Australia, Canada and the United States of America*

##### **Australian Homelessness Policy**

Beyond initial emergency-oriented responses to homelessness in Australia, the first National Homelessness Strategy (NHS) was launched in 1999 to provide leadership in the development of an approach which focused on both the prevention and reduction of homelessness. The NHS resulted in the government releasing a strategy document which outlined its intended approach to homelessness. This approach comprised four components: working together; prevention; early intervention; and, crisis transition and support. “The Road Home”, a White Paper released by the Australian government in 2008 marked the creation of Australia’s new strategic response. This strategy had the target of halving homelessness by 2020 and increasing by 55% government funding to support the key objectives of the strategic response (Homelessness Taskforce, 2008). The Road Home set out three core policy goals and provided a strategy to implement and monitor the response to homelessness across Australia. The first policy goal, turning off the tap, focused on early intervention services to prevent homelessness. The second goal, improve and expand services to end homelessness, focused on ensuring that services are sufficiently connected, integrated and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve social and economic participation and end homelessness for clients. The third goal, breaking the cycle, focused on moving people quickly through the crisis system and into stable, supported housing (Homelessness Taskforce, 2008).

A key outcome of The Road Home was the development of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), an organisation that was charged with creating the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), the initial policy framework for responding to homelessness in Australia (Homelessness Taskforce, 2008). The NAHA provided a framework to improve housing affordability and homelessness outcomes for Australians. Applied across the housing spectrum, the NAHA focused on providing

direction for social housing, assistance to those in the private rental market, support and accommodation for those who are homeless or at risk of homeless. In seeking to fulfil these goals, the agreement was designed to reduce the rate of homelessness by improving coordination across housing related programmes and integration between housing and human services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Essentially, through the NAHA, controls placed on the achievement of improved outcomes for homeless Australians were tightened, and controls placed on inputs were relaxed. In combination, these approaches enabled state and territory governments and community organisations to specify the design of services that work.

In 2018, the NAHA was replaced with the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). The NHHA provides for states and territories to match funding provided by the federal government. Federal funding is provided for a range of services that support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These organisations include those which specialise in delivering services to target groups and those which provide generic services to those who are facing housing crises (Parliament of Australia, 2018). In terms of housing it is also responsible for financial sector regulations and Commonwealth taxation settings, competition policy related to housing, and the provision of national infrastructure. As part of this, housing-related data is collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the social security delivery agency Centrelink.

States and territories are responsible for the leadership of housing and homelessness policy, housing and homelessness services, and administration and delivery. States and territories are also responsible for indigenous housing policy and housing for indigenous people, aspects that include land use, supply and urban planning and development policies in remote areas. They are also responsible for providing housing-related financial support and services for tenants and homeowners, support for residential development, legislative and regulatory guidance for the not-for-profit housing sector, and responsibility for the collection and publication of data from providers and agencies that provide services to people who are homeless (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019; Parliament of Australia, 2018). As with the access to funding within the USA and Canada, in Australia the jurisdictions receiving funding under the NHHA are required to provide a homelessness strategy which outlines the priority cohorts within their community and how their needs will be addressed (Council of Australian Governments, 2017).

## **Canadian Homelessness Policy**

In Canada, the federal government's response to homelessness began in 1999 with the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) and the investment of CAD\$753 million in the NHI over three years. The NHI is characterised by a decentralised approach, providing individual communities with the support they needed to respond to homelessness. The NHI was renewed in 2004 and rebranded the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) in 2006. The HPS retained the philosophy of supporting community based solutions while introducing some modifications to the existing programme areas of the NHI (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a; Gaetz, 2010).

Modifications directed the HPS to focus on reducing and preventing homelessness through: investment in transitional and supportive housing via a HF approach, support of community-based efforts; encouraging partnership between federal government, provinces and territories; and, pursuing collaboration with federal departments and agencies. The HPS had several funding streams, three of which were regionally delivered and three that were applied nationally (Employment Social Development Canada, 2017). The HPS was renewed for the period of 2014-2019 with investment dropping annually as a shift in approach towards HF was placed on communities (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a; Gaetz, 2010). In June 2018, it was announced that the HPS would be replaced by Reaching Home, a strategy that emphasised the ability of communities to respond flexibly to the needs of their local homeless population (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018b). Through Reaching Home, support for responding to homelessness is provided to communities through funding streams from both federal and local or provincial agencies. This funding is accessed only through Community Advisory Boards (CABs) who develop comprehensive plans and responses for their local communities (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). The establishment of CABs are required when a community entity enters into a funding agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada, the agency that administers federal funding for different streams of homelessness response. CABs guide programme implementation and other homelessness responses in a community. In taking a whole of systems approach, CABs need to understand the relevant issues of homelessness in their community, and have the ability to engage with stakeholders (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016).

## USA Homelessness Policy

In the USA, the official government response to homelessness began with the McKinney-Vento Act 1987. This initial phase of the government response to homelessness focused on building emergency service infrastructure. In the year 2000, the official approach shifted toward the use of a 'strategic response', which emphasised transition into housing. The use of a 10-year plan model began with a proposal from the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Supported by government funding, the National Alliance to End Homelessness plan focused on measurable targets and tight outcomes, including the development of standardised data collection and analysis in the sector. For the first phase of the 10-year programme, the priority population was the chronically homeless, a focus that saw endorsement in the HF approach.

In 2009, the McKinney-Vento Act 1987 was amended and rebranded into the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The Hearth Act 2009 consolidated three of the separate funding programmes offered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) into the Continuum of Care (CoC), a single grant programme. The goal of this consolidation was to

promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programmes targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its programmes to the particular strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community (Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).

The eligible activities under the CoC programme include supporting individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to gain access to permanent housing, providing transitional housing, accessing support services, and engaging in prevention-related activities. Additionally, CoC funding is available to support the infrastructure of a data system for homeless services and their client population (Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). Access to CoC programme funding is a national competition between geographic areas. This competition is based on consideration of the previous performance of the potential recipient regarding homelessness and, if appropriate, their performance under funding received from the Emergency Solutions Grant Programme (Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.). In their application for HUD homeless programme funding, organisations are assessed on their ability to demonstrate coordination with federal, state, local and other private

entities when providing services to homeless or those at risk of homelessness (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011).

A key feature of the response to homelessness in the USA was the creation of the United States Interagency Council for Homelessness (USICH), an independent collective composed of the heads of 19 federal agencies (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). The USICH was designed to integrate and coordinate responses to homelessness in partnership with the state government, local government and community groups. The USICH is also responsible for creating the federal strategic plan to end homelessness. The latest USICH plan, “Home, Together”, details strategies for the 19 federal agency members to achieve their goal of ending homelessness among veterans, people with disabilities, families with children, unaccompanied youth and other individuals (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). “Home, Together”, released in 2018, includes both long and short-term solutions for public and private partners to use for ending homelessness. “Home, Together” expresses an underlying focus on the need for accessible and affordable housing. The plan highlights the centrality of having a home in an individual’s ability to pursue opportunities and give back to the community. In order to achieve this, housing needs to be available to people earning across the spectrum of incomes. Additionally, the plan reports that there needs to be opportunities to access services, thus strengthening social networks and enabling individuals to pursue economic mobility and improve their overall wellbeing. In general, stability in a home is regarded as the solution to homelessness (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018).

“Home, Together” contains acknowledgement of the need to target strategies to respond to the diversity of the homeless population. The plan also expresses recognition that investment in outreach is required in order to gain trust from those who may be disengaged from, or distrustful of, state services. In expressing consideration of the need for achievement of goals at the community level, “Home, Together” is guided by a common vision to coordinate activities, policies, priorities at different levels (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018).

### *3.2.8.5 Political discourses around homelessness - New Zealand*

In the New Zealand context, where published definitions hold limited status within the government response to homelessness, this review utilised and analysed the ways

in which homelessness is discussed within government documents and grey literature. This literature review and approach contributes to the formation of nuanced insight around the government's understandings of homelessness in New Zealand. Such insight is obtained by drawing on the opinion held by Schiff (2003) that it is possible to look at the use of definitions and the position that they hold in order to see who holds the power to define and shape responses to homelessness. The following sections describe the ways in which homelessness is constructed within New Zealand political discussions and texts. These include the living situations used to describe homelessness and the ways in which the homeless are described.

Tables 3.7 – 3.10 quantify the different living situations utilised as exemplars within discussions of homelessness included in the review. Such numerical representation is useful as a tool to indicate those living situations that are utilised the most within government documents and discussions around homelessness. Taken by themselves, however, these references to living situations only tell part of the narrative around the way in which the New Zealand governments understood homelessness between 2007 and 2018. Upon initial inspection, it would appear that living in overcrowded situations, living on the street, living in substandard dwellings or living in a car provide an accurate summation of the governments' understanding of homelessness. Furthermore, it would appear that the government understood homelessness as being beyond rough sleeping. Any confirmation of governmental attitudes, however, is best made only after consideration is given to the context in which these examples were utilised and who it was that utilised the different living situations as a representation of their understanding of homelessness.

Table 3.7 New Zealand grey literature references to living situations categorised into broad homeless category "Without Accommodation" according to the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009)

Broad HL Category	WITHOUT ACCOMMODATION					
	<i>On the street</i>	<i>Public Park or Sports Ground</i>	<i>Under Bridge</i>	<i>"nowhere to live"</i>	<i>improvised shelter</i>	<i>In a car</i>
<b>Living Situation:</b>						
Beehive	7					6
TPK	1	1	2			
NZ Parliament	19	5	2	5	5	26
HNZC						
MSD	7				1	2
NZ Treasury						
MBIE						
Corrections	2				1	
Ministry of Justice	3			1	1	2
TOTALS	39	6	4	6	8	36
%	11.54	1.78	1.18	1.78	2.37	10.65

Table 3.8 New Zealand grey literature references to living situations categorised into broad homeless category "Temporary Accommodation" according to the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness (Statistics New Zealand 2009)

<b>Broad HL Category</b>	<b>TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION</b>										
	<i>Camping Ground</i>	<i>Night Shelter</i>	<i>Transitional Housing</i>	<i>Boarding House</i>	<i>Temporary Accommodation</i>	<i>Emergency Housing</i>	<i>Refugee or refugee</i>	<i>or Rehab</i>	<i>Motel hotel</i>	<i>or Squatting in a home</i>	<i>Insecure Housing</i>
Beehive		3	2						1		4
TPK											
NZ Parliament	13	5	2	11	9	8	5		6		9
HNZC						1					1
MSD	2	2		2	4	3	2		2		3
NZ Treasury											
MBIE											1
Corrections					1					1	
Ministry of Justice	1		1		1						
TOTALS	16	10	5	13	15	12	7	0	9	1	18
%	4.73	2.96	1.48	3.85	4.44	3.55	2.07	0.00	2.66	0.30	5.33

Table 3.9 New Zealand grey literature references to living situations categorised into broad homeless category "Sharing Accommodation" according to the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009)

<b>Broad HL</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>SHARING ACCOMMODATION</b>	
<b>Living Situation:</b>	<i>Sharing</i>	
	<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Couch Surfing</i>
Beehive		1
TPK	4	
NZ Parliament	9	1
HNZC	1	1
MSD	1	1
NZ Treasury		
MBIE		
Corrections	1	
Ministry of Justice	1	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>1.18</b>

Table 3.10 New Zealand grey literature references to living situations categorised into broad homeless category "Uninhabitable Housing" according to the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009)

Broad HL Category	UNINHABITABLE HOUSING				
	overcrowding	<i>uninhabitable housing</i>	<i>Garage</i>	<i>substandard housing</i>	<i>inadequate housing</i>
Beehive	2			4	
TPK	12		1	8	
NZ Parliament	15	5	13	10	1
HNZC	12		1	5	
MSD	5	1		7	
NZ Treasury	1			1	
MBIE				1	
Corrections		1			
Ministry of Justice	2	2		2	
TOTALS	49	9	15	38	1
%	14.50	2.66	4.44	11.24	0.30

## Homelessness as Rough Sleeping and “Other” Living Situations

True homelessness, which is “rough sleepers” - so those sleeping on the streets - and that is the argument. Obviously, we are concerned about people who are couch surfing. We want them to have permanent homes. That is something we are delivering on (Bennett, 2016 p. 14102)

Grant Robertson: Can he confirm that the number of 41,000 homeless in the primary question comes from the census produced by Statistics New Zealand and is, in fact, the Government’s definition of “homeless”?

Hon STEVEN JOYCE: No. In fact, the member should go back and look at the data, because the data refers to 41,200 people who are living in a range of situations, including temporarily resident with friends or family, in boarding houses, motels, emergency housing, or women’s refuges. The amount of people estimated to be living rough or in improvised dwellings is 1,413. The member needs to get his figures accurate (*Economic Programme - Homelessness and access to services 2017*, p.18954).

As exemplified in these quotes from Paula Bennett and Stephen Joyce, senior members of the National-led Government of the time, the theme of ‘Rough Sleeping and “Other” Living Situations’ is reflective of politicians imagined geographies of homelessness; it identifies rough sleeping as the living circumstance that “counts” as genuine homelessness. Even when referencing severe housing deprivation data, rough sleeping is accepted as constituting homelessness whilst other living situations are not; this is accepted despite severe housing deprivation covering a spectrum of living situations. This geography distinguishes other places and living circumstances as imagined to be “not quite” or “not really” homeless. In the review of grey literature, rough sleeping is almost always identified as the subcategory of homelessness requiring response within the programmes or initiatives design to respond to homelessness. Other living situations defined as homeless under the published definitions, such as needing or living in emergency, transitional or inadequate housing, are either disputed within political discussions, utilised as an example of homelessness by opposition parties, responded to but not necessarily framed as being homeless, or referenced sparingly when talking about homelessness.

Additionally, as the Minister of Social Housing described, the HF and Emergency Housing responses, the only actions directed specifically toward homelessness, aim to “move rough sleepers into appropriate housing and then immediately provide tailored wrap-around services to address the issues that led to their homelessness” (Adams,

2017b). This reinforces dominant representations of homelessness as rough sleeping. Furthermore, the language employed around the use of motels for emergency housing places rough sleeping at the top of the hierarchy of those in need of resourcing; by referring to rough sleeping as constituting “genuine hardship”, the government define a characteristic on which it is comfortable spending money (Adams, 2017b). This description of rough sleeping as genuine hardship reinforces the idea of rough sleeping as homelessness and the belief that other living situations are not worthy of being identified as homeless.

The “non-rough” living situations utilised within discussions about homelessness that are regarded as Other include living in a car, in a garage, in a night shelter, in a campground or tent, in a boarding house or in overcrowded situations. Within policy texts, documents and political discussions, these living situations exist as textual silences. In other words, the opposition political parties include these living situations within their descriptions of homelessness whilst the National-led Government exclude them. For example, opposition Labour Party MP Aupito William Sio commented that “[t]his lot, despite homelessness spilling out on the streets, in cars, in garages, and in public toilets, still denied there was a crisis” (Sio, 2017, p. 1629). These Other living situations are rarely employed as examples of homelessness, but when they are, they are framed as not being “real” conditions of homelessness. In comparison, rough sleeping is included in the imaginings of homelessness regardless of the political party to which an MP belongs, and when discussing homelessness, rough sleeping is a common reference.

Despite living in a car and living in a garage being a common facet of definitions of homelessness (see Tables 3.7-3.10), they were largely ignored by members of the National-led Government. For example, living in a garage is only mentioned once within the context of the HF response to homelessness, with the National Party Minister of Social Housing stating that “Housing First has helped 93 households off the street, out of shelters, cars, garages and overcrowded homes into safe, secure and stable accommodation” (Adams, 2017b). Considering the otherwise general exclusion of these living situations from National Party MP’s understanding of homelessness, Adams’ inclusion of these Other options is inconsistent with government policy at the time, particularly in the context of HF responses to homelessness. Thus, while these terms were promoted by MPs from opposition parties, especially in relation to children and

child poverty, they were rarely utilised by members of the National-led government. For example, Jacinda Ardern, opposition Labour Party MP, stated that “[s]ome of our kids are growing up living in cars. Our levels of child poverty and homelessness in this country are much too high” (Ardern, 2018). Similarly, Marama Davidson, opposition Green Party MP, highlighted that “women with children, particularly Māori women . . . are having to crowd into friends’ garages . . . because they are unable to find a home” (Davidson, 2016, p. 9004). Furthermore, in press releases for Emergency Housing, opposition MPs referred to the urgency of providing housing for those facing inadequate living conditions in the winter: housing is needed “over the coming winter months [because] at this time of year, no family or individual should be living in a car” (Twyford, 2018a). Thus, in addition to positioning living situations within the context of emergency housing rather than homelessness, the focus of urgency due to the expected colder weather works to reinforce conceptualisations of homeless in terms of inadequate shelter and exposure to physical elements.

Other examples of living situations considered as Other include living in a shelter or living in overcrowded housing. Beyond the documents published for the official definitions of homelessness (Amore, 2016; Amore et al., 2013; Statistics New Zealand, 2009, 2014), government agencies do not explicitly recognise overcrowding or living in a shelter as a form of homelessness. Rather, Housing New Zealand considers this category as being a form of emergency accommodation (Smith, 2013b), while the Ministry of Social Development recognise that “those that are homeless or living in over-crowded environments also have high need levels” (Taylor Fry Pty Ltd-Consulting Actuaries & Analytics Professionals, 2015, June, 30, p. 62). In the context of social housing provision, these living situations are thus framed in terms of housing need and not homelessness (see Housing New Zealand Corporation, 2011, p. 17). The absence of attaching the term homeless to these living situations works to reinforce the idea of homelessness as solely characterised by rough sleeping or being without physical shelter.

Permanently living in a boarding house, or living in a tent or campground, are also considered as ‘Other’ within the context of understandings of homelessness in New Zealand. Although permanently living in a boarding house was recognised within the published definitions of homelessness, and within the 2014 inquiry into boarding houses as a form of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009) (House of

Representatives, 2014), political discussions rarely give this as an example of homelessness (see Table 3.7-3.10). In the context of the severe housing deprivation data, National Party MP Steven Joyce argued that living in a boarding house is just one of the ranges of situations included within the data. When questioned by opposition MP Grant Robertson about the severe housing deprivation in New Zealand data, Joyce responded that “the member needs to get his figures accurate” (Joyce, 2017, p. 18954). This response reflects the dominant understanding within the government of the time that homelessness does not extend beyond lack of physical shelter. Similarly, whilst living in a tent or camping ground is identified as temporary accommodation within the published definitions, this living situation is not mentioned within government documents, speeches or press releases within the context of homelessness. Thus, these accommodation options are ignored by the National-led Government while being utilised by opposition parties to describe the extent of homelessness in New Zealand. For example, Winston Peters, leader of the opposition New Zealand First Party, spoke of situations where pensioners are “scraping by in camp grounds” (Peters, 2016, p. 15512). Similarly, Green Party MP Meteria Turei identified “thousands of New Zealand families who are homeless . . . are sleeping in motor camps [and] in caravans that are in appalling conditions - cockroaches, damp and mould” (Turei, 2016, p. 15520). Therefore, the way in which different living situations are framed and debated within political discussions indicates that the 2008-2017 National-Coalition Government had the power to define homelessness as ‘without shelter’.

#### Descriptions of Homelessness in New Zealand: The Homeless and Individual Deficits

Within New Zealand grey literature it was apparent that, regardless of political party, descriptions of the homeless were overwhelmingly tied to the announcement of HF programmes. In the context of HF programmes, the homeless are described as those who “face multiple and complex needs” (Twyford, 2018c) and who have a “complex set of issues, whether it be mental health, alcoholism or family violence . . . substance abuse and unemployment” (Adams, 2017b). Similar to descriptions of the homeless as having multiple and complex needs, accounts of individual’s lives and living situations as complicated are also used to identify the homeless. These tend to list the numerous living situations and conditions where the accumulation of unfortunate circumstances

has led to someone being homeless. For example, a Benefits Review Committee hearing employed this description:

She had recently undergone an acrimonious marriage breakdown and had been forced to leave her home, cut off from access to money, had significant mental and physical health difficulties, and was living in her car (SSA 180/16, 2017, p. 2).

Furthermore, opposition MP Phil Twyford described the homeless as “very vulnerable” because of the complex set of issues with which they struggle (Twyford, 2018c). Within the announcement of HF in Auckland, the Social Housing Minister of the National-led Government explained that with “initiatives like Housing First we can change the lives of people with highly-complex problems that don’t fit neatly within traditional government structures and approaches”(Adams, 2017a). Although it is correct to observe that those experiencing homelessness are vulnerable and can have complex needs, these ‘needs’ receive far more emphasis than the structural causes of homelessness.

Very rarely in New Zealand political discussions is it argued that those experiencing “highly-complex problems” are more vulnerable because of structural causes. The only description of homelessness that accounted for the structural causes and failure of systems to meet the needs of the vulnerable was in a report by the Human Rights Commission (2010). Thus, structural issues are rarely acknowledged as a part of the complex issues experienced by those experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, in New Zealand, descriptions of homeless individuals that draw on references to their multiple and complex needs, operate to separate this group from the rest of society and, in so doing, justify their need for HF programmes. This reality is reflected in the comments by National Party MP, Amy Adams, when she talked about how this groups needs could not be met within the traditional government approach and structure (see Adams, 2017b). Differentiation between the ways in which the homeless are described compared to the ways that tenants of social, transitional and emergency housing are described further functions to separate the homeless from the rest of society, thus justifying their need for HF. When describing the individual circumstances of those in social, transitional and emergency housing, tenants are described as having urgent need, high need and housing need, and the causal factors listed for such need include family reasons, financial stress and medical needs (Ministry of Social Development, 2016, 2017; Twyford, 2018a). In comparison, examples given for the homeless who are targeted recipients of HF utilise causal factors such as drug addictions, mental health

issues and alcoholism (Adams, 2017a; Adams, 2017b; Adams, 2017c). Whilst it is not incorrect to highlight that HF targets those who are dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues, the relative absence around other drivers of homelessness such as family reasons and financial stress exist as textual silences. Within the review of New Zealand's grey literature and political discussions, the dominant way in which the homeless are described is in reference to the HF programme and an associated focus on individual deficits. Whilst it is not incorrect to describe the homeless population as being vulnerable and facing multiple and complex issues, highlighting the complicated circumstances that led them to their homelessness, and over-representing individual causes combines with the lack of reference to structural and systemic causes of homelessness to produce textual silence.

### **3.3 Discussion**

#### **3.3.1 Narrow vs. broad definitions of homelessness**

With regards to the understanding and governance of homelessness by the federal governments of Australia, Canada and the USA, there is a clear disparity between the utilisation of either a narrow or broad definition of homelessness. In this case, published definitions of homelessness utilised by governments in Australia, Canada and the USA define and frame homelessness broadly, meaning that policy responses to homelessness acknowledge and respond to a wide range of need. In contrast, New Zealand political discourse narrowly frames homelessness, a focus that results in government understandings and responses being comparatively limited and targeted towards the most visible population of homeless. Published definitions tend to reflect critical, academic engagement and understandings of homelessness, whereas political discourses tend to express narrow understandings of homelessness. It is therefore consequential whether a government uses a published definition or political discourse in defining homelessness.

Schiff (2003) stated that those who hold the power to define homelessness may be identified by considering different understandings of homelessness and the positions held by these definitions. Considering this statement, this research indicates that within New Zealand, the National-led Government had the power to define or represent homelessness as rough sleeping. From an evaluation of the use of definitions and debates around living situations used to describe homelessness, living on the street or rough sleeping is the only living situation that is not under dispute as to whether it

constitutes homelessness. In New Zealand, within the timeframe of this review, rather than the published definition of homelessness, political discourse dominated government responses to homelessness. This political dominance relied on the absence of a definition of homelessness in response frameworks. Subsequently, the way in which homelessness is defined and understood by government has been open for debate. As Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) highlight “it becomes difficult to urge governments to meet the needs of homeless people if the parameters of the homeless population are unclear” (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992, p. 274). Consequently, the dominant understanding is of homelessness in its narrowest form, focusing on individual and agency explanations rather than structural causes of homelessness. This narrow definition has informed government responses to homelessness, initiatives that are limited in their ability to respond to the nature of the issue. Moreover, this view is biased towards a minimisation of the scale of the problem (Chamberlain, 2012). Specifically, the identified response of the government to homelessness has been limited to the provision of funding for HF and an associated targeting of the chronically homeless population. At the time of this review, a definition for chronically homelessness had not been outlined for use within the HF response funded by government. The power for political discourse to define homelessness is also evident in Cronley’s (2010) assertion that social constructionism has meant that policies are based less on empirically-derived knowledge and more on the public perception of homelessness. Here, the denial of the definition of homelessness provided by the severe housing deprivation data is marginalised in favour of ‘public perception’.

In contrast to their significance in New Zealand, published definitions of homelessness are utilised within national policies for homelessness in Australia, Canada and the USA. Within these published definitions, understandings of homelessness align with critiques presented in academic literature. As such, and in contrast to the political discourse recognised and used by the New Zealand government, these definitions encompass multiple facets of homelessness. These definitions of homelessness span a wider range of living situations than rough sleeping, and homelessness is officially recognised as occurring along a spectrum. Thus, the experiences of the homeless population are understood to be heterogeneous. Whilst the definitions used by governments in policy do differ slightly in terms of where they draw the boundary around homelessness, at a minimum living situations identified by government and

within policy extend beyond rough sleeping to include living in housing not meant for human habitation, living in emergency and temporary accommodation, and staying with others (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). The differences between where each definition draws the boundary around the status of homelessness include whether the categorisation of homelessness contains those living in situations of domestic violence, those living in institutions, those exiting institutions, or those living in structurally inadequate housing. Whilst governments in Australia, Canada and the USA utilised published definitions, these definitions are not conceptually rigorous (Amore et al., 2011).

### 3.3.2 A new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness

The national policy frameworks or strategies of response in the chosen overseas countries reflect a new orthodoxy around conceptualisations of homelessness. As explained in Chapter Two, the new orthodoxy for theorising the causes of homelessness posits that

structural factors create negative social and economic environments, that people with personal problems are more susceptible to these, and that the concentration of people with personal problems among the homeless population may be explained as the greater susceptibility of such people to the structural factors. (Lux & Mikeszova, 2013, p. 212)

This conceptualisation of homelessness appears within international examples of national policies and strategies through the recognition of subgroups within the homeless populations and the way in which homelessness is constructed as an issue of systems to respond to their needs.

Within each of the countries included for review, subgroups of homeless are defined and identified as priority cohorts for service provision. The identification of these subgroups within government policies reflects the new orthodoxy conceptualisation because they acknowledge the groups within their populations that are disadvantaged by the creation of negative social and economic environments created by structural factors (Lux & Mikeszova, 2013). In Australia, particular groups' vulnerability to homelessness is identified within the Specialist Homeless Services annual report and within the objectives of the NHHA (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019; Senate Economics Committee, 2017). In these documents, homelessness is identified as a particular issue for youth, youth released from state care, veterans, women and children experiencing domestic violence, Indigenous people living in overcrowded

dwellings, people exiting institutions, people with mental health and addictions issues, and individuals who have a disability or long term health condition (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). These national priority cohorts are not only identified within national agreements but state and local jurisdictions are required to address these groups within their homelessness strategies (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).

In Canada's "Reaching Home" national strategy for homelessness, the chronic and episodically homeless are prioritised and HF remains the government-supported response. However, the Canadian government also recognises the importance of other vulnerable populations such as young people, the LGBTQ2 community, women fleeing violence, racialised communities, veterans and persons with disabilities (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018b). This national strategy has given communities more flexibility than previously existed under the HPS in how they use funding. This improved flexibility has been enabled through an outcomes-based approach where decision making and prioritisation occurs at the local level (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a). Under "Reaching Home", Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness are specifically recognised, and whilst Indigenous people are eligible for service under all funding streams, the government increased the amount of dedicated funding for Indigenous-led homelessness initiatives. This reflects the understanding there needs to be support for, and the availability of, culturally appropriate services (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018b).

In the USA, "Home, Together" the federal government plan to end homelessness, states that the fundamental goal "shared across federal, state and local partners" is to end homelessness in America (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018, p. 6). In recognition of the diversity of the people who experience homelessness, the plan states that there needs to be population specific goals for the chronically homeless, homeless veterans, homeless families and children, and those homeless with disabilities (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). These population specific goals inform the need for tailored and targeted strategies and actions that reflect their diversity (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). Priority of response to these groups is reflected within the funding allocation criteria and incentives of HUD programmes. For example, selection criteria for CoC

programme funding includes incentives for rapid re-housing activities targeted at homeless families and for permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2009). Most of these funding requirements are set out within the HEARTH Act of 2009. By identifying the subgroups that are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, funding for, as well as the provision of responses targeted towards these groups operates to recognise that these groups are disadvantaged by structural conditions and the mainstream provision of services.

The other way in which these policies and national strategies exemplify the new orthodox conceptualisation is through the way in which homelessness is understood as being the outcome of the failure of systems to respond to the needs of these vulnerable populations. In all three countries included within this section of the policy review, the issue of homelessness is constructed and framed as a systems failure. Within Australia the strategy of “Turning off the Tap”, as outlined in the governments white paper on homelessness, specifically targets those at risk of homelessness by directing efforts at reducing the impact of structural drivers of homelessness (Homelessness Taskforce, 2008). Furthermore, the NHHA report highlights the issues of the system and the role of the lack of appropriate housing for those with complex needs as a key driver of homelessness in Australia (Senate Economics Committee, 2017). In Canada, the Advisory Committee’s evaluation of the previous national strategy, the “Homeless Partnering Strategy”, identified system failure as being at the core of homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a). The evaluation acknowledged that there is a need to “address systemic and societal barriers” and that “societies failure to provide adequate systems, funding and support for people to access housing and the supports they need” has contributed to homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018a, p. 9). Finally, the United States Federal Strategic Plan states that “to end homelessness, every community needs to be able to implement a systemic response that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible . . . and that systemic response must endure for the long term” (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018, p. 9). The plan describes homelessness as complex, and requiring a move away from working in silos and toward collaboration between different levels of government (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). The plan includes eight objectives which are intended to build “effective and lasting systems that are capable of responding effectively and quickly to

homelessness and housing instability now and into the future” (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018, p. 9).

### 3.3.3 The policy outlier - New Zealand

Previous research indicated that in New Zealand there is no formal national governmental response to homelessness (see Human Rights Commission, 2010; Laurenson & Collins, 2006, 2007; Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015; Richards & Pahau, 2009). Amore (2007) argues that homelessness “is a policy issue for which no government sector has mandated responsibility, lodged somewhere within the deep divides that run between government agencies and between government and non-government sectors” (p.30). Twelve years after Amore’s (2007) observation, it is evident that this comparative lack of policy action for homelessness remains.

Evidence confirms that New Zealand stands in contrast to government responses to homelessness in Australia, Canada and the USA; New Zealand is a policy outlier. The lack of consideration and narrow understanding of homelessness by New Zealand governments is reflected in the lack of policy response and narrow framing within existing responses. Such findings reflect observations from academics that “most people would agree that sleeping on the streets or staying in a shelter are examples of homelessness” but that “less visible accommodations such as doubling up with friends or family, living in substandard housing or in unaffordable housing may or may not be considered as homeless” (Veness, 1992, p. 445). It is also an example of how discussions around the definition of homelessness in New Zealand, between 2008 and 2018, have been so dominated by political discourses that the concept of homelessness and severe housing deprivation has been dismissed. Thus the dominance of political debate was such that it had the power to override the key role of a definition in enabling a systematic examination of homelessness (Daly, 1996; Danermark, 2002). Political discourse meant that within central government discussions, understandings of homelessness defaulted to everyday ideas, influenced by hegemonic representations about what characterises homelessness.

In this context, these findings also indicate limited engagement between what is implemented within the policy field and the advancements that are made within academia. This interaction between policy and academia is a key topic of discussion as scholars recognise that an agreement on the definition of homelessness across

academic and political communities would have positive affects (Fitzgerald et al., 2001, p. 145). These affects include the ability for research to be conducted across a range of spatial scales, and the ability to compare and contrast homelessness between different places. An agreed definition would also afford the interweaving of different research projects, facilitating the bringing together of different research findings and the development of comprehensive understandings of homelessness (Fitzgerald et al., 2001).

Another significant disparity between the response to homelessness in New Zealand and the responses outlined within national policies and plans in Canada, Australia and the USA is the matter of who is responsible for responding to homelessness. In New Zealand, it is not clear as to who has authority to attend to issues around homelessness; in the international examples discussed, it is made clear that resolution requires the coordination of a range of services from different sectors and different levels of government. This means that on a governance level, all relevant services and sectors are working with a common purpose towards ending homelessness (Doberstein & Reimer, 2016). This consistent focus on the coordination of services across different sectors, and the ability of local communities to access central government funding as part of the national agreements, strategies or policy responses to homelessness is reflective of the new orthodoxy around conceptualisations of homelessness.

Another example through which New Zealand exists as a policy outlier within the context of this review is via the targeted and emergency-oriented response to homelessness by government. As outlined in Section 3b, the only response to homelessness as explicitly expressed by government has been the funding provided for HF commitment to cities with populations of high need. This targeted engagement, though evident in other countries, is characterised by the absence of any other response by government and by a very individualist understanding of homelessness. Within the context of HF, the use of the term 'facing multiple and complex issues' is usually reflective of what Mabhala, Yohannes, and Griffith (2017) regard as the paradigm shift toward an understanding of the complex social factors that are significant considerations in responses to homelessness. However, in the New Zealand context, the complexity is not understood as being the result of interactions between individual level factors and structural level conditions. Rather, the focus on factors at the individual level, and the relative lack of explanation or linkage to societal level

factors, ensures the description and representation of homelessness in New Zealand is limited to individualist conceptualisations. This reiterates earlier research practices that interpreted characteristics of homeless people as representing the causes of homelessness. This is reflective of the personal pathology perspective that was popular from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s, with causes of homelessness being understood in terms of personal inadequacy due to mental health problems, or behaviours such as drinking or drug abuse. These agency explanations placed the responsibility for homelessness on the homeless themselves (Speak, 2004) rather than on solutions requiring social change (Jacobs, 1994).

The understanding of homelessness as an outcome of personal inadequacy has been identified as a limitation of the HF approach. As Stanhope and Dunn (2011) explain, within the HF context, the problem of homelessness is defined in terms of a particular group of individuals with specific service needs. This approach is employed in order to demonstrate that the problems of these individuals are unique and, as such, these individuals deserve targeted solutions. In focusing on individual and decontextualised areas of need that are not addressed of by market provisions, HF programmes do not address structural changes (Stanhope & Dunn, 2011). This limitation is particularly evident in the New Zealand context, where no responsibility is placed on structural causes of homelessness. Rather, descriptors of complex needs operate implicitly to place focus on the individual circumstances in which those who experience homelessness find themselves. Thus in such descriptions of the homeless, the particular circumstances of individuals are understood as the sole causes of their homelessness.

The New Zealand position contrasts with the policies and strategies in Australia, Canada and the USA, where the government responses to homelessness, as evident within the activities designated in national policies and strategies, include both emergency and preventative approaches. These activities connect to the objectives of these national strategies or policies to both prevent and end homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019; Homelessness Taskforce, 2008; United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). The fact that the national policies and strategies in response to homelessness in Australia, Canada and the USA cover both emergency and preventative approaches in responding to homelessness reflects the understanding of the heterogeneous nature of homelessness and an

understanding of pathways into homelessness. In providing both housing and non-housing related services, governance responds to an understanding that homelessness “can have different causes, and that for some homelessness may be a temporary episode, and for others it is a manifestation of a continuing poverty of personal and social resources” (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007, p. 643). This also reflects the new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness where homelessness is understood as experienced at the intersection of structural and individual causes.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

#### **3.4.1 Why (accepted) definitions matter in homelessness policy**

An accepted definition within policy frames understandings and governance methods of the homeless population. Accepted definitions of homelessness are important for policy response as they dictate the nature of response and classify the population to be served within homelessness policy initiatives. In the case of New Zealand, an accepted definition of homelessness within government, particularly in the absence of a policy framework to guide government response to homelessness, is crucial. As this review of grey literature found, between 2008 and 2018, New Zealand did not have an accepted definition of homelessness and, subsequently, within government, political discourse and rhetoric shaped understandings of homelessness. This political discourse defined homelessness narrowly failing to express the breadth and complexities of homelessness. This bias contributed to a lack of system response or recognition. The effect of this was that government responses explicitly identified as targeting homelessness were comparatively narrow and emergency-oriented having little capacity to respond beyond the symptoms of homelessness.

#### **3.4.2 How comparative research informs critique of New Zealand's approach to homelessness**

This comparative research on the understandings and responses to homelessness by government informs the critique of New Zealand’s approach to homelessness. The findings from Australia, Canada and the USA provide examples of the way in which the discursive construction of homelessness impacts the governance of the homeless population and illuminates the limitations of the New Zealand government’s narrow understanding and subsequent approach to homelessness. The findings indicate the importance of having an accepted definition of homelessness, and the importance of homelessness being problematised for informing the governance of the homeless

population. In Canada, Australia and the USA, the definition of homelessness within policy places the issue of homelessness, and more importantly, a consistent understanding of homelessness within the realm of government responsibilities. The construction of homelessness as a cross-sectoral issue, and as the outcome of a failure of systems to respond to the needs of populations who are vulnerable to the negative social and economic environments created by structural forces, resulted in the development of responses to homelessness that extend from emergency-oriented reactions to preventative action. Beyond this, in these countries, homelessness is viewed as a social problem spanning across the housing, justice, health and welfare sectors. The result of this recognition is a coordinated effort to respond to homelessness across different sectors and levels of government. This is in stark contrast to New Zealand governments' approach to managing the homeless population, which is relatively disjointed, ad-hoc and emergency-oriented.

## Chapter Four: The People's Project in Hamilton- a case study: Context and Method

### 4.1 Introduction

New Zealand academic literature highlights that the absence of a national policy framework for homelessness means that service providers and local governments are free to respond to and consider homelessness in their own ways. As the review of grey literature in the previous chapter highlighted, when and if considered at all, homelessness is understood inconsistently amongst government agencies. Some local governments have not developed a response to homelessness, while other local councils, such as those in Wellington, Nelson, and Auckland, had worked with government agencies at the regional scale and non-government organisations to respond to the issue of homelessness (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). As was evident in the findings from Chapter Three, the absence of a national policy framework for responding to homelessness aligns with the issue not being considered by government agencies and organisations.

Regardless of the absence or presence of a national policy framework for responding to homelessness, both international and New Zealand academic literature contain acknowledgements that responses to homelessness at the local level can be both supportive and punitive (DeVerteuil et al., 2009; Laurenson & Collins, 2007). In consideration of this, DeVerteuil et al. (2009) call for future research to engage with the complexity of responses to homelessness on the ground and for homelessness researchers to engage with the “true authors” of homeless geographies such as city managers, welfare officials and homeless people. The perspectives of these true authors are an important tool through which to understand how homelessness is considered, understood and responded to by public sector services at the local level. Through this research, engagement with key stakeholders provides empirical evidence around the nuanced ways in which homelessness is understood and considered by public sector services and agencies at the local level. Furthermore, by utilising The People's Project in Hamilton as a case study, this research provides understanding around some of the barriers to, and enablers of, implementing a HF and system-wide response to homelessness in the New Zealand context.

Considering insights from academic literature and the policy environment for understanding and responding to homelessness in New Zealand, this chapter sets the context and method for using The People's Project in Hamilton as a case study. The purpose of the case study is to explore both the understanding of homelessness by government, referred to as public sector services, at the local level, and the understanding of homelessness by The People's Project in Hamilton. The People's Project in Hamilton is the first significant HF response to homelessness in Aotearoa, New Zealand (Pierse et al., 2019). The chapter firstly sets the context for the utilisation of The People's Project as a case study by providing an overview of the case study site, Hamilton city. A brief history of homelessness in Hamilton prior to the formation of The People's Project is then provided. An outline of other local responses to homelessness in New Zealand that were considered for the local response to homelessness in Hamilton, prior to The People's Project, is given. A concise profile of housing need in the Waikato region, and in Hamilton city specifically, sets the scene for the increasing need for The People's Project response to homelessness. After a brief description and overview of The People's Project is provided, The People's Project in Hamilton is presented as a case study, and the methods of research and analysis for the case study are detailed.

## **4.2 Setting the Context**

### **4.2.1 Hamilton City**

Hamilton city (Māori name Kirikiriroa, meaning "long stretch of gravel") is located in the Waikato region in the central North Island of New Zealand, approximately 112 kilometres south of Auckland city. As New Zealand's largest inland city, Hamilton is also the fourth largest city in New Zealand with an estimated population of 169,600 for June 2019. Hamilton has a youthful population with around half of its residents aged less than 30 years old. Home to 80 ethnic groups, approximately three quarters of Hamilton's population identify as New Zealand European, with Māori comprising approximately 19% of the population (visithamilton, 2019). Hamilton is the major service centre for the Waikato region, which is centred around the dairy industry.

Hamilton was established in 1864 by the fourth Waikato militia. Initially developed as two separate settlements on either side of the Waikato River. In 1877, Hamilton East and Hamilton West combined as one borough in order to gain government funding for a bridge across the river (Swarbick, 2010). Hamilton remained relatively small until

the First World War when the city became a transport hub for the region. In 1945, after having enjoyed several decades of growth associated with its role as a hub for the local dairy farming sector, Hamilton gained city status with a population of 21,982. By 1966 the population had grown to approximately 63,000, a population increase due, in part, to the establishment of a University and teaching college in the city. The employment of medically skilled workers for the hospital and scientists who joined agricultural research institutes also contributed to the population growth and development of Hamilton city (Swarbick, 2010).

#### 4.2.2 Homelessness in Hamilton

Providing a background on homelessness in Hamilton, wherein homelessness is understood as beyond rough sleeping, is a particular challenge given the prominence of reference to visible homelessness and the relative silence regarding other forms of homelessness. In 2012, a Hamilton City Council report noted that homelessness had become a “pressing issue for Hamilton in recent years as numbers of rough sleepers rise and service providers’ face increasing challenges to respond” (Banks, 2012, p. 7). Whilst the report is titled *Homelessness in Hamilton- An Interagency Approach*, there is a clear focus on rough sleeping. The report noted the general increase of homelessness in New Zealand from the 1980’s, a decade during which the political climate was a catalyst for the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, the introduction of market rents for state houses and decreased housing affordability; in combination, these changes affected the ability of New Zealanders to remain adequately housed. The closure of psychiatric institutions and a lack of employment opportunities also contributed to the displacement of people into homelessness (Bang, 1998 as cited in ; Banks, 2012). For Hamilton, the decline of affordable emergency accommodation such as the closure of boarding houses and hotels throughout the 1990s created a particular driving force for homelessness locally. This occurred when the Empire Hotel in Frankton burnt down, the Cameron Road Lodge was converted to student accommodation and the Bell View and Grand Central Hotels were sold and used for other means (Calnan, 2007 as cited in Banks, 2012). For 16 years, starting in 1999, the Hamilton Christian Night Shelter was the only provider of emergency accommodation in Hamilton for men and women; this changed in 2015 with the Government provision of motel and hotel rooms as emergency housing.

In Hamilton, a number of faith-based organisations have provided free or cheap meals for people including those who sleep rough and may be homeless, and the Methodist Centre has provided showers for rough sleepers to use. In addition, Anglican Action provide a 13-week transitional housing programme for long-term homeless men, some of whom have been released from prison. However, the first community wide coordinated effort for a response to homelessness in Hamilton begun in 2009 when the Hamilton Police initiated the Waikato Homeless Action Response Effort, a project that evolved into the Hamilton Homelessness Interagency Group (HHIG). HHIG was established in late 2010 under recommendation from the Hamilton Police that government and community organisations should work together to address the social issues involved in homelessness. Hamilton City Council was tasked to lead the coordination of the HHIG (Banks, 2012). HHIG was made up of organisational representatives from:

- Hamilton City Council Community Development and Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces and City Safe units;
- Hamilton Christian Night Shelter Trust;
- Hamilton Central Business Association;
- Keys Living Choices; Anglican Action;
- New Zealand Police;
- Salvation Army;
- Waikato District Health Board (Community Alcohol and Drug Service);
- Ministry of Social Development (Work and Income);
- Methodist City Action and
- Pai Ake Solutions (Banks, 2012).

In 2012, HHIG produced a report to provide Hamilton City Council with background on HHIG and to identify some of the key issues relevant to homelessness in Hamilton. These key issues were based on a review of research and best practice both nationally and internationally. Attached to the report were HHIG recommendations on responding to homelessness. The research undertaken for the report involved consultation with non-government organisations and representatives from central and local government agencies involved in working with homeless people. This consultation focused on attaining participants views on rough sleeping in Hamilton and what could be done to better meet the needs of rough sleepers. The key issues relevant to homelessness in Hamilton were identified as a lack of affordable housing and transitional housing, and the need for third party involvement in transitioning rough sleepers to permanent housing. The report also identified a role for improved inter-sectoral

collaboration so that people would no longer ‘fall through the cracks’. Additionally the report confirmed the value of increased capacity in alcohol and drug treatment facilities, so that rough sleepers with addictions were no longer cycling in and out of the justice system. Finally, the report found a need for programmes or community facilities that provided rough sleepers with an opportunity for social connection. The report recommended the need for a citywide homeless action plan based on collective responsibility and for the council to develop a homelessness strategy in collaboration with HHIG that would be set within the HCC Social Wellbeing Strategy. Other recommendations included funding for the night shelter from Waikato DHB and the Hamilton City Council, and third party involvement to support the transition of night shelter occupants into permanent housing. The report also recommended for City Safe staff to record and report numbers of rough sleepers in the CBD and for staff to be educated about social services so that they are able to refer people to relevant agencies. Finally, the report recommended that HHIG advocate for free legal advice to be provided at the night shelter and for the HHIG to take a long-term strategic focus on permanent housing for men exiting the night shelter (Banks, 2012). Whilst some of these recommendations have been undertaken since the submission of the report to the Hamilton City Council, they have not been implemented under the HHIG. Rather, TPP in Hamilton adopted responsibility for the goals established by the HHIG. In acting upon the bulk of HHIG’s findings, TPP used its community wide response to focus on a HF approach and to reform some of the system barriers for access to services. TPP achieved this reform by engaging with key stakeholders who held senior positions in their respected public sector organisations or agencies (see section 4.2.5).

#### **4.2.3 Other local responses to homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand**

In and around the time of the HHIG and TPP in Hamilton, other local government responses to rough sleeping, some of which extended to homelessness, emerged in New Zealand. The “Homelessness in Hamilton- An Interagency Approach” included recognition of the common tendency for local government to use bylaws as a response to rough sleeping and the presence of people ‘living’ on the streets. In working to prohibit or regulate particular activities in public spaces, such bylaws disproportionately affected the lives of homeless. Beyond the punitive scope of bylaws, the report authors traced the increased tendency for local government to employ

collaborative approaches to improve support for those people sleeping rough. By drawing on the work of Laurenson and Collins (2007), the report authors were able to identify examples of such collaboration in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The influence of these earlier examples is evident within the HHIG and TPP approaches.

In 2012, Auckland city had more than 100 people estimated as rough sleeping on the streets of the CBD. Historically, Auckland City Mission, beginning in 1920, and Lifewise, since the mid-1950s, have provided outreach and services to homeless in Auckland (Banks, 2012). From 2008 onward, Auckland established an interagency approach through the “Auckland Homeless Action Plan 2008-2013”, an agreement that was underpinned by the Auckland Homeless Steering Group Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This document emphasised wraparound support for homeless in their transition from emergency to temporary or permanent accommodation. The MoU sits next to the Homeless Taskforce group which carried responsibility for the project implementation. Made up of 13 local, central and non-government member agencies, the steering group is charged with “streamlining processes and practices” so that those experiencing homelessness are placed in long-term accommodation with appropriate supports in place to sustain their tenancies (Auckland Homeless Steering Group Memorandum of Understanding, n.d., p.2 as cited in Banks, 2012). The “Auckland Homeless Action Plan 2008-2013” was based around leadership and public awareness; interagency response for future direction of homeless services; outreach services and street monitoring; and on an integrated response to anti-social behaviour (The Auckland Homeless Action Plan, 2010 as cited in Banks, 2012). The Auckland City Council (ACC) was a signatory to the plan and supported initiatives that promoted public awareness of homelessness; ACC staff attended meetings for the NZCEH, organised for council staff education on relevant issues, produced information cards for frontline staff and other organisations, and provided NZD\$25,000 annually for Auckland City Mission to provide outreach services. The establishment of a Special Circumstances Court, modelled off an American model which sentences ‘public space offenders’ such as the homeless, to treatment programmes, rather than to prison, has been one of the key successes of the “Auckland Homeless Action Plan 2008-2013” (2010 as cited in Banks, 2012).

In Wellington, the Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) has been providing services to those experiencing homeless for decades. The DCM initiative “Project Margin”, assists those experiencing homeless into their own houses through the provision of outreach support. The staff of Project Margin work alongside Housing New Zealand Corporation and Wellington City Council in order to find appropriate accommodation, and Wellington City Council funds the initiative as part of its ten-year Strategic Plan to address homelessness (Downtown Community Ministry, 2011 as cited in Banks, 2012). In addition to this work, DCM provides a benefit advocacy services and “The Street People Project” provides banking and money management for those unable to utilise mainstream banking services. Wellington City Council also contributed NZD\$250,000 for the refurbishment of the Wellington Night Shelter which provides emergency and transitional accommodation (Downtown Community Ministry, 2011 as cited in Banks, 2012).

In Christchurch, the Christchurch City Mission were responsible for operating a night shelter and a food bank, while also providing social work, budgeting services, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation services (Christchurch City Mission, 2008 as cited in Banks, 2012). The Christchurch City Council provided support through the provision of two NZD\$50,000 grants for the consent costs of developing new buildings for the Mission; this funding sat within the Council’s Long Term Plan 2009-2019 (Christchurch City Council, 2011 as cited in Banks, 2012).

#### **4.2.4 Housing Need in the Waikato Region with a focus on Hamilton City**

According to data from 2018, Hamilton is the third least affordable housing market in New Zealand with a median house price to median household income ratio of 6.8 (three times is considered affordable) (Brame, 2019). Additionally, in 2019, Hamilton had a shortfall of 4000 dwellings. Associated with this unaffordability and need for more housing in Hamilton is the increasing need and demand for social housing and accommodation assistance. In the Waikato Region, demand for social housing increased by 135% between December 2017 and 2018 (Brame, 2019). In 2018, NZD\$3.2 million per annum was provided through emergency housing special needs grants; this funding supported 785 households. For the year ending September 2018, NZD\$9.8 million was paid out through the Accommodation Supplement and the Ministry of Social Development.

With increasing demand in the Waikato Region, it is evident that there is an increased need for access to public and social housing. In September 2018, Hamilton had an excess demand for social housing stock of 15%, by December 2018 this excess demand increased to 19%. Public housing in the Waikato Region is primarily provided by Housing New Zealand (since 2020 known as Kāinga Ora) and by a range of community housing providers (CHP). According to September 2018 data, Waikato had a total of 4,424 public houses available, 4,315 of which were IRRS places. The public housing demand in the Waikato is largely for dwellings with one or two bedrooms (74% of the social housing register waiting list), the average for Waikato's housing stock is 3.2 bedrooms (Brame, 2019). On the most severe end of housing need, the *Waikato Housing Initiative Report* identified 80 'homeless' people in the Hamilton CBD. This designation referred only to people rough sleeping, with no estimate provided for the number of Hamilton residents experiencing homelessness along the continuum (Brame, 2019).

#### 4.2.5 The People's Project (TPP)

The People's Project (TPP), an organisation designed to provide a community-wide response to homelessness, currently operates in the cities of Hamilton and Tauranga in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a collaborative of community and government agencies where "key organisations come together and work collaboratively to end homelessness rather than manage it" (The People's Project, 2017). TPP was predominantly funded privately for the first few years of operation (McMinn, 2017; The People's Project, 2017). The strategic goal of TPP is to connect people, organisations and communities to realise a just society for all. This outcome is achieved through TPP's community-wide approach and by following examples of successful HF programmes in Canada, the USA and the United Kingdom (Pierse et al., 2019; The People's Project, 2018). The community-wide approach is reflected in TPP's governance group, which includes representatives from those agencies who comprise the collective. These representatives include individuals who hold senior positions in their respective community sector or public sector service, agency or department (see Figure 4.1).

The Wise Group had coordinated such an approach previously with staff from core public services such as Work and Income and the DHB to come together to house those who were at risk of living on the streets. The catalyst for this initial approach was the closure of the Cameron Road camping ground, a decision that added approximately 30 campground residents to the approximately 80 homeless people identified as

occupying the CBD. Following investigatory research by the Wise Group, the founding agency of TPP, it was decided that TPP would adopt a HF approach to homelessness in Hamilton. The decision to employ this approach stemmed from the Wise Group finding that housing is crucial to the recovery and stabilisation of those with mental illness, and an evidenced-based approach can be employed to deliver effective responses to homelessness (McMinn, 2020). After visiting HF programmes overseas, The Wise Group and TPP became aware that New Zealand had very different welfare, health and social housing systems than that of countries who had implemented HF in their response to homelessness. Given this awareness, TPP established that Housing First would require some tailoring for its implementation in the New Zealand context (McMinn, 2020). Given that HF had only been trialled by Downtown City Ministries in Wellington over a decade ago, TPP were cognisant of the fact that it would need to gather evidence around drivers of homelessness in New Zealand. Such data gathering was necessary because there was very little existing research and data to inform the formation of policy in New Zealand for homelessness and around the implementation of HF (McMinn, 2020).

Initially funded by the Wise Group Trust Board, TPP provided the first pilot for the roll-out of a large-scale HF response to homelessness in New Zealand. With the data and evidence detailing system interaction of TPP's initial client cohort, and having engaged in research collaborations with staff from the University of Otago and the University of Waikato, TPP was able to confirm evidence of the effectiveness of HF in Hamilton. From TPP in Hamilton and the evidence gathered around its local success, HF was up scaled to be rolled out across Auckland through the "Housing First Auckland collective". In light of the Hamilton achievements, and expansion into Auckland, central government agreed to provide funding for HF throughout New Zealand in cities deemed high need (see Chapter One).

Rather than being a drop-in centre, TPP operates a centrally-located office from which services are coordinated. Through on-street outreach efforts and referrals from government and community agencies, clients are referred to the office based in the Hamilton CBD. Within the office, a team of professionals with experience in mental health and addiction work with those experiencing homelessness to connect them with accommodation, income, employment and other community support services they may need to progress towards independent living. TPP takes an intensive case

management (ICM) approach for all of its clients, whether they have high, medium or low needs. This means that TPP provide one-on-one case manager to client relationships, basing engagement on a recovery-oriented approach. TPP broker access, or help clients navigate access, to public sector services, with TPP staff accompanying clients to meetings and appointments. The duration of services provided by TPP is determined by the needs of the client.

Underpinning TPPs work are the three goals outlined in its 2015/2016 strategic plan. These include disrupting the system, creating solutions and serving the person. For TPP, disrupting the system is about transforming the service system to end rather than manage homelessness. This is about refocusing efforts on how to end homelessness, exploring ways in which to break down barriers, encouraging agencies to work collaboratively, and managing by inclusion. Creating solutions is about the reallocation of resources, providing a community-wide response, securing housing stock and using a wrap-around multi-agency model to improve effectiveness when working with the vulnerable population. Finally, serving the person is about taking a unique approach in responding to individual's needs. The strategic plan specifically outlines that fundamental changes need to occur in Hamilton's social services systems because the existing system of services is perpetuating homelessness. The premise of adopting the HF approach was to treat those experiencing homelessness as human beings and members of the community who have a basic right to home and health. It also recognises that it is easier for people to address their issues – including those that led to or sustained their homelessness – once they are housed.

The establishment of TPP in Hamilton city in 2014 was centred on two observations, the first of which was the Wise Group's recognition of homelessness as complex social issue that no single organisation can solve. The second observation was the need to address concerns around the number of people living on the streets or sleeping rough in Hamilton's CBD. As part of this concern around rough sleeping, TPP was a central partner in the Hamilton City Council's "Central City Safety Plan". When formed in 2014, the Central City Safety Plan had the goal of by providing an attractive and vibrant city centre and thus generating improvement in how people felt about visiting central Hamilton. A key component of this was improving spaces the central city spaces managed by the council with an aim to balance enforcement for inappropriate behaviours with support for vulnerable people (Hamilton City Council, 2020).

Recent publications from the “Ending Homelessness in New Zealand: Housing First research programme” present findings around the service usage of those housed by the HF programme run by TPP in Hamilton (Pierse et al., 2019) and findings around the socio-demographic characteristics, housing situations and broader wellbeing indicators of TPP client cohort (Atatoa-Carr et al., 2018). Utilising client registration data between July 2015 and March 2017, Atatoa-Carr et al. (2018) found that of the 695 clients actively engaged with TPP at the time, 54.4% were aged between 25 and 44, 19.8% were under 25 years of age; these figures compare with 28.1% and 38.9% (respectively) for the Hamilton Resident Population. Just over half of the clients registered were female (55.7%) and for the 647 clients who had a single ethnic group recorded, 77.3% identified as Māori; these statistics compare with 22% for the Hamilton Resident Population. One-fifth (20.4%) of TPP clients identified as New Zealand European, with 3.1% identifying a Pacific ethnicity and 2.8% identifying as “Other”. For the 639 clients who identified the housing situation where they “slept the most” prior to seeking HF support 18.5% identified couch surfing, 15.6% slept on the streets, and 15.5% stayed with family; motels/hotels and private rental accommodation were the least common forms of accommodation (Atatoa-Carr et al., 2018). These sleeping locations were experienced in combination with night shelters, boarding houses, backpackers, emergency accommodation and Housing New Zealand properties.

Looking at a cohort of 390 of TPP clients, Pierse et al. (2019) examined over 200,000 service interactions throughout the homeless cohorts lifetime. Findings indicated that this cohort are not hard to reach. Rather, the high levels of interaction with government agencies preceding their homelessness reveals the “lack of systems approach that ultimately fails some of our most vulnerable” (Pierse et al., 2019, p. 7). The research notes that for the 390 individuals, 93,615 interactions occurred with government agencies prior to the clients being housed and 10,040 bed nights were spent in mental health facilities. Pierse et al. (2019) conclude that housing is a key determinant of outcomes across health, justice and social development. They noted that whilst the HF approach can attend to the gap in access to services, a system-wide strategy is required to prevent homelessness in the future and to ensure that government services can adequately address individuals complex needs and to prevent future homelessness.

### 4.3 The People's Project Case Study

TPP in Hamilton was chosen as a case study to explore understandings and governance practices of homelessness by public sector services at a local level within the context of a coordinated community response and HF approach to homelessness. Case studies are a useful for providing in-depth analysis on a subject as they involve the collection of detailed information. The detailed learning afforded within case studies is relevant to the aim of this research and particularly research objectives 3, 4 and 5 (see Chapter One). Yin (2003) defines case studies as a method through which a contemporary phenomenon can be investigated within a real-life context.

This research seeks to examine understandings of and governance practices around homelessness, as well as the enablers of and barriers to implementing a HF approach within the existing policy context in New Zealand. As such, it is appropriate to develop a thorough understanding of service providers' perceptions of homelessness and their experience of providing services to the homeless population in Hamilton. According to Burton (2000), case studies are one of the most frequently used research designs within the social sciences. This focus is not surprising given that case studies are often utilised when the "inquirer seeks answers to how and why questions, when there is little control over events being studied, when the object of study is contemporary and a real-life context", and where quantitative evidence is hard to acquire (Macpherson, Brooker, & Ainsworth, 2000, p. 52). Although case studies are utilised for the collection of detailed knowledge, they are critiqued for the risk of generalisation. This risk of generalisation refers to the extent to which the findings from, in this instance, a single case study, can be applied or used to understand other cases. Within this research, this risk is mitigated through the consolidation and triangulation of data collected in the literature review (Chapter Two) and the policy/document analysis (Chapter Three).

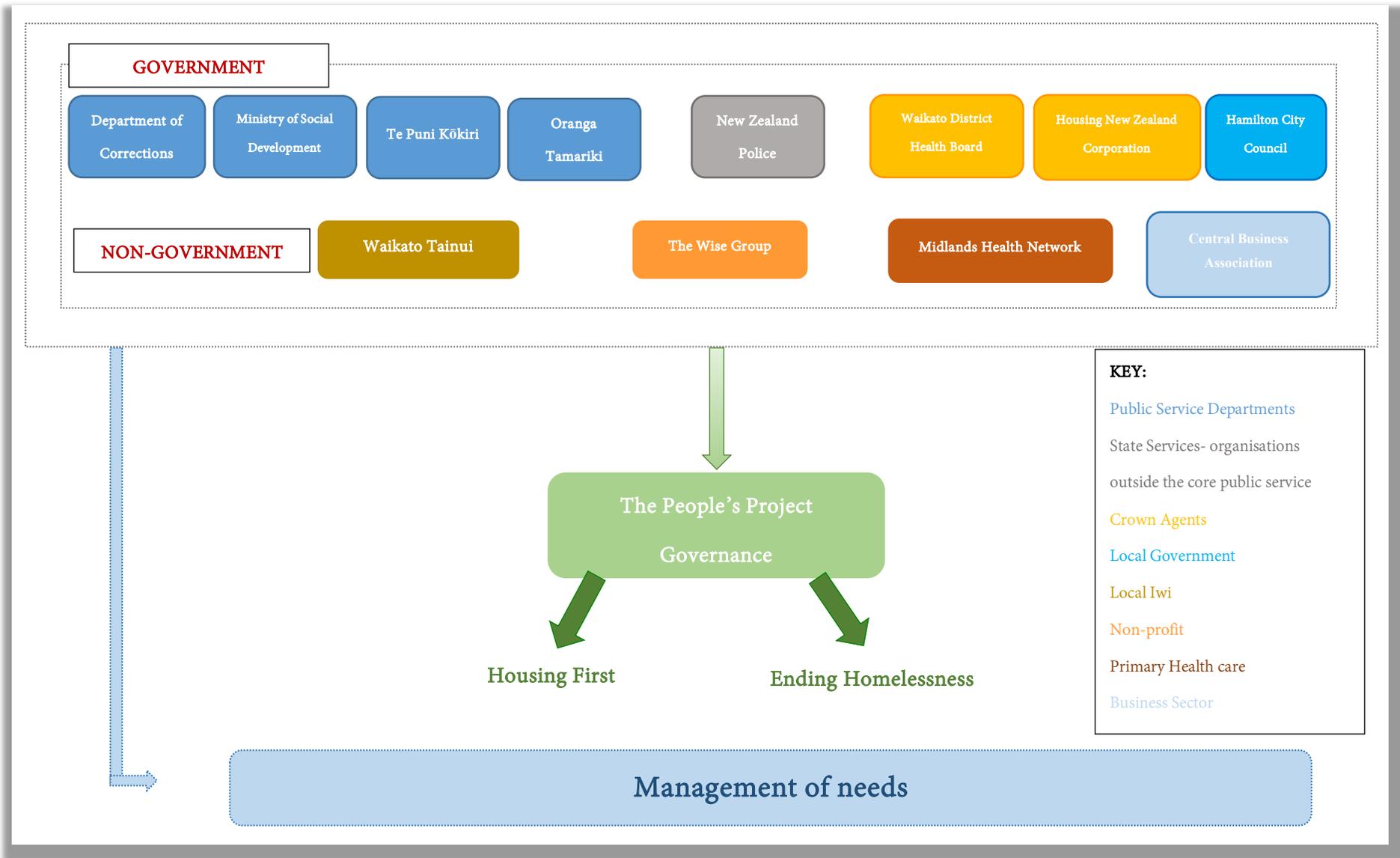


Figure 4.1 The People's Project Governance

TPP in Hamilton holds significance as the first pilot of HF in New Zealand (Pierse et al., 2019). In addition, TPP's coordinated approach and specific inclusion of public sector agencies in the governance group reflected organisational models identified in policies formulated in other country's community responses to homelessness. Furthermore, the TPP governance structure was, at the time of the review, unique to New Zealand provision agencies. The decision to utilise TPP in Hamilton as a single case study was also informed by methodological bounding, or the practical constraints of conducting research (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2009). At the time of the research, Hamilton was the only site where TPP had a significant community presence, having been in operation for two years. In contrast, TPP site in Tauranga was established more recently, in June 2018, meaning limited information was available for this site at the time of this research.

When undertaking case study research, Yin (2003) explains that the research approach needs to be designed in a way to meet four elements of empirical social research: construct validity; internal validity; external validity; and reliability. Construct validity is concerned with how well the research succeeds in measuring or capturing the topic of investigation. Yin (2003) explains that this can be achieved through the use of a range of evidence sources and the associated formulation of a clear chain of evidence. Within this research, the case study was researched via a range of methods, including the use of a systematic literature review and a review of grey literature. These methods involved content analysis using methods such as retrieval from coded text, word frequency and keyword in context tools of extraction and analysis. This is in addition to the use of semi-structured interviews and associated thematic analysis. Internal validity is concerned with relationships discovered within the findings and the confidence "with which researchers can make causal inferences from the results of an empirical study" (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004). When applied to qualitative research, Lewis-Beck et al. (2004) argue that this does not require the independent variable to be the only cause of variation just that it has to have some independent causal role. Within this research, internal validity was maintained through methodological and data type triangulation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). For example, findings regarding the public sectors consideration and understanding of homelessness are explored through a systematic review of grey literature in Chapter Three, as well as through key stakeholder interviews within the case study. Here, the lack of consideration and understanding of

homelessness by the public sector in Hamilton confirms findings around the lack of policy framing for homelessness at the national level. External validity relates to the idea of generalisability of research findings, an element that asks whether the findings of the case study can be applied to different contexts. In this research, and as in other qualitative case studies, it is understood that the specific context of each situation requires nuanced investigation (Mills et al., 2009). While Hamilton as a location provides a distinct context with a specific service landscape, the general issues faced in terms of understandings of homelessness are common to all New Zealand locales. This commonality means the barriers and enablers of implementing a community wide HF approach to homelessness in Hamilton provide learnings that can be applied at the national level. Finally, research reliability, the extent to which the research and results might be reproduced if conducted again, has been achieved through the documentation of, and adherence to, research procedures. The steps taken required to carry out the interviews have been clearly outlined below and approaches to analysis have also been detailed and follow standard procedures.

#### **4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most commonly utilised qualitative research methods within the social sciences and are widely used method of systematic data collection within case studies. Semi-structured interviews are used by researchers in order to “gain a detailed picture of a respondent’s beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic” (Smith, 1995, p. 10). With semi-structured interviews, the researcher asks participants a series of predetermined and open-ended questions as set out on their interview schedule (Given, 2008). The interview schedule is employed to guide rather than dictate the discussion set out in the interview (Smith, 1995). Interview guides include topics of interest in the form of specific research questions or more generalised topics the researcher intends to discuss (Given, 2008). These topics are based on the research question and the conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research. As such, semi-structured interviews are most often used when a researcher has identified an area of interest and some questions they require to be answered. Being semi-structured, the interviews employed in this research allow the respondent to introduce topics or issues of which the researcher may not have thought, and/or to expand on their answers in specific areas. In this way, semi-structured interviews allow for the researcher to guide the topic of conversation, they allow respondents the opportunity to share their perspective on the topic, and they allow the

interviewer to follow up on the respondents particular interests or concerns in relation to the research topics (Smith, 1995).

The advantage of using semi-structured interviewing is that they provide for consistent information gathering in the area of research, they can facilitate rapport with the participant, and they allow for flexibility of coverage by enabling the interview to enter “novel areas”. The disadvantages commonly associated with semi-structured interviewing is that they can be time intensive to carry out, they reduce the control held by the researcher, and they generate data that may be difficult to analyse. In the context of this research, semi-structured interviews were utilised in order to gain a detailed picture of key informants understandings of homelessness based on the conceptual model outlined in the literature review.

#### Research Subjects and Setting

The research conducted involved human participants and therefore ethical approval was required prior to the conducting of interviews. Ethical approval for this research was given by the University of Waikato’s Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix One). Prior to conducting interviews, participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix Two) and asked to provide written consent to be included within this research (see Appendix Three). In addition, participants indicated how they would like to be identified within the research findings, and whether they would like to receive the audio recording, transcript and copy of the findings.

Due to the two-fold purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews, research participants were chosen on the basis of their involvement with TPP and TPP governance group. Within this, a range of key stakeholders from the New Zealand public sector who hold senior positions within their services in the Waikato Region were interviewed. This interview population enabled the capture of both the social services responses to homelessness in New Zealand in general, and the social service responses at the local level as part of TPP. Therefore, most of the participants could speak to both TPP’s response to homelessness in the Waikato and their government organisations response to homelessness at the national level. This nexus allowed for the identification of system gaps within the response to homelessness. In addition, several participants were selected because of their long-term service provision in Hamilton and their long-standing commitment to the provision of services to

homelessness. Given their long-term involvement, these participants were able to speak to the background of homelessness as well as local responses to the issue over time.

Initial research participants within TPP were identified from the research relationship between senior TPP staff and the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis (NIDEA). These participants were contacted via email. Subsequent research participants were identified using a snowball sampling method from the initial research participants. Participants were also identified by one of my supervisors, a health scholar who has existing relationships with those involved with TPP governance group and their position within their respective social services sector.

In total, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 key stakeholders in the delivery of social services and the TPP-led response to homelessness in Hamilton. Key stakeholders represented the different sectors of the relevant social services including health, justice, welfare and housing. Education is the one social services sector not explicitly included within this research. This is because initial investigation determined that, in terms of systems and processes, teacher or school administration response to being aware of homelessness is to refer children or their families to other services. Four of the organisations that are represented on TPP's governance group, four of the organisations were not included as semi-structured interview participants. Thus, representatives from Te Puni Kōkiri, Waikato Tainui, the Hamilton Central Business Association and Oranga Tamariki were not interviewed. The decision to exclude these organisations and agencies is not reflective of the importance of their involvement with TPP. Rather, these agencies were excluded from providing interviewees because they are not directly involved in the delivery of public sector services. These four organisations make important contributions in providing leadership, strategic input and consultation to TPP's response to homelessness in Hamilton, but they do not have a direct contribution as part of the homeless serving system. Of the fourteen interviewees who work with, or have been involved with TPP's coordinated response to homelessness in Hamilton, five participants belong solely to TPP and three of the participants sit on the governance group of TPP (see Table 4.2).

Interviews were predominantly conducted in-person and individually, however, in two instances dual interviews were conducted due to convenience to the research

participants. In one instance, an interview was conducted over the phone and consent was not given for the conversation to be audio recorded. For this interview, written notes were the only record of the conversation.

The interview guide topics and questions were based around the five broad research questions and topics developed for the interview method of research (see Table 4.1). Two sets of interview guides were developed, one set directed at TPP (see Appendix Four) and one set directed at the understanding and consideration of homelessness within the provision of social services in New Zealand (see Appendix Five). The two sets of interview guides were structured around the relevant corresponding research questions into sets of topics that were used to encourage conversation around each topic. For the majority of interviews, interview guides followed along the topics of conversation as outlined below.

#### Interview Session Structure

Each interview session was conducted in a semi-structured manner. Interviews began with the interviewer briefly discussing the purpose of the research and going through the conditions of the consent form. The interviewees were informed of the procedures of the interview before recording of the interview commenced. Each interviewee was asked to introduce themselves, their current position and previous work experience in relation to service provision, and how they became involved with TPP. By having an open-ended introductory portion of the interview, space was created for a narrative grounded in participant experience (Galletta & Cross, 2013).

*Table 4.1 Semi-structured interviews focal research questions*

The People’s Project focal research questions	Social Services focal research questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is homelessness defined and understood by The People’s Project?</li> <li>- How does The People’s Project respond to the needs of those experiencing homelessness?</li> <li>- What challenges and opportunities do The People’s Project face in the current setting of social services?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is homelessness defined by New Zealand Social Services?</li> <li>- How does the New Zealand Social Services Sector respond to the needs of the homeless population?</li> </ul>

<b>The People’s Project Interview Topics</b>	<b>Social Services Interview Topics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of The People’s Project</li> <li>- Challenges and opportunities in the current setting of Social Service Provision</li> <li>- Definition and Conceptualization of Homelessness</li> <li>- Difference in populations of homeless and their needs by place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of Service Provider</li> <li>- Relevance of Service Provision to Clients experiencing homelessness</li> <li>- Definition and consideration of homelessness</li> <li>- Involvement with TPP and changes to service delivery practices</li> </ul>

Table 4.2 Interview participants profile

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Geographical Jurisdiction</b>
PSS1 PSS2 PSS3	Health	Waikato
PSS4	Justice	Waikato
PSS5	Justice	Hamilton
PSS6	Housing	Waikato
PSS7	Welfare/Housing <i>*Note: phone interview, no consent for recording granted.</i>	Waikato
PSS8 PSS9	Council	Hamilton
TPP1 TPP2 TPP3 TPP4 TPP5		Hamilton

Following introductory comments, the interview schedule (see Table 4.1) addressed understandings and responses to homelessness. The interviewer presented the first topic of the interview by asking an open-ended question for elaboration on by the interviewee and by doing so, the interviewer attended to the nuances of the participant’s story in order to capture the complexity of the topic. As the interviewee

spoke about each topic, the interviewer consulted the interview guide to determine if any prompting about question specifics was required. Additionally, during the interview the interviewer noted down any points of interest and raised related questions when appropriate. Once all interview topics were covered and questions addressed, interviewees were asked whether they had any further comments to make and the interview session was concluded. Content from the semi-structured interviews was digitally recorded and transcribed in full.

#### **4.5 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis refers to a qualitative research method used to formalise the process of developing themes (Byrne, 2017). The purpose of thematic analysis is to make sense of qualitative data by extracting broad ideas (Fugard & Potts, 2019) or themes that “represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Effective thematic analysis involves going beyond reporting what is in the data and providing an interpretation of the data in relation to a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Whilst many different approaches to conducting thematic analysis exist, there is agreement among academics that the usual stages of thematic analysis include the preliminary scanning of the data, the development of themes which can be formed both by pre-existing understandings or can emerge in-vivo from the data, and the coding of data into the relevant themes (Byrne, 2017; Fugard & Potts, 2019). For this research, thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews was guided by the six-stage approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Familiarisation with the data and identification of potential items of interest
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Search for themes
4. Reviewing of potential themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Familiarisation with the dataset was achieved through transcribing the audio recordings and preparing transcripts for NVivo. Through the familiarisation stage of thematic analysis, potentially relevant features of the data were identified. In the second phase, interview content relevant to the research inquiry was coded. Coding involved gathering relevant interview material based on the purpose of the research inquiry. This initial process of coding was then utilised for generating initial ideas and facilitating the identification of themes in the interview material. A total of 34 initial themes were generated inductively and relevant data were coded for each node through the use of NVivo software. Within NVivo, a node is a collection of coded

material or references about a specific theme. From these initial theme nodes, eight potential themes were discerned and identified as parent nodes. These themes emerged from a process of sorting and grouping similar child nodes or subthemes in relation to their relevance to the research questions. These potential themes were reviewed by considering whether they captured the most important features of the coded data relevant to the research question and related literature. The themes were also reviewed by checking them against the whole dataset and clarifying boundaries between themes. As part of this review process, each theme was examined for its coherence and clarity.

In the fifth stage of the thematic analysis, three themes were defined and named in relation to the public sector data and five themes were defined and named in relation to TPP data. Definitions for each theme were created by considering the essential message of each theme in relation to the conceptual framework of which the semi-structured interviews were based. Where they appeared, relationships between each of the themes were explored. During this stage, data extracts for use in the final report were selected for their ability to provide examples of each theme. The final stage of thematic analysis involved the process of writing-up the findings and analysis for the public sector and TPP data. Within this stage, the themes were refined through the narrative created and related analysis. This involved integrating findings from the literature with findings from other parts of the wider research project and by determining the presentation order of themes.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter set out the context of homelessness policy in New Zealand, and introduced TPP in Hamilton. Up until mid-2016, the New Zealand government provided no response directed towards homelessness. Despite growing evidence and reports of homelessness in New Zealand, government documents recognising the existence of homelessness were few and far between. Historically, homelessness has remained on the margins of social policy within New Zealand and has held a relatively low profile as a social issue. In New Zealand, homelessness has been characterised by cultural invisibility and separated from “serious housing need”, orientations that minimised the significance of New Zealand’s failing housing system. Whilst some local level responses to homelessness in New Zealand have existed for some time, these have typically lacked the involvement of central government agencies, focusing

instead on coordination between local government, community-based agencies and non-governmental organisations.

TPP in Hamilton, established in 2014, is a local-level coordinated response to homelessness. TPP employs a HF and systems approach. Such an approach is widely employed outside New Zealand, but is progressive when placed within the New Zealand context. It is of significance that TPP governance group purposefully includes central government agencies operating at the local level. Taking these factors into consideration, TPP in Hamilton is used as a case study to explore the understanding and governance of homelessness in Hamilton city and to examine both the opportunities and limitations that exist within the New Zealand policy context.

Chapters Five and Six present the findings from the interview analysis in light of findings from relevant literatures (see Chapters Two and Three) and HF and governance literature. Chapter Five presents the findings concerning the way in which the public sector of services define, understand and respond to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton. Chapter Six presents findings in relation to the way in which TPP understands and defines homelessness. It also presents findings around the opportunities and limitations of implementing a HF and system-wide response to homelessness in Hamilton given a wider New Zealand context characterised by an absence of national policy or plan for responding to homelessness.

## Chapter Five: Public Sector Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

In New Zealand the public sector services comprise the response of central government agencies to local level need across health, welfare, justice, housing, and education at the local level (see Chapters One and Four). With the absence of a central government policy for responding to homelessness, this research explores when and how staff within the public sector employed meanings of homelessness. This chapter presents the findings from semi-structured interviews that obtained responses regarding the understanding of homelessness within public sector services operating in Hamilton and the Waikato Region. These findings are presented in the form of themes and are discussed in relation to the following research question: how do staff within the public sector consider, define, understand and respond to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton? The findings are also considered within the context of themes from the academic and grey literature as explored in Chapters Two and Three.

### 5.2 Findings

As shown by the highlighted text in Table 5.1, three core themes were identified regarding the understanding and consideration of homelessness within the public sector. In comparison to the core findings within the academic and grey literature, and to the themes discovered for TPP (as explored in Chapter Six), it is evident that, whilst the consideration and understanding varies between sectors, for the most part, staff in the public sector lack a clear and coherent understanding of homelessness. The theme most prominent within data collected from public sector workers is that there is a *limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness*. This theme was made up of two sub-themes *systems* and *funding*. The *absence of a definition of homelessness* emerged as the theme that ranked second in terms of public sector responses. This theme comprised three sub-themes: *a definition unnecessary in the absence of homeless specific services*; *a definition would enable public sector staff to understand the way their agency or department contributes to homelessness*; and *a definition alone is limiting because of the need to understand the complex nature of homelessness*. The third theme, *hegemonic representations informing the understanding of homelessness* did not align with any sub-themes.

Table 5.1 Themes and sub-themes identified from public sector participants

<b>Public Sector Themes</b>
<p><b>Limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness:</b>  <i>Whether homelessness is considered within the public sector varies. Generally, there is a limited ability for each sector to consider or conceptualise homelessness within their specific purpose and service provision.</i></p>
<p>Systems                      Funding</p>
<p><b>The absence of a definition of homelessness:</b>  <i>No definition of homelessness is formally adopted or utilised by public sector services. Participants identified why this is the case, some participants explained how definitions would be useful to increasing staff understandings of what defines homelessness, others viewed that it would be beneficial to understand the complexity of homelessness as opposed to having a definition.</i></p>
<p>A definition is unnecessary in the absence of homeless specific services                      A definition would enable public sector staff to understand the way their agency or department contributes to homelessness                      A definition alone is limiting - need to understand the complex nature of homelessness</p>
<p><b>Hegemonic representations informing the understanding of homelessness:</b>  <i>Some participants identified the way in which hegemonic representations of homelessness have informed the public's understanding of homelessness. This has influenced the public sectors role in responding to visible homelessness.</i></p>

### 5.2.1 Limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness

This theme encompasses how the absence of consideration for homelessness within the public sector at the national scale results in a parallel absence in the usual provision of public sector services at the local level. This theme comprises the finding that, when homelessness is thought about by staff working within the public sector at the local level in Hamilton, their ability to respond to homelessness is limited. This *limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness* may be attributed to two distinct but related sub-themes, *systems* and *funding* (See Table 5.1 above and Figure 5.1 below).

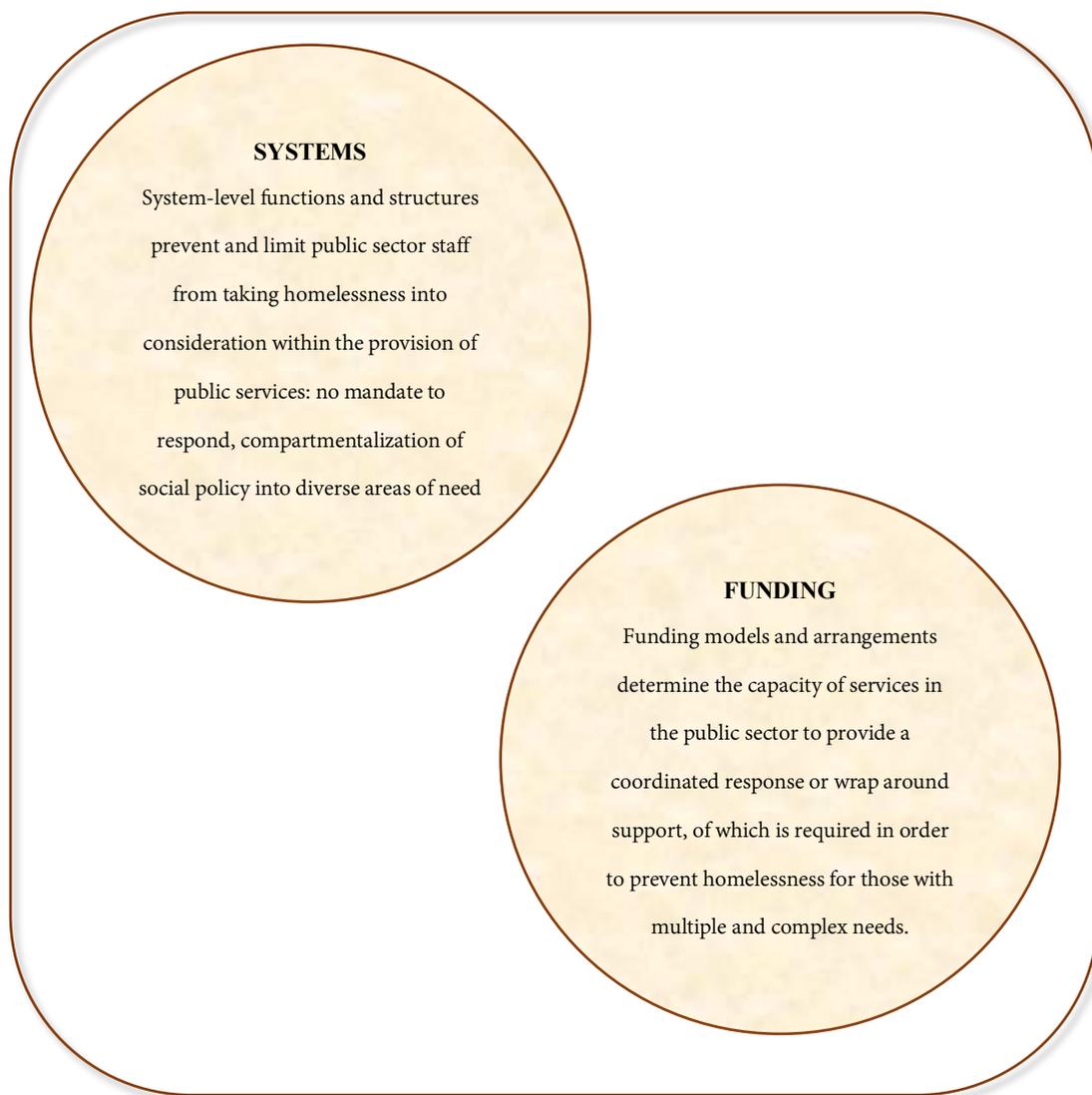


Figure 5.1 Sub-themes for the “limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness” theme

The most coded for sub-theme, *systems*, refers to systems-level functions that limit or prevent public sector personnel from conceptualising homelessness. Drawing on the Productivity Commission’s (2015) evaluation and report of public services in New Zealand, two related sub-themes may be identified: the mandate to respond; and, the siloed nature of the public sector’s provision of social services. The mandate to respond refers to there being no directive from central government for the public sector to respond to homelessness. The lack of central government mandate to respond to homelessness results in two effects. Firstly, the lack of central government mandate means that the local government is able to respond to homelessness in ways unique to each given locale. Secondly, because of the lack of mandate to respond, the ways in which the public sector at the local level can support local government efforts is limited. In these ways, the system restricts consideration for and the conceptualisation of homelessness. As one participant identified, homelessness was considered by

Hamilton City Council, however, the way that homelessness is considered by different councils in New Zealand differed due to the lack of guidance from central government:

We've had within council, social policy, social development, someone who has kind of been thinking about some of our bigger issues for a wee while. So back in 2011, homelessness was on the radar in terms of a community issue and needing a type of response. (PSS8, council)

Auckland were talking about some of the hardline stuff as well, so there was a bit of that conversation nationally, 'should we be hard-lining our bylaws?'. . . There was the conversation around 'what is the best response from the council perspective?' Lots of the hardline stuff was being driven by some of our businesses in terms of wanting to not see the problem. But ultimately, the conversation initially went, 'we can't enforce our way out. . . Other councils have different roles with that, but we have never played that space. (PSS8, council)

I think, as a general rule, if central government is directing or giving strong guidance, it becomes easier to customize within a local environment, to support and add on. . . You know, housing is one of those things central government needs to have ownership and responsibility for, and probably needs to invest for the social outcomes in a way that is larger than it currently is. With that central government direction, then I guess local government knows who to back a little bit more. (PSS8, council)

In recognition of the need to respond to homelessness, participants identified that the council initiated interagency meetings to discuss homelessness. Within these meetings, discussions took place with third sector service providers, government agencies and other key local level stakeholders. Although homelessness was being considered by key stakeholders, such considerations failed to venture into conceptual discussions. Examples from the interagency groups understanding and response to homelessness in Hamilton were clearly confined to a narrow framing of the issue. Additionally, these interagency meetings, generated only limited results and action:

[A] group of us had been meeting with a group of people from different agencies . . . with the mayor at the time, Julie Hardaker, around safer cities and the issue of homelessness and the concern about homelessness. And at the time, the incidents and prevalence of synthetic cannabis that that was having on vulnerable people was a topic of conversation and real interest for us, and concern. And like, those types of meetings can be, in the early stages . . . there was a lot of talking around ideas about how we should be providing more joined up services, that we should collaborate together, all of these nice ideas. And then actually, the catalyst for change was when the mayor who chaired the group said, 'actually, we have been talking about this for a while now, and you keep saying you need to do things differently, why don't you just do it?' (PSS1, health)

There were a few things that happened in that space from the police being involved with individuals and knowing how to deal with specific individuals rather than a blanket response. There were things that developed within some of our social services like City Action, you know making showers available for people on the street. There was always a conversation around what free meals would look like . . . We had our parks team brought in because our parks were being used as a place for rough sleeping . . . So one of the things that happened in regards to our homelessness was, there was a bit of a look at the interagency group and going, 'the people who sit around that table don't really have the power to make systematic change, only the power to manage and to help from a grassroots level. And actually, we are not going to see major change.' (PSS8, council)

This lack of power for the efforts of the interagency group to make systemic change stems from the public sector having no mandate to respond to homelessness and relatedly, from each public sector agency or service provider having little ability to provide beyond that for which they are contracted. Constraints on the scope of service provision was discussed by a participant in relation to interagency group meetings coordinated by the Department of Corrections in the Waikato Region. The participant acknowledged that with no mandate for public sector services to respond in a holistic manner, patch protection occurred:

It is a challenge to get agencies to just, I should say, just to do the right thing. Everybody is busy, we kind of sometimes retreat back into our trenches and go 'no that is not what we do', rather than saying 'well it's not what we do, however, what we will do is work with that person until we can re-establish, or establish what they need. (PSS4, justice)

As noted by PSS4, at a systems level, because there is no responsibility to respond to homelessness, and because system architecture limits flexibility in the way and by whom services are provided, patch protection leaves gaps in support. These gaps have particular relevance for those individuals whose high and complex needs require interagency support across services. The comments of PSS4 also indicate that the lack of a mandate to respond to homelessness has implications for the resources that are made available to local agencies. Thus, even if agencies coordinate their responses, without a mandate for action they remain limited in their ability to access appropriate resources to provide an adequate response. Similarly, participants commented on the importance of housing both to an individual's overall wellbeing, and in terms of the role that it has in meeting the specific purpose of the corresponding department, agency or service. Despite this recognition, the relevance of providing a response to homelessness is not accounted for within these agencies or services.

I think if we look at any number of convincing pieces of research, housing is the core thing to our wellbeing and our quality of life is pretty poor if we don't have a quality roof over our head".(PSS8, council)

You could either take a holistic approach to improving a person's recovery or wellbeing and that, in order to stay well, that you require a comprehensive plan in all aspects working in your life. That would be the view I take and the view consistent with where we are going. But there will be views in mental health services generally across New Zealand in our sphere, that because of issues around demand, because of growing problems and because there are other people involved in providing services . . . that our role is really only to deal with the persons wellness, treat the illness and then move the person on . . . People would have actually said, in this wider organisation, outside of mental health . . . I think it was the senior comms person said that homelessness is not a health issue. And I was like "what?!" (PSS1, health)

It's pretty well known that [the Department of] Corrections have set some targets around reducing recidivism and trying to keep people out. So, there has been a real emphasis on getting people skills, it is clearly understood research that people in employment are less likely to reoffend so that becomes a real focus . . . I guess that's the mind shift, the rehabilitation and reintegration step, because leaving prison and moving into the community is quite a big step . . . Whether its supporting people to relocate to other places, it is really hard to find housing when you are in prison. (PSS4, justice)

I think our probation staff and our case managers you know, sit in a place where we have quite a lot of angst around how do we keep people of the streets or try and reconnect them with family . . . but again, overlaid on that is what is their offending and what is the risk that [the Department of] Corrections is managing. And again, your risky people, homelessness is probably not one of the greatest risks that Corrections is managing, there is obviously a linkage there. (PSS4, justice)

So, if they are at a high risk of re-offending, like a child sex offender that is under probation services, then we will certainly have a lot of input into that person, where they might live and who they might associate with and knowing where they are. On the other end of that spectrum might be someone who is on fewer conditions that's reporting, that can actually be where they choose to be. (PSS4, justice)

The response of the public sector and the role of public sector agencies did not include the capacity to include a specific response to homelessness as part of their service provision. This disparate provision of services, fragmented organisational purpose and lack of mandate for public sector services to respond has meant that regional services

are having to obtain their own information themselves to ascertain those who are homeless.

We are trying to find the links to find people who are homeless or in emergency housing and things like that. . .we are the ones that are going out to find them, as opposed to having a whole database of who is doing this, and who is doing that because there are different people in each region. (PSS6, housing)

Thus, in the absence of a national structure to allocate roles and responsibilities, there is no systematic support of a coherent response to homelessness. This lack of clarity stems, in part, from the way in which services within the public sector are siloed. This makes up the second aspect of the systems sub-theme. Thus, one participant explained that within their services, even if they were concerned about a client's wellbeing with regards to homelessness, they do not have access to the additional services or support in order to help: "If we ask, then what do we do? Are we then stuck with a problem that we can't get support for? So that can be a challenge as well" (PSS3, health).

With there being limitations around the timing of service delivery, and the manner in which services from different sectors can connect, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) appears to be the sole avenue to gain access to housing services for the homeless:

We know we have a lot of customers who need housing and we have to turn them away from the counter, send them back to MSD and say 'you need to go back down there and talk to them because we can't do anything here unless your name is on a list and it pulls through to a property'. (PSS6, housing)

The process described by PSS6 can be difficult for clientele who are already in stressful situations, who do not like dealing with government agencies or who feel intimidated. The siloed nature of the public sector of services ensures that the processes required to resolve homelessness are not user-friendly as they do not take into account the complex needs of individuals. One of the most significant system-level contributors to the lack of accountability is that the need for housing and the need for associated social support are split between agencies within the public sector:

So, if a customer turns up and says I have a few mental health issues, I have schizophrenia, I have no support or anything like that, we can turn around and say, "have you worked with so and so? You can go and see so and so". But we don't really do that a lot because we can't offer that kind of support, it is not the tenancy manager's role because we are not trained in it. We are basically trying

to make sure they try and keep their houses tidy, to ensure that we give them a house that is comfortable. (PSS6, housing)

*Funding* is the second sub-theme identified as having a role in the limited conceptualisation of homelessness within the provision of services by public sector agencies. The sub-theme coded content that identified the role the availability of funding and funding arrangements have in the ability for public sector services to consider homelessness and for whom. Participants identified the relevance of funding and the consideration of pathways to homelessness within the justice and health sectors. These participants identified how the availability of funding for high needs individuals reflected an understanding that those with multiple and complex needs have barriers to accessing and sustaining housing. This enabled consideration of pathways to homelessness within the provision of their services:

I guess some of the contracts that the department has are with providers that have housing options and obviously, we are supporting a particularly risky person, with a provider, to stay in a house. So that's, yeah, medium to high risk. We have got some facilities and houses through other contract providers that are an interim step from prison and those are for people who might have a cognitive or mild to moderate mental health impairment that just need some support on release and an agency that will help locate a flat and benefit. (PSS4, justice)

The mental health and cognitive impairment one [programme] has been going now for two years in a pilot capacity, which is proving to be really supportive. Not everybody succeeds down that pathway . . . The government announced earlier this year, \$50 million towards [the Department of] Corrections for housing. And so, there is a project team in Wellington just pulling together what that might look like. I don't have any details on that yet, it hasn't come out. But I think logically, that's probably to support people coming out of prison again. So, I am reluctant to use terms like halfway houses and things like that, but I guess if there is money for supportive accommodation and people coming out, there's thinking going on about how to make a pathway that supports people. (PSS4, justice)

This participant went on to explain that through a pilot project operating locally, their department was able to provide additional wrap around support for some of their high needs or high-risk offenders. Whilst the participant does not explicitly state that this is a response to homelessness, it indicates the capacity to which some of the pathways to homelessness are considered within the public sector's response to need. However, the focus on high needs and high-risk offenders limits scope in the provision of wrap around services and supportive housing, with those with 'less-than-high' needs missing the opportunity to receive potentially positive benefits. Furthermore, as PSS4 suggested within *a definition is unnecessary in the absence of homeless specific services* sub-

theme, there is much to be gained from providing wrap around support and coordinated service provision to offenders who may be short servers and lower level offenders. This sentiment is shared for the provision of health services. As PSS1 and PSS3 explained, the distribution of funding across services directed at different levels of needs constricts the ability of public sector agencies to respond in ways that might prevent some of the pathways into homelessness.

So, what happens is that we have got a reasonably wide-open front door where people can access assessment or triage and then the idea is that if you are, if you don't have serious problems, then you will be assisted to the right service. Which is all great in theory, but there are actually very limited places to assist people to. So, either people stay in our service, or get assisted out somewhere unsuitable and don't get their needs met, and get worse, and come round and round. Then they do meet our service. So, one of the big problems is the lack of wrap around, immediately responsive, supports for people who don't actually have serious mental illness and need a service like ours, certainly don't need to be an inpatient. But they have needs that are significant at the time, and if there were services that could swiftly engage and wrap supports around quickly - housing, employment relationships, counselling - whatever, that just happens, and we keep people out. You know we keep people well as early as possible, intervention [sic], and um, they don't need to come into services. (PSS1, health)

So, the secondary care services probably have about 95% of the funds for health but look after three percent of the population. And they are quite open, they would have said the top three percent most, the most severe. But they have more money than we do . . . they don't have any contracts or funding to deal with people who are moderate to severe distress or illness. So, there is just this gaping big hole and they end up coming to us in the mild to moderate space, not really being enough, and bouncing backwards and forwards between primary care and secondary care. (PSS3, health)

As PSS3 describes in the above quote, because the distribution of funding and available services is skewed towards individuals with the highest needs, those who are not eligible to access those services are left without having their needs responded to adequately. Furthermore, the way that services are funded ensures responses are emergency oriented, leaving the potential for unmet needs to contribute to an individual's pathway into homelessness.

For the most part, particularly at the local level, the way in which funding is structured has limited the ability of public sector services to respond to client needs in a way that considers how complex needs contribute to homelessness. As one participant

explained in relation to the health sector, the low-cost access funding model is “not great” because “it means all of the high needs patients end up being concentrated in practices which, when you have got lots of them, they need more time. . . . and it was hard to provide the service that I wanted to provide” (PSS3, health). Furthermore, access to funding can often determine access to additional services that may be relevant to a patient’s wellbeing:

Some practices have access to social workers, and some do not . . .if you have access to a social worker then it is easier to ask those questions than if you don’t. We are in negotiations with the DHB about how there are a truckload of social workers, but we can’t access them from primary care, and we are probably the ones better positioned to identify those issues and prevent admission into hospital because a lot of admissions to hospital would be because of lack of social support and housing challenges. . . . A key thing going forward would be to have access to social workers, health coaches, peer support workers and peer mentors as well as advocates. (PSS3, health)

Access to other services from outside of primary care is a prime example of where funding has the ability to facilitate the provision of multiple access points to services that clients may need to address their complex needs and to resolve homelessness. A service hub would enable the complex needs of clients to be considered and, as such, would alleviate the need for patients or clients to navigate an array of services.

### 5.2.2 The absence of a definition of homelessness

The second theme, *the absence of a definition of homelessness in the public sector of services*, is the second-most coded for theme from the public sector of services data. As the title of the theme indicates, the public services do not adopt a definition of homelessness. This lack of adoption is not surprising given evidence of the limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness within public sector service provision (see Section 5.2.1). In accordance with the emphases evident in participant responses, this second theme is composed of three distinct sub-themes (see Figure 5.2).

The first sub-theme, *a definition is unnecessary in the absence of homeless specific services*, expresses the view that public service staff do not currently have a definition of homelessness because the agency, department or service for which they work does not provide homeless services. When asked about whether they have a formal definition or even shared understanding around homelessness, participants answered:

I don’t think we are necessarily talking enough about homelessness. . . Because we are not a provider we probably haven’t felt the, or the conversation hasn’t

been directed to, having an agreement in what we are talking about. . .so we are loose on an absolute [Hamilton City] Council definition of homelessness. (PSS8, council)

Official no, unofficially [the] application [of a definition] for my people who are the principle people from Hamilton City Council who would be dealing with [homelessness]. . .[includes]people who are in the central city who have nowhere to sleep. Our focus is simply on those who are coming across as homeless. (PSS9, council)

No, no and no . . . I actually had to look that up, I actually went through the policies and everything just to make sure that I could actually say ‘no, no and no’ . . . Because we are no longer looking after the applications, I don’t think there is any real need for us to have that definition because that’s where the other service providers come in. (PSS6, housing)

It was not seen as anything to do with us. That is an extreme answer but think generally, it is a true answer . . . I think it is more implicit, I am not sure that we have said that we have an active definition that we use. (PSS1, health)

Furthermore, PSS7, who is employed in the welfare sector, explained that within social housing assessments, some living situations, such as sleeping in a car, in a tent or in unsatisfactory shared accommodation, are considered as being homeless. Welfare sector agencies have not adopted a definition for homelessness, a situation which requires homelessness be identified through assessments of living situation and the application of the category ‘serious housing need’. When asked about the usefulness of having a standardised approach to homelessness, one participant responded that a definition would not be particularly helpful when providing their response or services. For this respondent, a definition would not be useful because the agency for which they work has a role in responding to immediate need as opposed to resolving an individual’s homelessness:

Well, I mean, even front line get called too. We had a period of time where we’d get a number of jobs where people are passed out in Hamilton CBD with synthetics. And the first call is the police, and then the ambulance if you need it . . . So I don’t know that a standard definition of homelessness would be beneficial . . . Because homelessness has those different aspects, you can’t really apply one standard definition to it, I think. (PSS5, justice)

Conversely, one participant commented that while they do not provide a response to homelessness as such, it would be relevant to have a definition. This response exemplifies the second sub-theme, that *a definition would enable services to understand their contribution to homelessness*. Although only three items were coded as relevant to

this sub-theme, and these items all belonged to the same participant, this sub-theme is significant as it describes the role of a definition in furthering understandings of living situations that comprise experiences of homelessness. Thus, when asked about whether a definition would be relevant, the participant replied: “I think it would be, and I think that some of the challenging conversations that I have here are about how [the Department of] Corrections contribute to homelessness. And there would be push back on that.” (PSS4, justice).



Figure 5.2 Sub-themes for "the absence of a definition of homelessness" theme

In this quote, PSS4 is explaining how a definition of homelessness would contribute to understandings of the living situations that constitute homelessness, cognisance of instabilities associated with such living situations, and knowledge of how their department contributes to homelessness through the lack of support given to individuals exiting from their system. The participant acknowledged the extent of the challenges individuals experience when leaving prison and trying to find accommodation. Furthermore, they explained that “with the hard people, high level offenders, we do a really good job . . . [and that] maybe that multi-agency approach will start moving to all these other people that are moving out of the system” (PSS4, justice).

Part of the participants justification around the value of having a definition is that it would prompt their department to “think a bit more about where they [offenders] go” because there is a need to “value stability as much as we might value some other aspects of Correction care” (PSS4, justice).

In comparison to the first two sub-themes, the third sub-theme (see Figure 5.2 above) expresses the dismissal of, or limitations around, the need for a definition of homelessness when it comes to public service provision. Rather than simply requiring a definition of homelessness in order to understand homelessness, this sub-theme points to the need for services to understand the complex nature of homelessness. This sub-theme was evident within the data collected from participants employed in providing justice and housing services. When asked whether a definition of homelessness would be relevant or useful, one participant commented: “I don’t know that a standard definition of homelessness would be beneficial, but possibly a better understanding of the complex nature of it, and just making sure everyone know the different places that they can refer people to” (PSS5, justice). Similarly, when asked about the value of the categories of housing need when placing a client into social housing, one participant commented on how information is lacking:

We don’t know what is going on with this customer and yet we are the ones that are supposed to house them, we have to put them in an area that they want, and help sustain their housing there, and we can’t do that without that information. (PSS6, housing)

But I suppose on a national consistency, for all of us, especially my colleagues who do my role across the country, we look at homelessness as somebody who doesn’t have a roof over their head, who is in emergency housing or who is transitional housing, or who is basically living on the streets. So a very simplified way of looking at things for us. And to us, that is what homelessness means, you know, we see it on the applications ‘in emergency housing or homeless’. That is all that they have got on their notes, and that is the only trigger that we have when we see their application. Half the time we don’t know whether they are in emergency housing or whether they are on the street . . . But I suppose we have just bumped it in that they don’t have a permanent roof over their head. (PSS6, housing)

As this participant explains, background information and status of need for clients would be of more use than a definition of homelessness. Such material would help ensure that clients are placed into suitable, sustainable housing tenancies. This commentary provides an example of how the simple categorisation of ‘in emergency housing or homeless’ has limitations with regard to understanding each client’s needs.

Another participant identified a similar need for understanding complex needs when providing services and addressing homelessness:

And often, I think, with homelessness, because there are other profound issues wrapped up, not one thing works all the time. You can think 'I am going to offer someone a home and then it is going to be fine' and a lot of the time people say 'no I don't want to be housed, I don't want the responsibility' for many different reasons about having a home. It may be that they have lived in a home and committed a crime that they have used their home for. (PSS2, health)

As the participants explain, within the public sector, there is value in having improved understanding around the complex needs sometimes involved with homelessness. So whilst participants identified the absence of a definition for homelessness within public sector services, and some noted that having a definition would be useful in order to increase staff understandings around what comprises homelessness, most participants focused on the need to understand the complex nature of homelessness.

### **5.2.3 Hegemonic representations informing the understanding of, and response to homelessness**

This theme includes content that recognises the role of dominant representations of homelessness in informing individual understandings of homelessness, to whom homelessness is ascribed, and characteristics of the homeless population. The theme also includes the finding around how actions of public sector services, namely local government and justice, may be understood as occurring as a reaction to public discomfort around homelessness. Such unease stems from both real world interactions with homeless people and consumption of representations of those who are presented as being homeless. These representations tend to coalesce into hegemonic representations of homelessness. This theme exposes the ways in which public sector responses at the local level in Hamilton, prior to TPP, were informed by a narrow understanding of homelessness. For this theme, participants identified how the visibility and associated behaviours of homelessness in the CBD informed public sector efforts to improve the general public's perception of safety:

We, our central business association and some of our shops, hired security guards because their workers were feeling really unsafe in terms of going to their cars. We had lots of business owners shouting out about inappropriate and anti-social behaviour. Rough sleeping was a part of that, as well as aggressive begging. As well as in 2013 there was a whole psycho-substance debate going on. So, we had some puff shops in the city. So, Embassy Park had a puff shop there, so people were coming and buying, and then going to that park and smoking. There was intimidation that was taking place. (PSS8, council)

[W]e had an issue with synthetics, an issue with a relatively recent explosion of increase of the visual presence of people on the streets in Hamilton CBD who appeared to be homeless . . . At the same stage there was a bit of push back from the business community about the presence of these [sic], the presence of these people was having on their profitability. (PSS9, council)

[T]he areas that I have worked in is with what are generally referred to as vagrants. But vagrants in the, like Dinsdale shopping centre and the Clyde Street shopping centre in Hamilton East, I work with to try and put a plan in place to reduce the issue. And so, I sort of recognize that a lot of people see rough sleepers and see them as homeless. But they are not necessarily homeless, some of them have a home to go to and whether it is the social contact, their addictions, or the combination of the two which means they end up staying in the city . . . So we deal with those people . . . If I am honest with you, with the people on the street, it's more about improving public confidence and safety, and having, as harsh as it sounds, having people rough sleeping or begging or that sort of situation in a shopping centre or street, decreases the public sense of safety. (PSS5, justice)

As another participant specified “I won't lie to you, the presence of the groups of people who I termed that make some of our population feel unsafe . . . So our role with the general public is to enhance their level of safety” (PSS8, council). The public's fear around homelessness and safety is in part due to their reliance on stereotypes and assumptions for informing their understanding of homelessness, and their inability to separate these individuals from other street dwellers. Similarly, some staff in public sector services applied the label of homeless to those who were on the street begging or to those who 'looked' as if they were homeless.

Sorry, because we have this interchangeability of terminology, homeless and beggars in particular, are two that intermingled, we are dealing with very different populations. And I think our inability to separate them out and be very clear on what we are dealing with is part of what drives some of the feelings that are held by the general public. And so it becomes fear rather than understanding. (PSS8, council)

[T]o be fair, I have got people in this office who say 'oh those homeless people are outside again'. And 'how do you know that is a homeless person?' 'Because I can tell you that person has a house', 'but they're begging!', 'well that doesn't mean they don't have a house' . . . So there is kind of that naivety that if you're begging or if you look dishevelled then you must be homeless. So I don't know that we have a definition, but I think people are pretty quick to judge which doesn't help. (PSS4, justice)

Another participant speculated that in the absence of a definition for homelessness, “I would say most GP’s would consider homelessness to be rough sleepers or those sleeping in cars, because that has been in the public eye. People would consider that to be a homeless situation” (PSS3, health). These examples, particularly the assertions of PSS4 and PSS3, highlight the role of hegemonic representations in informing the narrow understandings public sector staff have around what defines homelessness. Although this theme includes the fewest coded items, it is significant as it identifies the role of hegemonic representations in understandings of homelessness and the need for public sector services to respond to the way that those not experiencing homeless view those who are homeless.

### 5.3 Discussion

#### 5.3.1 How does the public sector consider and understand homelessness at the local level?

As presented in the findings for the theme of *limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness*, public sector staff considered homelessness through their involvement with the HHIG. The involvement of public sector staff in the interagency meetings reflected recognition that homelessness is a complex social issue for which one agency alone could not respond. Within the *systems* sub-theme, participants described the difficulty they experience in being able to respond to homelessness, with the fragmentation of service delivery hampering the ability of participants to deliver services outside stipulated roles. As discussed in Chapter Four, an interagency group was formed out of the recommendation for government and community organisations to work together in order to respond to homelessness. This interagency group, in its report on homelessness in Hamilton, highlighted the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration in efforts to limit the number of individuals who fall through gaps in systems of service provision. The interagency report for Hamilton also identified a lack of affordable and transitional housing, and deficiencies in support provided for those rough sleeping, as drivers of homelessness in Hamilton. Participants’ comments around the fragmentation of services as evident within the *systems* sub-theme, as well as the rationale around the need for an interagency group, aligns with the new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness within which homelessness is recognised as the failure of systems to respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable individuals (see Chapter Two).

The consideration of homelessness as reflected in the Hamilton City Council-coordinated interagency meetings, mirrors the observation made by Laurenson and Collins (2007) that local government responses to homelessness in New Zealand occur in a “relatively unbounded policy environment” (p. 663). The absence of a mandate from central government means that each local government is free to respond to homelessness as it sees fit. The consideration of homelessness in Hamilton mirrored concerns in many urban areas around regulating behaviour within public space (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). Additionally, recognition around the limitations of regulating social issues associated with homelessness rather than addressing homelessness, acknowledgement of the value of taking a supportive approach to homelessness, and considerations of homelessness in the context of public safety, combine to illustrate how, in New Zealand, local authorities are prepared to consider alternatives to the use of punitive regulations to address homelessness (Laurenson and Collins, 2007).

Whilst the interagency group represents a new orthodoxy understanding of homelessness, the finding *hegemonic representations informing the understanding of, and response to homelessness*, reveals how the interagency groups consideration of homelessness was based on a narrow conceptualisation. The finding exposes how the Hamilton City Council’s and the justice sector’s consideration of homelessness in Hamilton was triggered by a dramatic increase in the number of street dwellers and concerns around their behaviour in public space. These concerns drew on the public and business community’s encounters with, and subsequent understanding of, homelessness. Local government and justice sector participants expressed an awareness that their consideration of visible homelessness within their response to public safety included only a small portion of the wider homeless population. As participants described, the issue of rough sleeping, begging and anti-social behaviour in public spaces drove conversations around the need for a response to homelessness in Hamilton. These discussions resulted in the development of the interagency group, which, despite optimistic underpinnings, was relatively silent about forms of homelessness outside of rough sleeping. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter Four, the formation of the interagency group stemmed from the suggestion of Hamilton Police that there was value in providing a collaborative response to address the social issues involved with homelessness. As presented within this finding, the social issues involved with homelessness to which are being referred are limited to the presence of homeless people in public places. Furthermore, as participants from both the

Hamilton City Council and the justice sector highlighted, their consideration towards homelessness is in response to the public's understanding of homelessness. This understanding tends to associate homelessness to people on the streets, rough sleeping, anti-social behaviour and aggressive begging. The predominance of these facets has been maintained and reinforced by the role of hegemonic representations of homelessness. Here the literature (see Chapter Two) contains observations as to how the domiciled public's fear toward those who are homeless or who appear to be homeless occurs.

The consideration of homelessness within issues of public safety in Hamilton mirror scholarly discussions around the role of representations in understandings of homelessness. If representations of homelessness influence the way in which society reacts to and comprehends homelessness (Hodgetts et al, 2011; Parsell 2011; Resende, 2016), then it is unsurprising that local government and the justice sector have to consider homelessness, and what the public identify as the presence of homeless populations, in their response to public fear . The inability to distinguish between the visibly homeless and those who are street dwellers, but have housing, is reflective of the influence of representations. As Hodgetts et al. (2011) explain, rough sleeping and the visible homeless have been the dominant depictions of homelessness across both the media and the daily exposure the domiciled population experience. Furthermore, the negative stereotypes associated with homelessness, such as dirt, drugs and danger (Parsell, 2011; Schmidt, 2017; Toft, 2014; Torck, 2001), are exacerbated by the general tendency for mentally ill and substance dependent individuals to be among the most visibly homeless. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Hamilton City Council and the justice sector find themselves responding to the domiciled public's fear of "the homeless". Furthermore, the deviant behaviour of the homeless cannot be easily distinguished from other street dwellers who partake in similar behaviours in public places.

Although staff from Hamilton City Council, the justice sector and from the wider public sector give consideration to homelessness in Hamilton, it is evident that, for the most part, homelessness does not demand attention within the usual purpose and provision of public services. As discussed in the sub-theme *systems*, the fragmentation of public services, the challenges associated with a siloed system, and the lack of mandate to respond to homelessness from central government, has meant that the design and delivery of public services does not support a coordinated response to

homelessness, even if it is considered by staff at the local level. As shown in the sub-theme *funding*, the only instance when pathways into homelessness are considered within the provision of services in Hamilton is when funding is provided to target the provision of services to extremely high needs clients. The majority of these clients are individuals who are exiting the justice sector and who are placed into supported housing. However, this funding is limited to a narrow group of clients; it is not provided as an explicit response to homelessness. This lack of consideration for homelessness within the public sector is well documented within governance literature. For authors of such literature, the shortcomings and failures of numerous sectors, institutions and agencies are understood as contributing to a growing homeless population. Public sector agencies are rarely conceived of as being associated with homelessness and, as such, the policies of major care institutions result in the discharging of individuals into homelessness (Nichols & Doberstein, 2016).

### 5.3.2 How does the public sector define homelessness?

It is evident from the theme *the absence of a definition of homelessness*, that at the local level in Hamilton, the public sector does not define homelessness. Within the public sector in Hamilton there is no recognition of published definitions of homelessness, and no definitions of homelessness are identified as being utilised or adopted by services or agencies. Participant views on whether their public sector service or agency should formally recognise and adopt a definition of homelessness centred on whether the adoption of a definition would benefit staff understandings of homelessness, and whether staff viewed their services as having a role in responding to homelessness or determining access to related services. Given the results from the review of grey literature (see Chapter Three), the finding of *the absence of a definition of homelessness* is not surprising. Results from the review of grey literature in New Zealand indicated a lack of engagement with published definitions by the public sector and central government staff. The findings from the interviews confirm that, at the local level in Hamilton, the public sector does not define homelessness. The lack of recognition of the published definitions of homelessness by public sector at the local level is surprising given that the definition of homelessness published by Statistics New Zealand was developed by public sector agencies in order to fill gaps in official statistics and to help the central government and community groups make informed decisions on the level and nature of homelessness. Thus, despite the rationale behind the development of the definition, the definition was not utilised. As Thorns (1989) noted, however, the development of a definition does not provide the basis for policy

formation, nor does it identify the location of responsibility for a response to homelessness or address the question around whether homelessness should be an issue legislated for by central government. Given that the grey literature review revealed the New Zealand government could not agree on a definition of homelessness, or provide a mandate to respond to homelessness, it is possible that the lack of definition at the national and local levels has more to do with a lack of a policy framework than with the supposed inadequacy of the published definition. Simply put, even though a government-developed and published definition of homelessness exists, the adoption of the definition by the public sector is contingent upon homelessness being recognised and problematised as a social issue within a recognised policy framework.

Within the sub-theme *a definition would enable public sector staff to understand the way their agency or department contributes to homelessness*, one participant argued that the recognition of a definition of homelessness would be beneficial in understanding the way in which their services contributed to homelessness. This finding is noteworthy given that scholars report the importance of definitions for the role they play in determining access to services; thus, definitions have ‘real world’ relevance (Arapoglou, 2004). This sub-theme suggests, however, that in the absence of a policy framework for responding to homelessness, the conceptual basis of definitions of homelessness, and the provision of descriptions of the conditions where homelessness occurs (Schiff, 2003), would be useful for understanding the ways in which services may help members of what is a growing homeless population. Therefore, the finding that *a definition would enable public sector staff to understand the way their agency or department contributes to homelessness* highlights how, in the New Zealand context where there is no policy framework or mandate for response to homelessness, a definition of homelessness used consistently by the public sector could aid in supporting the understanding that homelessness is more than rough sleeping. Therefore, the importance of definitions in the New Zealand context goes beyond the role that they have in determining access to services; rather, a definition facilitates understandings of homelessness as a dynamic process that occurs along a spectrum of living situations (Amore et al., 2011).

At the local level in Hamilton, participant views around whether their public sector service or entity should adopt a definition of homelessness aligned with key debates within the academic literature around the role of definitions. As some participants

argued, they did not feel that the use or implementation of a definition had any relevance to the delivery of their services because they either did not provide any homeless related services or they did not determine access to the services they provided. As identified in the academic literature, if definitions are tools that frame an issue and classify the population to be served (Arapoglou, 2004; Schiff, 2003), then the sub-theme assertion that *a definition is unnecessary in the absence of homeless specific services* is an expected finding. Within this sub-theme, participants highlighted the irrelevance of adopting a definition of homelessness when they do not provide homeless-specific services. The sub-theme that *a definition alone is limiting-need to understand the complex nature of homelessness* is encompassed participants views that a more complex understanding than that provided by a definition of homelessness was required in order for their service to respond adequately to homelessness. This viewpoint aligns with academic arguments that definitions are unable to capture the complexity of the issues preceding and accompanying homelessness (Minnery & Greenhaulgh, 2007).

### 5.3.3 How does the public sector respond to homelessness?

Prior to their involvement with TPP, the public sector in Hamilton had a very limited response to homelessness. As identified in the finding *limited capacity for the conceptualisation of homelessness*, staff within the public sector in Hamilton participated in an interagency group as part of their response to homelessness. As PSS1 and PSS8 explained, Hamilton City Council coordinated the interagency group meetings for homelessness which included government agencies, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations and other key stakeholders at the local level. As presented in the findings for the *systems* sub-theme, this response was limited due to both the position held by those who were involved and because public services operating at the local level have no mandate to respond to homelessness. This lack of coordination between public sector services in general, but particularly around a cross sectoral issue such as homelessness, is well documented in both HF and homelessness governance literature. In Hamilton, the issue of homelessness was considered as a cross sectoral issue, an approach evident through interagency meetings and responses, yet the degree to which the interagency response was delivered was limited due to the lack of systems response afforded through central government direction. As Nichols and Doberstein (2016) recognises, “homelessness is a systemic public policy problem, involving numerous sectors, institutions and agencies and therefore requires system responses in terms of governance and policy” (p. 406). Whilst in countries outside New

Zealand government policy requires the formation of interagency councils on homelessness that act to reform segmented homeless serving systems, in New Zealand no such central government requirement exists. Even though local governments are free to respond to homelessness in New Zealand (Laurenson & Collins, 2007), their ability to act is limited. This limitation exists because, in order to make a significant difference to the way that homelessness is responded to by the public sector at the local level, the public sector needs to be supported by central government to respond. In New Zealand at the time of the interviews, the absence of central government direction for the issue of homelessness meant that the public sector remained segmented, with multiple systems of care operating under separate funding rules. Furthermore, evidence of disparate purposes means that different agencies continue to “make a partial contribution, serving some part of the problem for some part of the homeless population” (Hambrick & Rog, 2000, pp. 354-355).

In addition to the partiality of contributions, the public sector response to homelessness in Hamilton was limited in scope. As described within the finding *hegemonic representations informing the understanding of and response to homelessness*, interagency meetings and responses to homelessness by the justice sector occurred largely in response to the visible presence of homeless in urban public places in the city. In particular, these responses were directed toward nuisance behaviour in public places as opposed to targeting those who were homeless. Thus, responses were not informed by, nor did it respond to, hidden forms of homelessness such as associated with living in inadequate housing or temporary or shared accommodation. This focus on nuisance behaviour suggests that the comments captured from Hamilton City Council and justice sector participants are based on issues around public safety, an area of concern of which the visibly homeless are merely a part. This finding of *hegemonic representations informing the understanding of and response to homelessness* in Hamilton aligns with findings from the review of grey literature where it was found that the ‘official’ response to homelessness of central government was informed by political discourse that reinforced a limited understanding of homelessness. The narrow scope of the governmental definition of homelessness, combined with its orientation towards emergency needs, contributed to justifications for the public sector in Hamilton to target its efforts toward visible homelessness.

Beyond involvement with the interagency group and response to the visible presence of homelessness in urban public spaces, the sub-theme *systems* described how outside

of the interagency group, public sector staff within Hamilton provided services to meet the health, justice, welfare and housing needs of their clients. The provision of these services, was, however, disparate, with there being no coordinated effort or understanding as to how best to respond to the needs of those experiencing homelessness. This general lack of coordinated response to the issue of homelessness by the public sector in Hamilton is an expected finding given the absence of a government mandate or framework to respond to homelessness (see Chapter Three). Arguments that the governance of subjects is reliant on problematisation are supported by findings relating to the absence of a definition, the dearth of shared understanding and general lack of consideration regarding homelessness (Bacchi, 2009). Whilst a systems approach to homelessness is not evident within the public sector, findings from participant interviews indicate that, where funding permits, cross sector approaches are employed to meet the needs of individuals with high needs. For example, contracts between mental health services and the Department of Corrections in Hamilton provide supportive housing for individuals with acute mental health needs who are released from prison. Similarly, a multiagency approach to high need individuals was evident at the local level in Hamilton. Coordinated by a key stakeholder in the justice sector, both high risk panels and multiagency meetings were held to discuss how best to support and respond to high risk and high needs individuals being reintegrated into the community. These meetings were designed for services to understand all relevant needs and risks, and meeting participants focused on resolving how agencies could support one another in responding to these individuals' needs. Though these participants recognise the need for supportive housing and wrap around approaches, it is evident that such arrangements did not exist as an explicit and intended response to homelessness.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

There is a paucity of academic research exploring local government responses to homelessness in New Zealand (Laurenson & Collins, 2006; 2007). The findings of this research contribute to the existing canon by exploring public sector services' understandings and responses to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton. Interviews conducted with stakeholders explored the ways in which staff in the public sector in Hamilton considered, understood, defined and responded to homelessness prior to their involvement with TPP. From the interviews, it was evident that the public sector of services in Hamilton did not, in general, directly consider, understand, define or respond to homelessness. This is because, in comparison to Australia, Canada and

the USA, the issue of homelessness had not been recognised as an immediate concern for public sector services, yet alone being problematised by government. The exception to this finding included the local government's facilitation of interagency meetings for homelessness. This provided evidence of Laurenson and Collins' (2007) findings that, in New Zealand, local governments operate in an unbounded policy environment, and may seek alternative responses to homelessness that are not purely punitive. Furthermore, both local government and justice sector considerations of homelessness drew on ideas of public safety and, as such, were largely confined to the consideration of and response toward visible homelessness. This speaks to the role of dominant representations of homelessness in informing considerations in the public sector, particularly in the absence of a policy to frame the issue of homelessness.

## Chapter Six: Findings from The People's Project

### 6.1 Introduction

TPP is a collective social agency that purposefully involves core public sector agencies which interact with those experiencing homelessness (see Chapter Four). TPP acts to transform the ways in which homelessness is considered and responded to within the public sector. With the exception of Hamilton City Council-coordinated interagency meetings for homelessness, Chapter Five presented findings confirming that the absence of a formal understanding of homelessness within both government and public sector services was evident within agencies operating at the local level in Hamilton.

As described in Chapter Four, the responsibilities of the Hamilton interagency group on homelessness were taken up by TPP, which was formed to provide an effective response to homelessness in Hamilton. TPP is governed by, and involves, the core public sector services of relevance to homelessness. As such, TPP is a useful case study through which to understand public sector conceptualisations of, and responses to, homelessness in Hamilton. This chapter employs themes to explore findings about TPP from the semi-structured interviews. The findings are also considered within the context of the themes found in the academic and grey literature in Chapters Two and Three, including work on HF (see Chapter One). These themes are then discussed in relation to the following research questions.

- How does The People's Project define and respond to homelessness in Hamilton?
- What challenges and opportunities does The People's Project face in the current setting of public sector service provision?

### 6.2 Findings

There were five core themes identified from the TPP participant interviews: two themes related to the conceptualisation of homelessness; two themes related to the definition of homelessness; and one theme related to representations of homelessness. Where relevant, distinct sub-themes were identified from within each theme (see Figure 6.1).

Table 6.1 Themes and sub-themes identified from The People's Project participants

The People's Project Themes
<p><b>New Orthodoxy Conceptualisation of Homelessness-</b> <i>the failure of the public sector to respond to the needs of individuals with multiple and complex needs.</i></p>
<p>System Failures Filling the Gaps Systems Disruption</p>
<p><b>Homelessness conceptualised as a complex issue beyond housing –</b> <i>for some, homelessness is more than the mere absence of housing. Homelessness can be experienced due to unmet and interconnected needs across health, justice, and welfare sectors.</i></p>
<p>Drivers of Homelessness Housing First- Housing and Wrap around Support Multi-agency Governance Group and Multi-consent</p>
<p><b>The role of definitions in access to services –</b> <i>within the provision of services in the public sector access to services is reliant on meeting specific definitions of need and prescribed eligibility criteria. This reliance creates barriers in access to services for those who don't meet need and yet have significant need.</i></p>
<p>Definition of need within contracted service provision The unhealthy reliance on definitions in the provision of services</p>
<p><b>Definitions frame homelessness but don't capture the complexity of homelessness required to address needs and deliver services effectively -</b> <i>limitations associated with providing services through fixed definitions or categories are not sufficient for responding to individual's needs.</i></p>
<p>Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness Categorisation by chronicity Assessing level of need: VI-SPDAT</p>
<p><b>The role of hegemonic representations of homelessness-</b> <i>understandings and response to the vulnerable population inform the delivery of services within the public sector and informed the need/support for The People's Project response.</i></p>
<p>Rough sleeping and “visible homelessness” informing the understanding of homelessness Discrimination in accessing services</p>

### 6.2.1 The People's Project and the new orthodoxy on the conceptualisation of homelessness

The *new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness* theme coded content where TPP's understanding and response to homelessness highlighted the failure of the public sector service system to provide adequate support to those with complex needs. This failure results in existing needs not being met, and contributes to an individual's homelessness. TPP's engagement with homelessness is evidence of the new orthodox conceptualisation of homelessness. This approach acknowledges a need to address the failure of service systems to provide the housing and support services necessary to prevent individuals with multiple and complex needs from homelessness. From TPP-related data, three distinct sub-themes were identified as reflecting this new orthodox understanding of homelessness: *system failures*, *filling the gaps* and *systems disruption* (see Table 6.1 above and Figure 6.1 on p.178).

The *system failures* sub-theme refers to TPP's understanding that the nature of interaction between public sector agencies contributor to homelessness in Hamilton. This sub-theme is included as part of the new orthodoxy and vulnerable individuals contributes to exclusion from services and is a key conceptualisation of homelessness that recognises the failure of public sector services to provide a safety-net of support for those may contribute to an individual experiencing homelessness. The finding explains how the failure of public sector services to provide adequate support stems from a combination of core services being difficult to navigate for clients, the inability of agencies to successfully align client need with methods of service delivery, and public services managing through exclusion. The failure of this system was due to a combination of the processes through which clients apply for services and the siloed nature of service delivery.

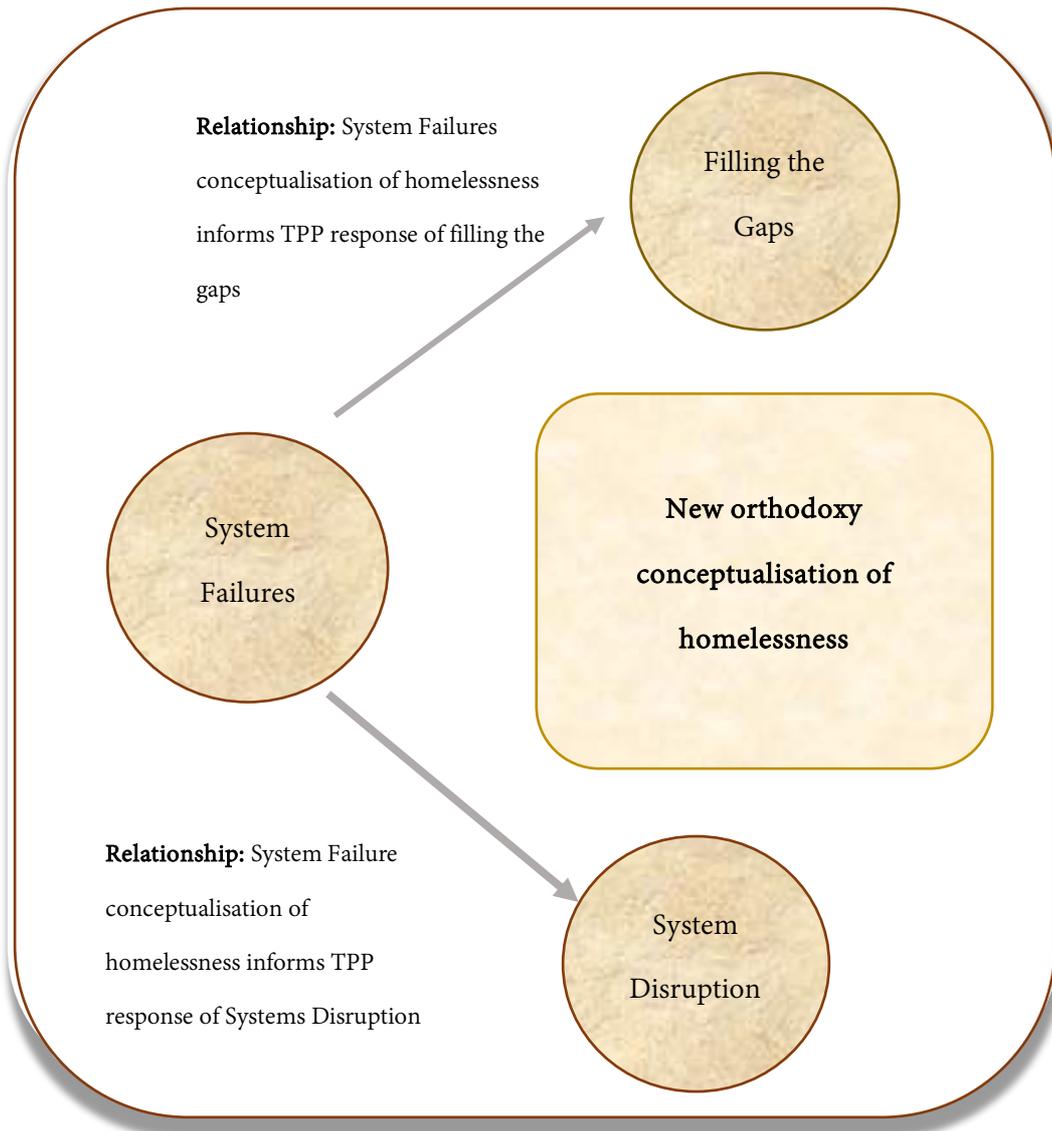


Figure 6.1 The "new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness" theme and sub-themes

One of the most common system failures described by participants relates to the process through which clients access services. Participants identified many instances where the application process of applying for services was not user-friendly for vulnerable individuals with multiple and complex needs. As explained by one participant, a common barrier for clients accessing services is their inability to read, write or use computers; the public services were not always able to cater for clients who did not have these skills. Inconsistencies and complexities around the application process were described, with information around client entitlements used as examples. Further, TPP participants explained that such inconsistencies resulted in clients having low expectations around accessing services from the public sector.

The paperwork, some of the MSD [Ministry of Social Development] forms are quite complicated, and you ask them to fill it in and they don't know what it means. Some people don't know the date - it's just simple things that we take for granted, I don't know maybe the forms need to be very really basic to give them a chance . . . I would like consistency, so you know, our guys get the same answer wherever they go. And I would like that the services are user-friendly so that includes everybody. So not just somebody like me who can read and write and who is "cluey" but I would like it so that anybody could do it, so it's not exclusive. Maybe there is different ways with coping with different people. (TPP4)

Not knowing that services existed . . . I have had two elderly gentleman who have come in the last six months who didn't know that they were entitled to an Accommodation Supplement and additional support. And they had both lived in their car for long periods of time, they thought they had to pay for everything out of their benefit of \$212 a week . . . Sometimes they tell people about the Accommodation Supplement and temporary additional support, but not all the time. And I think that's where people get confused. They think they can't afford a house. (TPP5)

Overwhelmingly, the expectations of people who come through the door are very low. Not from us, but from any system. And their expectation of failure is really high. So, what we find is people have no resilience. So, something will go wrong and they will walk away. (TPP2)

The second system failure most commonly identified were the siloed services and patch protection that were enforced through strict eligibility criteria. Here, participants explained how most of their clients with multiple and complex needs were excluded from services due to strict eligibility criteria:

The system that we have, despite major efforts not to, we have siloed our systems. And I talk about management by exclusion. As we manage limited resources and our limited budgets by excluding people from our service. Not ours, I mean services in New Zealand in general. So, services spend an exorbitant amount of time assessing whether or not I am eligible for their service, and at the end of the day they say I am not. I may have missed the threshold by that much (*participant pinches fingers close together*). (TPP2)

What has happened in society that we say 'oh we are not contracted to do that, it doesn't fit our criteria'? . . . When did we get to start staying 'look, you're just one point above where you should be in order to get services'? How did we get to that place? . . . and we have to change that. Because we are talking about human beings. We are not talking about a table and chairs. We are talking about excluding people. (TPP1)

Some of it would be spectacular system failures, that we often have not intervened in a problem before it was a problem . . . There are just some things that we need to stop doing, because clearly, that has not worked. So, you know, I think whether it be Oranga Tamariki, or whether it be [the Department of] Corrections, or whether it be health or whoever, we now have a body of evidence that says we need to do things differently. (TPP1)

TPP participants acknowledge that assessment of eligibility is a mechanism through which to target limited resources, however they also view this as a key system failure. The siloed nature of public sector services means that providers cannot deliver services outside of that for which they are contracted or for whom they are specifically contracted to provide for. Thus, despite having high needs, individuals who fall short of eligibility criteria or those whose needs may cross the roles of different services, the public sector is largely unresponsive.

Another system failure highlighted by TPP participants was the inability for public service staff to respond to the needs of individuals with multiple complex needs. For example, participants expressed concern about the paucity of appropriate skills in public services employees who interact with clients who suffer the effects of head injuries and mental illness.

People with head injuries can be really difficult to work with and not logical, and so can mental health [sic]. So if you are just going into a service that doesn't have an understanding of any of those things, I certainly didn't when I first started, you might be inclined to disengaged [sic] or say that the person isn't doing what I am asking them to do, and stopping the service. Kind of like the young lady yesterday who went to get help and sent her away [sic]. You wouldn't do that to someone who has been suicidal, but they did. So, I don't think that they have any tolerance that might be the wrong word, but just understanding, of different areas they are not trained in. They need to understand more about the clients coming through the doors, even we need more information. (TPP4)

We have got emergency housing. And again, many of those organisations were really struggling with the volatility of people who were using some of those products. So, you know, I think what happened was organisations excluded, understandably, because it is actually just too difficult to work with people. Also, the response of services in some of those health related services are just not there. And as a result, I think those services had to make a decision around excluding some of those people. (TPP1)

They have probably made decisions around resourcing. I'm sure, that if a person doesn't engage three times, then they are discharged form their mental health

services. My goodness, shouldn't that not be a trigger that they are the very people that we need to pursue? (TPP3)

Some of the folk we are talking about are not hard to reach. In fact, they are very well known to a range of organisations. And I think part of what is going to be really important in the future is to look at, what you're not doing is not working . . . Some of what we know around debt, trauma, or history around connections with the justice system, all of those things are not positive encounters. So, I think if we can't get some of the change in the system around how it is actually interfacing and working with people . . . we will kind of just keep spinning around. (TPP1)

[T]hey get turned away straight away because they don't have the words to explain it, they don't have the knowledge of what they are allowed or what their rights are. I think they are used to getting 'no's' so they just walk away. They get angry and get kicked out. They can't read or write but pretend that they can. There are lots of barriers to them getting the help they need . . . The man with solvent abuse, he can't get services because of his addiction issues and that rules him out for having that service [sic]. (TPP5)

This inability to interact with vulnerable individuals was also described as then resulting in either exclusion from services or significant delays in the delivery of services. The consequence of such delays includes the inability of clients to access services and client confusion around the determination of eligibility for services. Thus, one participant identified a client who "waited 18 months because he hadn't signed the piece of paper, that is garbage, that is just silly . . . all our services need is to make things simpler" (TPP1).

*Filling the gaps* was another sub-theme evident within TPP participant interviews that provided evidence of TPP's new orthodox conceptualisation of homelessness. Interview content was deemed relevant to *filling the gaps* if it highlighted the role of TPP in providing clients with a response that services within the public sector failed to provide. This role that TPP has in filling the gaps is an example of the new orthodoxy because it recognises the inability of the public sector services to provide access, or the required response, to high need individuals. As described:

So, we are filling this enormous gap where people fall just below thresholds. They absolutely have mental health issues, physical health issues, intellectual disabilities and massive trauma . . . So, this massive group of people who have huge needs, but don't meet thresholds, don't meet criteria for services, so end up

sleeping under a tree in Garden Place<sup>7</sup>, smoking synthetic cannabis in order to deal with their day to day lives . . . that's where we come in. (TPP2)

I guess the information coming through now with the IDI<sup>8</sup> would indicate that, all of the things we know, that many of the folk that we are working with are not hard to reach. Many of the services that are working with those people are either not responding in a way that works for those individuals, or in fact, is not listening or hearing what people need . . . Many of the people who we are working with have actually been involved in other organisations. And those other organisations have either discharged them or exited them from their services. (TPP1)

Right from the get-go, it was about advocacy. It was about people falling below criteria for all services . . . We want to be the voice, the collective voice of the people we serve when there is a gap These people are trying to access all these services, and they're homeless so they have multiple complex problems that absolutely need to be engaged with all at the same time and not separately. (TPP3)

What was happening was that all services were sending people to TPP for housing. That is not the solution; the solution is that services themselves work on housing. Because you know, a lot of our service providers they are silos. We could be all things to people if we are not careful . . . every time you dig around, you find another gap. (TPP2)

As participants explain, many of the individuals for whom TPP provide services have multiple interactions with a range of public sector services. Participants were clear that public services often do not listen to what these clients need and, as a consequence, they fail to provide clients with the type of response needed. Whilst the fundamental role for TPP is filling gaps in service provision, in instances when clients do not meet eligibility criteria required for access to public services, it also has a role in advocating for clients wrongly excluded from services such as through a lack of information gained from initial assessments. As one participant explained, when TPP advocate for a client “probably 60–70% of the time we can help a person into emergency housing if they do qualify by explaining the story a bit more” (TPP4).

So, one of the things we do, we know how to get people high on that list. And we are not bending the truth, it's just they don't know to say all those things. And for

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<sup>7</sup> Garden Place is the main public square in central Hamilton. It is in 'the heart of the Hamilton CBD' and is the location of several community events throughout the year (visithamilton, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> The Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) is a research database that links data about life events across education, income, benefits, migration, justice and health from government agencies, Statistics New Zealand surveys and non-government organisations (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). TPP is engaged with IDI-linkage research projects to provide further information on their client's engagement with the public sector.

Housing New Zealand, you have to look really bad. But to our guys, they want to look really good so that they can get a house, look like they will pay their rent on time and be tidy, so they don't understand that. So, they are telling them all these facts and if they aren't with us, they are not going to get high enough because they don't understand it. (TPP4)

Another key aspect of TPP's role of *filling the gaps* is developing a good relationship with clients. Participants explained that one of the failures of services in the public sector is the lack of trust that clients have towards public sector services. Furthermore, the constraints placed on the public sector means that they do not have sufficient time to fully understand a client's situation, needs and entitlements. As one of the interview participants explained, the delivery of services as part of TPP involved "gaining a lot of trust and gaining a lot of rapport with clients that were coming in the door and really developing a trusting relationship" (PSS2). TPP participants highlighted how they fill the gaps by developing a good relationship with their clients and giving their clients the time needed to gain access to services:

[W]e go through everything with them and spend longer than what Work and Income can afford to spend with someone. Then we find out that they are more suited to go back to Work and Income . . . With a bit of direction for what they are entitled to and stuff like that and they tend to get more support that way. (TPP5)

You know for some folk who walk in here, for many of them, life has just been really, really tough, so just showing that you care, and genuinely care, makes the difference. Which is why I think the enduring relationships and support that happens is because people actually get a sense that you are really there . . . those things become important. (TPP1)

The approach of TPP has filled the gap whereby clients are treated with respect and are made aware of the genuine, caring interest of responsible staff. The work of TPP staff fills the void created by the public sector's lack of understanding and response to homelessness.

The final component of TPP response of *filling the gaps* is the relationship it has with other services. TPP relationships with key stakeholders in local public sector services have resulted in these services adopting new approaches to working with clients that previously would have been declined because of assumptions about being overly dangerous or challenging. These relationships have also contributed to the decision of these services to work with high needs and vulnerable individuals in a way that caters

to their needs. The quality of communication between TPP and public service agencies ensures that urgent situations are addressed efficiently and effectively. This cross-service engagement is exemplified in examples detailed by participants:

So, if we, for example, if my manager, phoned the manager of Work and Income, and said this person needs a different approach, please, if they rock up slightly drunk with one of my staff can you please let them through the door. (TPP3)

So, over the three years, one of the things that has been really important with those two organisations, WINZ and HNZC, is us forming a really solid bond with the local people. So it gets down to people relationships. . . So we can say to Work and Income, this person, this woman, is in dire need of getting out of where she is, it's a domestic violence issue and she is feeling suicidal. We know we can get her into another property, but we need to get this tenancy with a bond through today. Can you prioritise that? Because we have an amazing relationship with the local centre manager for Work and Income, that happened yesterday. (TPP3)

LinkPeople<sup>9</sup> and TPP are our on-the-ground wrap-around support for our customers so I interact with them. So, I know who their customers are and who we need to house for them so that we can link up and go 'okay, we have Joe Bloggs here who is an A20, but he is not showing up on the lists. So, there could be something wrong with the application'. So that's when we link up with MSD who say 'yes, he is an A20, but he doesn't have these areas which means that if he doesn't have those particular areas then he isn't going to get a match to anything'. . . So, the whole link when I work with them is, basically, they give me profiles of their customers, then I see if I can find them in my system. (PSS6, housing)

So I got to know TPP purely from working with that one person and then my knowledge of them extended to more of the LinkPeople side of things and looking at situational problems with that whole area that the individual lived in . . . From there my relationship with them has just grown and now I also work with emergency housing or MSD tenants that LinkPeople are working with. . . Part of that is about sort of, putting the friendly face on policing, for want of a better phrase. To just try and take down those barriers . . . Trying to remove those problems so that they don't have the police barriers or the court barriers when they are already in a situation that is causing them a lot of stress. (PSS5, justice)

The final sub-theme related to the *new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness is systems disruption*, a topic identified within the interview data as one of the primary

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<sup>9</sup> LinkPeople is a registered community housing provider and is part of Wise Group, which is one of the largest providers of mental health and wellbeing services in New Zealand. LinkPeople owns housing in which it supports people to live and it also helps people to access other social housing or properties in the private rental market. Once housed, LinkPeople connect individuals or families with support systems they need (LinkPeople, 2020).

aspects of TPP's response to homelessness. *Systems disruption* involves TPP challenging the ways in which the contribution of public sector services to homelessness are hindered through inadequate or inappropriate responses to client needs. *Systems disruption* also encompasses efforts of TPP to use these challenges as a catalyst to initiate changes in the ways in which services respond to homelessness. This part of the new orthodoxy is related to *system failures* in that it recognises, and seeks to change, the system features that are failing vulnerable individuals. Participants were vocal around TPP's role in systems disruption:

[P]art of what I hope The People's Project has done is actually given a bit of a challenge back to organisations to say actually we can do better than this . . . So if we rock the boat and upset people, that is probably because we are having some of those conversations around 'is it okay for us to actually see these cycles continuing and not doing anything about it?' (TPPi)

Understanding that maybe your organisations are part of the problem because of the ways in which you are not responding, or that you are excluding, or that you are not providing photo ID or that people come out of prison without ID. (TPPi)

[W]e have been visited. . . by so many different people, by political parties, both that have been in government and that are now in government. We have worked across every political party to ensure that the message around Housing First and the message around housing people is the solution. . . So, it has been important for us. An important conversation and discussion that we have had with policy, we have had Treasury here, spend time in the field with us. We have had MSD colleagues; we have had every organisation that we believe has got a vested interest in being able to look at what they can do. (TPPi)

So, one of the things that I feel really proud of is the Wise Group's contribution and commitment to fund staff and our response here in Hamilton. And I think that in itself is quite disruptive. We have had a couple of positions seconded from the DHB. . . one is a community alcohol and drug and one is a social worker [sic]. . . And I think that has been important for some changes back in those organisations in terms of how they respond. I think the fact that we have been able to get Work and Income to work much more closely with us and in a much more joined up way. The police as well, we have got a vested interest in making sure that we can intervene, provide a critical solution for those. (TPPi)

Some of the system change has been really small stuff, but really significant. Like when we first started, WINZ would never pay a letting fee and usually it is a couple of hundred dollars. So, they would expect the client to come up with it, which of course meant that people didn't get the properties. So, you know, that is completely changed now. They do give them that. Ninety percent of Hamilton['s homeless population] had our address as their address for a while

because there are so many things that in Work and Income you can't do without an address. . . So, you know, lots of that little system change where clients would be unable to negotiate their way through it. WINZ would never pay rent arrears, they would never. Now they do it standard [sic]. (TPP2)

The participants also explained their intent to ensure that all public sector services ask their clients about housing. Thus, one of the most significant shifts resulting from TPP work has been the commitment of health and justice sector services in Hamilton to prevent individuals from being discharged from their services into homelessness.

[T]hrough TPP, one of the system disruption aspects that we decided pretty early on was that we would make a stand that we would not discharge anyone out of our inpatient service to no fixed abode. That has been a massive call. When it was made, I got huge kickback around that. . .that rule remains. And what that did was empower staff to start thinking differently. And if they didn't have the skills to find housing quickly and all of that, they found a way to do it. (PSS1, health)

[I]ncreasingly within our services, we are appreciating that we have a greater role to play than what we do in supporting people into stable accommodation. This region's senior team talks about 'all people will be released into appropriate accommodation'. That is a stretch goal really with the numbers coming out and the complexity that we are dealing with in the high risk. (PSS4, justice)

#### 6.2.2 The People's Projects understanding of homelessness as an issue beyond housing

TPP participants clearly articulated that homelessness is more than the absence of housing, and, as such, wrap-around support is required in order to attain and sustain housing. This complex conceptualisation theme codes content that expresses an understanding of homelessness as a cross-sectoral issue, and it includes recognition of the trauma that may be involved with some individuals' experiences of homelessness. These understandings are also evident within the *drivers of homelessness* sub-theme. Furthermore, by informing the way in which homelessness is governed, these understandings of homelessness have shaped the descriptions evident in the sub-themes of *multi-agency governance group and multi-consent* and *Housing First- housing and wrap around support*. Evidence makes it clear, therefore, that there is a relationship between the sub-themes (see Figure 6.2).

*Drivers of homelessness* encompassed TPP participants' identification of factors contributing to homelessness. Some of these included experiences of trauma and structural causes of homelessness such as poverty, landlessness and the housing

market. A final driver, which was alluded to in the theme *new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness*, is the role of public sector services in the displacement of vulnerable individuals with high and complex needs.

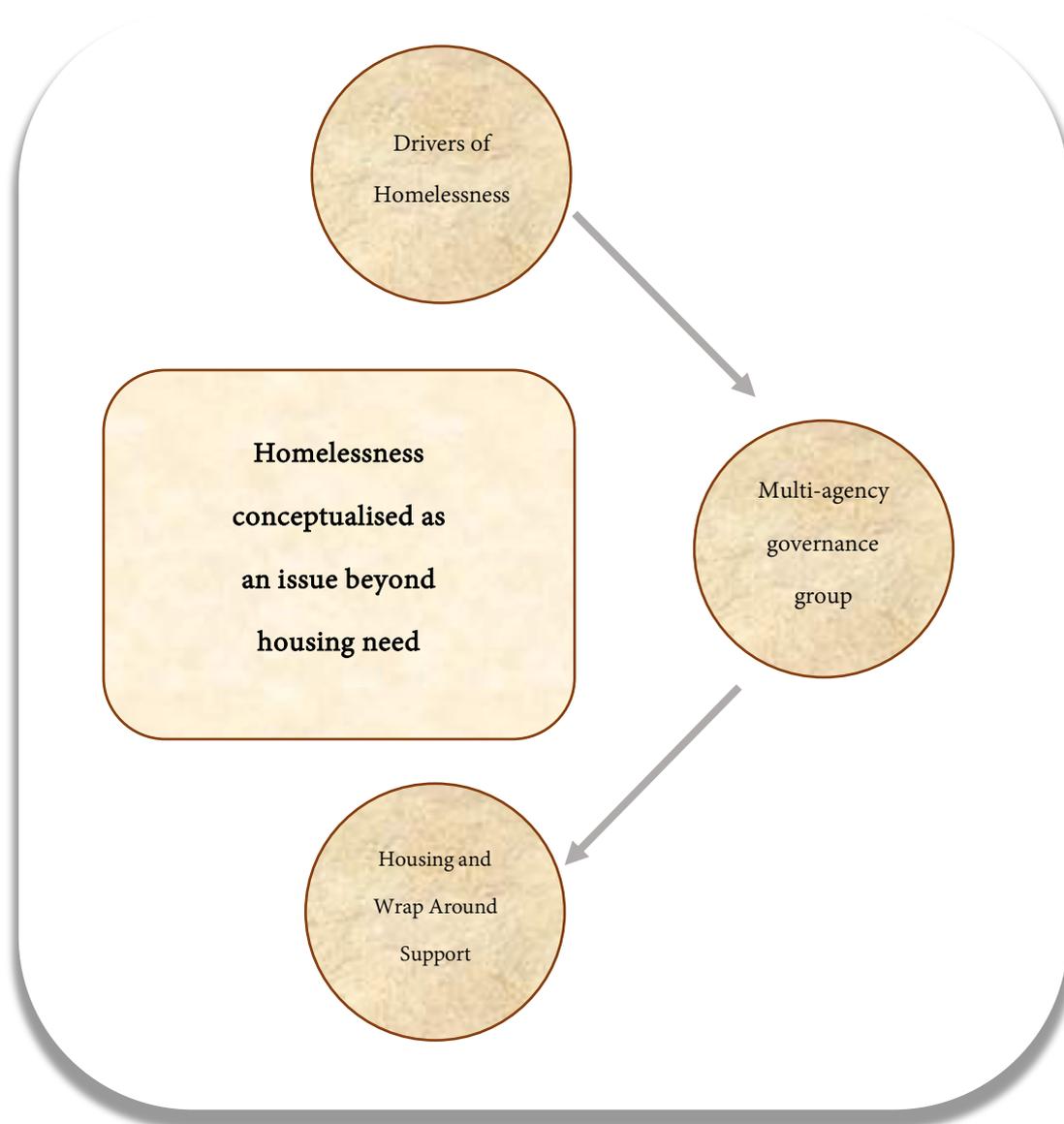


Figure 6.2 The "homelessness conceptualised as a complex issue beyond housing" theme and sub-themes

TPP participants described how, through interactions with individuals with high needs, they developed an understanding of the complex nature of homelessness. By 'complex nature', participants acknowledged the many factors in an individual's life that may contribute to their homelessness; for example, one public sector participant involved with TPP commented:

It has increased my knowledge of the nature of their problems and the complex nature . . . it's usually several factors whether it is mental health or addictions and relationships... I just wouldn't have understood all of these little dynamics that

go on . . . So I understand more about the complex nature of it, it's not just "oh they should get off their drugs or whatever, you know? (PSS5, justice)

Most importantly, TPP participants expressed understandings of homelessness as being a manifestation of trauma. Other drivers identified by participants included experiences of domestic violence, bad debt, chequered employment histories and relationship breakdowns.

What we are beginning to understand more and more, and what we need to research further, is that we get the sense that the underlying causes is trauma. The manifestation might be high debt and addiction, or a trigger, but we are getting back to an understanding that it probably isn't what manifests in front of us, that is just a trigger, as opposed to what their underlying issue is. (TPP3)

They absolutely have mental health issues, physical health issues, intellectual disabilities and massive trauma. Trauma is huge. We see so many people with PTSD and usually that manifests in addiction. (TPP1)

Trauma definitely. Drug and alcohol abuse, life choices, relationship breakdowns. Sometimes it is a death or the use of something in life that has just messed with them mentally and physically and they have never recovered from it. (TPP5)

So, what we are saying is that homelessness in Hamilton will be rare, brief and non-recurring. Unless you deal with some of those other drivers around inequality, poverty, trauma, and those sorts of things, then saying that we will absolutely not have a homeless population is somewhat more challenging. But if we do start to look at making it rare and brief and nonrecurring, it means that when we are looking at domestic violence or trauma, or some of those other drivers, that we can actually then look at how do we respond in a much more joined-up system response? (TPP1)

Thus, TPP participants understand that causes or triggers of homelessness reflect the ways in which "people deal with trauma in different ways, some people can address it and get support, and some people have no knowledge of who you would even go to, to get support for trauma" (TPP5). Individual level triggers of homelessness are, therefore, understood as manifestations of trauma that contribute to, rather than cause, homelessness.

Related to this, TPP participants identified the failure of the public sector system of services to respond effectively to such complex needs, resulting in displacement of these clients from the public sector of services.

We have a high population of people who would have been in Tokanui<sup>10</sup> and exited from that mental health facility into this community . . . We certainly have two prisons on our peripheral [sic] . . . I would think that the fact that we have got those big care institutions and also the Henry Bennett Centre<sup>11</sup> there, they have come to somewhere and this is the catchment area for those care organisations. (TPP3)

Yeah, so a lot of the ones who have suffered trauma have come from institutions that have shut down and they have been left on their own. And you know, or they have been placed somewhere and the institution closed down and they have only lived that life and not this life and they don't know how to respond. (TPP4)

I think that for us we have a lot of prisons around us, so we get a lot of those people come into us. The hospitals are here, so sometimes, it doesn't happen so much now, but people being released from hospital into the night shelter with nowhere to go. (TPP5)

The release of clients from institutions without appropriate support has resulted in some vulnerable individuals becoming homeless. Given many vulnerable individuals cycle in and out of care institutions, flux that reflects a lack of appropriate intervention, system failure is a significant driver of homelessness. In recognition of this, a participant commented that:

[B]ecause we have lost the window of opportunity to have intervened early, before the situation has got to a really critical place, the future will be having conversations with health, corrections, justice, the police and whanau . . . Unless you deal with some of those other drivers around inequality, poverty, trauma, and those sorts of things, then saying that we will absolutely not have a homeless population is somewhat more challenging. (TPP1)

In terms of structural causes of homelessness, TPP participants identified the scarcity of affordable and social housing as a driver of homelessness in Hamilton. They commented that the housing market has become increasingly tight, an outcome of unmet demand for a small supply of individualised single supported housing,

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<sup>10</sup> Tokanui Hospital was one of the largest psychiatric institutions in New Zealand. The hospital opened in 1912 and closed in 1997 (Swarbrick, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> The Henry Rongomau Bennett Centre is a 110-bed unit that services the Midlands Health area patients with acute mental illness. The Centre is located on the grounds of Waikato Hospital in Hamilton. There are general population wards and forensics wards, the latter of which caters for those with patients with acute mental illness within the justice system (Nyika, 2020).

supported housing, and social housing. Participants also identified a lack of housing for big families as a challenge. Beyond housing market conditions, one participant highlighted the importance of poverty and the inequality that emerged as a consequence of colonisation, as a driver of homelessness. Moreover, the participant explained that as a result of colonisation, “we have made people landless and we can’t underestimate for Māori the impact of that” (TPP1). The participant identifies that the scope of these structural issues means they cannot successfully be addressed by local-scale service providers.

If you think about the last fifteen years, you know, you would be hard pushed to say there was a huge homeless population. But I think what we have seen with inequality and disparity and the poverty [sic], we have seen homelessness become very much in the last decade, quite visible. (TPP1)

In terms of the Waikato, it has got to be housing. It has got to be social housing and particularly around the cohort of single adults. I think we have probably single-handedly filled up Housing New Zealand’s single person social housing . . . TPP have a huge blow-out in the Housing New Zealand registration for having a serious housing need. So definitively around supported housing, I think we have a high need around that. (TPP3)

[F]amilies are the hardest to house. We don’t do families anymore, but that can take a long time because the bigger houses are harder to get and also there is not extra housing, or you can’t put a family into a studio. (TPP4)

The *multi-agency governance group and multi-consent* sub-theme identifiable in TPP participant data also reflects an understanding of homelessness as a complex issue that goes beyond simple housing need. This sub-theme coded for content around the multi-agency response to homelessness as achieved through TPP’s governance group; the purposeful inclusion of key stakeholders, including the welfare, justice, housing and health sectors, in the response to homelessness.

I think that the governance group, because it encompasses so many different organisations, it has been invaluable to the work on the ground. Pulling down from a great height, down to an area where it really does matter to the person walking through the door. Whereas if that governance group hadn’t been heavy with people who could make change down to the bottom, it could never have worked. (PSSI, health)

It was a real collective impact . . . There is a benefit in this being a collective impact project and not just being a service in its own right that sits independent. Because actually, this isn’t a homelessness service, this is a social action to ensure

that all of the agencies and services who actually have contributed over the years, to people's trauma, and not necessarily addressed people's problems effectively and contributed to where people are at. (PSS1, health)

We didn't actually want TPP to be owned necessarily by anyone. We just wanted something that actually talked about, you know, for us it was, you could talk about homelessness but actually, this was the *people's* project. And for us, it was really important that we had a governing group of senior leaders of organisations. And, unashamedly, they were organisations like Police, and Corrections, Work and Income, health, like primary health and the business association [sic]. Because they are the ones who can actually get some system change. (TPP1; emphasis in original)

[W]e all sort of have our speciality area. But it is really only somewhere like The People's Project that I am lucky enough to go to, where they sort of all come together as a governance group which is really positive. (PSS4, justice)

One participant explained that for TPP to use the HF approach, it needed a common purpose: "[T]he purpose that everyone felt really comfortable with, which is what drives us today, was connecting people, organisation [sic] and communities to realise a just society for all" (TPP1). Through the governance group's leadership, these system changes can be enacted at the local level in Hamilton.

One key element which enables these systems changes is the multi-consent that TPP holds:

[O]ne of the most powerful things I think The People's Project has is our consent, which is a multi-consent. People assume that we are able to talk to all of the different departments, but actually, on our consent it says we can talk to the police, we can talk to the hospital, the night shelter, Housing New Zealand. The only organisation that doesn't recognise our consent is Work and Income. We have to complete a separate form for them which gives us consent. So, people who come through our door continually assume, that, for example, Work and Income can talk to Housing New Zealand directly about their needs, and that is just not the case. So, we are very much connectors for all services, which people assume we talk together, and we do not. (TPP3)

This multi-consent allows TPP to share relevant client information with "any and every organisation on [the] governance group and pretty much covers the whole gambit of services that a client may come into contact with" (TPP2). What this achieves is that it allows TPP "to tell the whole story [which is] really important around soliciting empathy" (TPP2) and, more importantly, it allows public sector services to understand an individual's need on a holistic level, engaging with opportunities across services.

However, the downside of this multi-consent is that, because TPP is the only entity that has consent to hold all of this information, it is put in the “unenviable position of being the only service that know the whole story” (TPP2).

*Housing First- housing and wrap around support* is the final sub-theme of *homelessness conceptualised as an issue beyond housing need*. For this sub-theme, content about the need for HF and, in particular, the need for wrap around support to sustain housing, was coded. This sub-theme the understanding that an individual's experience of homelessness is not solely about their inability to access housing; rather, homelessness is about an inability to sustain housing. For TPP, this ability to sustain tenancies is dependent on the provision of wrap around support. This includes support for non-housing needs, such as physical health, mental health or addictions or any other aspect of wellbeing. TPP's initial impetus for using a HF approach derived from interagency work led by the Wise Group, which began TPP in Hamilton. In explanation of this interagency work, one participant commented:

Other people were connected with the right services and other people were given some housing. And look, for the odd twenty people who were given housing, you know, for a good percentage of those people, it worked really well. But there was also a good percentage where that didn't. And that's because simply giving someone keys to a house doesn't mean that life is actually going to work out for everyone. And what we realised is that it fell over quite quickly for some of the people because they needed extra support. (TPP1)

From the experience of taking a multi-agency approach to housing individuals, TPP investigated the HF approach.

Through this utilisation of the HF response to homelessness, participants in the public sector involved with TPP and TPP participants described their understanding of ending homelessness:

[W]hat I have learnt through the project too is that, finding somebody a house is just the beginning, maintaining those tenancies is really important if that's what you get to. (PSS4, justice)

To me, there is a housing component and a health and wellbeing component. (TPP3)

The adoption of HF by TPP was particularly relevant for the very visible group of homeless people (those 'on the streets') who TPP targeted at their beginning. Although

TPP participants commented that individuals with complex needs were the most difficult group with whom to engage, they noted how the implementation of the HF approach worked:

It started a really nice expectation of people starting to come through the door, and seeing that, you know, we were [sic] and could do what we said we would do, which was support people to get a house, and provide the support. (TPP1)

[P]eople were a little bit unsure . . . they thought it was going to be a drop-in centre, they thought it was going to be a soup place. Everything else but a place that people would come to get support and housing. . . And let's be clear, you can manage homelessness, or you can end it. They are two distinctly different things and I think one of the things we lack is debate around managing something and ending something. And many organisations have responded to, you know, responded to the needs of people, but that may be managing something which doesn't necessarily end it. It means you know. . . if someone needs to be able to take shelter or to take emergency type situation [sic] then we respond to that. But if we don't address some of the drivers that led someone to get there, then that will continually circulate. (TPP1)

Through its continued success in supporting individuals with the HF approach, TPP became a vocal supporter of action on homelessness. Directing its ideas on action towards political parties and public sector agencies, TPP argued that “if you have nowhere to live, then it is very hard to hold down a job, to feel that you are a worthy person in society when you just go from one crisis to another” (TPP1).

### 6.2.3 The limited role of definitions and their limitations for service eligibility

From TPP participant interviews, two core themes emerged in relation to the definition of homelessness. The first theme coded content around *the role of definitions in access to services*. This theme acknowledges the relationship between funding, defining the population to which services respond, and definitions as to eligibility (see Figure 6.3 below).

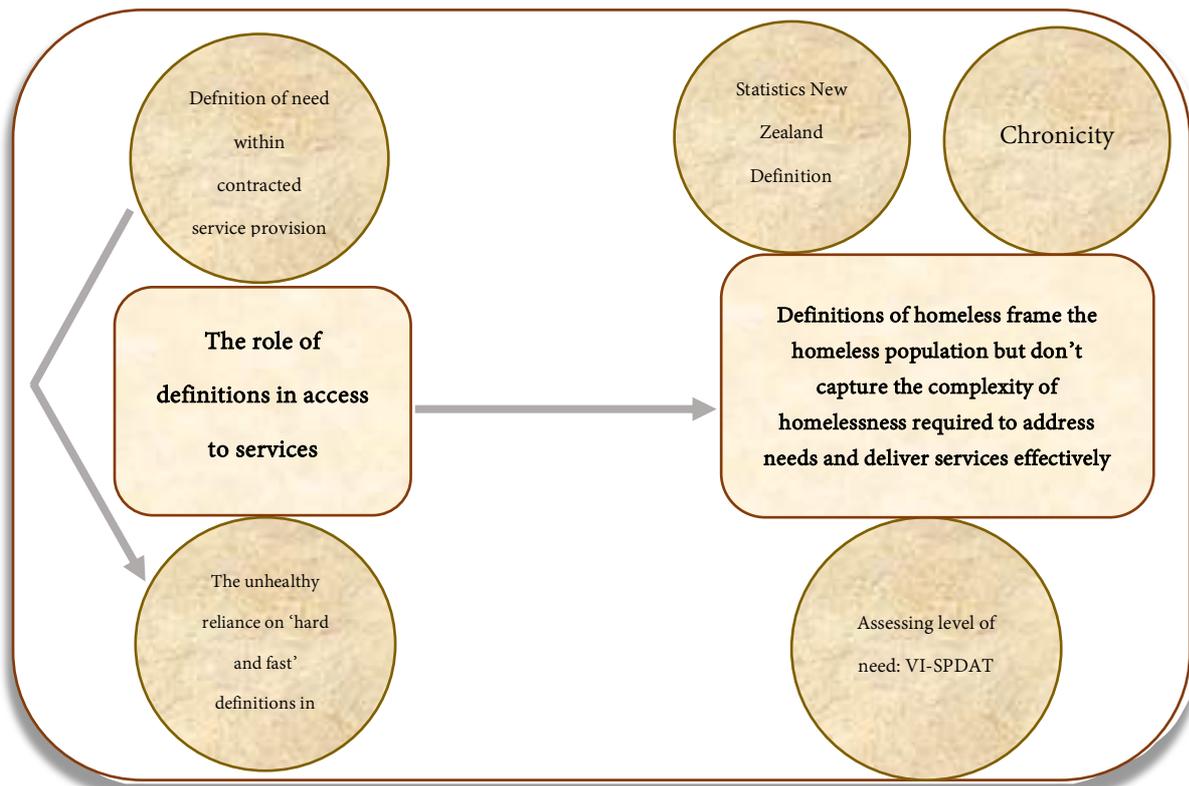


Figure 6.3 Definition theme overviews for "the role of access to services" and "definitions of homelessness frame the homeless population but don't capture the complexity of homelessness required to address needs and deliver services effectively"

This theme comprises two sub-themes. The first, *definition of need within contracted service provision*, describes the relationship between funding and access to services. This sub-theme acknowledges how, in general, services agencies only provide assistance to those who fall within their areas of responsibility, as defined within their funding arrangements. TPP participants identified that in order to manage their limited resources and budgets, many services have to be very strict around who has access: “[B]y the very nature of delivering a service, you have to decide where it starts and finishes because you can’t provide services to everybody” (TPP2). The participants discussed how, in New Zealand, providers tend to spend a long-time assessing eligibility for their services, and providers are known for their ‘patch protection’ in terms of what they will provide, as also described in 6.2.1: “when services say, ‘you don’t fit our category’ or ‘we are not contracted to work with you’, that really is an area that I think we should be saying, actually that is unacceptable” (TPP1). Participants explained that because TPP is largely self-funded, and not as bound therefore by contracting parameters, it is able to fill the gaps of other services and can decide what fits within the parameters of what and to whom it provides.

[B]ecause they are self-funding, they were able to not be reliant upon the bureaucracy that sometimes associates itself with cross government agency approaches. (PSS8, council).

I have it in my head that I wouldn't turn away anybody who doesn't have a house and we are lucky enough that we can do that. . . none of our team would turn away anybody who needed help. (TPP4).

[N]o matter how out of the box it is, we can look at whether or not we can do that . . . at the end of the day I can make the decision as the manager based on what is right for that person. (TPP2)

The second sub-theme is *the unhealthy reliance on definitions in the provision of services*. TPP and public sector participant interviews exposed two key examples of this sub-theme. Firstly, the social allocation system used by the public sector for providing social housing to families and individuals in need is particularly challenging and inadequate. The only information that social housing placement specialists are given is the category into which the applicant fits as indicated by a letter and number, and therefore public services did not receive sufficient detail to place their clients into appropriate social housing.

The amount of information that they get from WINZ, who do the assessing part of who is going into social housing, they just get a match with a rating for example. If I am an A15, you can tell that I have a significant mental health or wellbeing issue, but actually they don't know anything else about that person. (TPP3)

This criticism is confirmed by a public sector participant working with TPP:

The information that comes through to us is very minimal. I can have twenty people on the list, and I could have an A18-19 and an A17 and an A16, but all the information I get is their name, who is in the household, how many bedrooms they need and in what areas. I might get that they have some gang affiliation but sometimes we don't know what gang they are affiliated to. They might have a mental health issue but we get one word 'schizophrenic' and based on that information we are supposed to match them to this property, and I also have to look at who are in the surrounding properties because it is about sustainability and knowing our clients can live in that area. (PSS6, housing)

TPP participants also reported that the social allocation system did not always ensure placement into appropriate social housing need categories. The relationship developed between TPP and the two relevant public sector services did, however, ensure that clients were being assessed appropriately.

I have been lucky. I have linked in with everybody here so I can get all that information. And the service providers like TPP, LinkPeople and MSD, when they talk to their clients and get profiles, they get their clients to sign a consent form saying we can share this information with HNZC which is really good . . . So, I get to know who their customers are, I actually get to see if they are on our list, and I also get to help if I can. But if I can't, I push it back towards them and say you need to do a bit more to get them up, to get their ratings up because if they are not at the top there then I can't help, because we have got so many people up there. (PSS6, housing)

Secondly, the provision of public sector funding for the HF response was discussed by participants with reference to *the unhealthy reliance on definitions for access to services*. As TPP participants identify, central government has provided funding to non-government agencies for the HF response in cities with high social housing demand. However, the funding arrangement is such that that services can only provide the HF response to individuals who have been homeless for 12 months or more as denoted in the North American definition of chronic homelessness.

[T]he last time we met with MSD, I think one of our key messages to them was that chronicity is not just about length of time homeless. So, to try and contract services based on length of time homeless, makes no sense. A whole heap of people who need a service are going to miss out because they have been homeless for 8 months or 6 months. (TPP1)

The adopting of these categories [of chronic homelessness] by Government has actually hampered the work of organisations such as TPP. Well, it would have if we didn't totally ignore the definitions and just help the people who need the help . . . we think we have a better idea of this cohort than our funder. (TPP3)

[W]e knew that the length of time someone was most recently homeless has very little to do with how much support people needed once housed . . . Most people seemed to have been most recently homeless less than one year. Once the NIDEA research and Otago's research was completed, this highlighted how really unwell people were and that most people had not been homeless for years and years . . . When we were finally contracted by MSD and then MHUD to do our work, they adopted those categorisations, probably largely because we had the first large-scale pilot of Housing First in New Zealand. And also, because Sam Tsemberis gave advice to the government of the day, and the US and Canada still used those definitions. These categorisations were set as the original contracting parameters; the person had to be rough-sleeping homeless, in a car or in the night shelter, for 12 months continuously or for 12 months over three years. This very narrow criteria was applied . . . The Government have since back tracked on the second round of contracting, after much protesting by providers, to still being mostly about long-term rough sleepers or visible homeless, but throwing it a little wider

open to providers to access if people are high need, medium need or low need.  
(TPP3)

Concerning the use of narrow definitions within the contracting of services, TPP participants held the view that it is necessary to intervene in a problem before the problem intensifies. Participants identified that services need to be careful about some of the “unintended consequences of some of the ways in which contracting means we are making people homeless” (TPP2). For these reasons, TPP participants commented that they “don’t have a healthy respect for some of the categorisations of homelessness” (TPP1), a position that supports arguments for the value of a New Zealand definition of homelessness that is relevant for the community experiencing homelessness.

The second theme, *definitions frame the homeless population but don’t capture the complexity required to deliver services effectively and address needs*, codes for content where TPP participants recognise that definitions are unable to capture the complexity of homelessness. Rather, participants argue that definitions need to be accompanied by lived understandings, or understandings around the needs, vulnerabilities and future capabilities of individuals. This theme comprises three sub-themes. The first two sub-themes, *Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness* and *categorisation by chronicity*, coded content around the way in which TPP participants employed the Statistics New Zealand definition to categorise the living situations of the homeless population. It also included content around how TPP staff utilise definitions of chronic, episodic and transitional homelessness to categorise the varying levels of need for their clients.

It is evident that participants utilise the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness to inform their understanding of the living situations they consider to be experienced by homeless people. However, as one participant highlighted, the definition is used for eligibility to their service but in a flexible form where

if someone comes into us or on the phone and says, ‘what’s your criteria?’ we would say, ‘we serve anyone who is homeless or about to become homeless’. So that’s an open descriptor a little bit because that’s about prevention opposed to just crisis management . . . all of the things that make up that Statistics New Zealand definition. (TPP3)

Whilst TPP participants highlighted the limitations of definitions when it comes to service eligibility, they all recognised the importance of the public sector having a shared understanding around the definition, and spectrum, of homelessness:

I think there was a high level of acceptance that any kind of shelter was good enough . . . it was hard to get people to understand that having just any form of shelter was not good enough, and that actually, still technically is homelessness in the definition. (TPP1)

I think that we have bought a very good awareness around the difference between rough sleepers, like people who have been on the street for quite some time, and episodic, whereby people are couch surfing. So, I do think that there is, and I think there is an important distinction that has been made at some senior levels. . . and I think we have been able to do that with talking about the chronic, episodic and transitional. (TPP1)

As seen in this particular quote, TPP participants also identified that this categorisation of chronic, episodic and transitional homelessness is a valid indication of an individual's circumstances, particularly time spent homeless. However, it was argued to not be enough information on its own to determine need.

[B]ecause transitional, chronic and episodic is about the amount of time someone is homeless, largely, and it has only a small component of wellbeing, but not nearly enough we don't think. . . it in no way helps TPP to prioritise their needs accurately. (TPP3)

The third sub-theme, *assessing level of need: VI-SPDAT*, reflects participants' recognition of the limitations of definitions and categories, but also of the need to conduct a standardised assessment for each client. This recognition shapes arguments for moving away from fixed definitions and categories, and towards discussions and assessments based around accurately establishing levels of need. One way in which TPP achieves this is through the VI-SPDAT. Rather than "dancing around definitions of homelessness" (TPP1) in order to gain access to services, TPP employ the VI-SPDAT to produce a numerical score indicating an individual's level of need. Instead of using this score to ascertain if an individual gets access to support, TPP uses the VI-SPDAT outcome to determine the level of support the client needs. As one participant commented, this takes

the definition kind of conversation to a different direction. What you are looking at is a person's vulnerability, and part of what you should be looking at is vulnerability versus a hard and fast definition. If someone is vulnerable, I mean you are vulnerable today and tonight, that's what we should be responding to. . . Not we'll wait until you've been here for 12 months and then we will speak to you. . . So you know, for us we don't have a healthy respect for some of the categorisations of homelessness (TPP1)

We have a set preamble which describes to people why we do [the VI-SPDAT assessment], and basically what we are saying to them is you know, like everybody else we've got limited resources and we need to make sure that the resources we've got are used for the people who need it the most. So that is not about sending people away with nothing. But it is about measuring how far do we [sic]. . . we have people score as little as three so they have been advised, we let them use computers, we show them how to surf on Trade Me<sup>12</sup>, etc. and we have information sheets that we give people on how to get into the private market. (TPP2)

One of the things that is really important is that we are sort of dancing around the definition of chronic, episodic and transitional homeless. You can take the emotion out of that by doing an assessment like VI-SPDAT and it will give you a number. And the reality is if you're number three or four, then the reality is the majority can resolve their own solution [sic] with a little bit of guidance versus those who are eight or above and actually require a much more intensive and ongoing intervention. And Housing First is for that. (TPP1)

One participant noted that the VI-SPDAT gives TPP staff

background information and also what they might need in the future. If they have high debt, they might need budgeting skills, if they have health issues you would support them to see a doctor etc . . . If you understand their needs and whether they have support, you have more of an idea around whose needs aren't being managed that need to be in order to be able to sustain a house. (TPP4)

Significantly, TPP staff discovered some limitations in the use of the VI-SPDAT in the New Zealand context. One participant highlighted that it would be beneficial for the VI-SPDAT to include a section measured aspects of the system failures identified for public sector services in relation to their response to homelessness: the difficulty of navigating services; and the inability of staff to interface with individuals who have multiple and complex needs.

#### 6.2.4 The role of hegemonic representations of homelessness

The final theme identified from TPP participant interviews was *the role of hegemonic representations of homelessness*. This theme describes the finding that visible 'homelessness', or the visibility of people 'living' on the streets, has been the dominant representation, and subsequent understanding, of homelessness in Hamilton to date.

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<sup>12</sup> Trade Me is a New Zealand online marketplace where individuals can buy or list items for sale, properties for rent or list job vacancies (Trade Me, 2020)

The role of hegemonic representations of homelessness theme is comprised of two distinct but related sub-themes; *rough sleeping and “visible homelessness” informing the understanding of homelessness* which results in *discrimination in accessing services* (see Figure 6.4 below). The *rough sleeping and “visible homelessness” informing the understanding of homelessness* sub-theme included content where participants identified the visible presence of people assumed to be homeless (see Chapter Two) informed the local level understandings and interpretations of the issue.

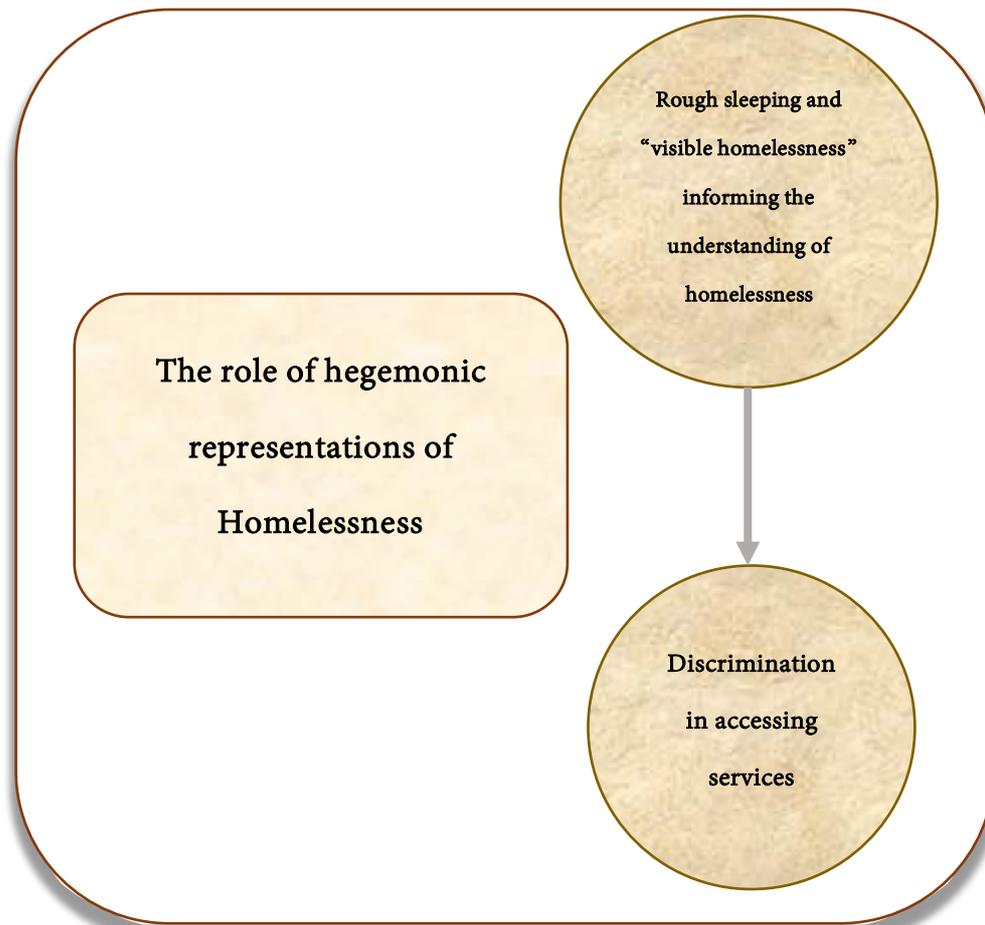


Figure 6.4 "The role of hegemonic representations of homelessness" theme and sub-themes

The identification of this sub-theme occurred on two levels. Firstly, TPP participants identified that visible homelessness and the presence of people on the streets informed both the initial need for a significant response to homelessness in Hamilton at the local level, and public and service providers understandings of homelessness:

So there was a big homeless population living in Garden Place, sleeping under trees, the grass died because people didn't have a place to live and there was an increasing sense of a lack of safety in the CBD, as well as increasing unwellness from the people who were actually living on the streets at that time. So, it became

really obvious at that stage, with the legal highs<sup>13</sup>, that we actually had a large number of people living rough in Hamilton CBD. And the police undertook . . . a bit of a check of what was happening and they found

80 people living rough in just in the CBD so at that stage. . . the city council was concerned, they were concerned about the dying central city, they were also concerned about the vulnerable people who were on our streets, and so there was some discussions and they were joint discussions . . . So, everyone was kind of lock them up lock them up.(TPP2)

I think it was partly because Garden Place, that was where people slept. So, it had become the real campground of the city really and because the [TPP] office was placed in Garden Place and so the group that was closest was dealt with first and that happened to be people that were chronically homeless, yeah. (TPP2)

I guess there was the 80 people that were kind of known and what also started to become a real issue, we had the Cricket World Cup that was coming to town. There was this sense of you know, how is Hamilton going to be portrayed? We have the business sector saying they feel unsafe which was a fair call. And we had antisocial behaviour because of some of the synthetic products as well. (TPP1)

Whilst it was the hardest place to start, it was also the right place to start. And as a result of that, some really hard core people were actually housed. And as a result of that, not only was there a perception in the public that you know, perhaps some of these folk that were constantly in Garden Place were no longer in Garden Place, but equally for some of the people that were housed as well you know, 'this person has been housed, well actually I want to be housed'. So really it started a bit of a momentum around 'gosh if this person is housed then maybe it is possible'... It was important that we started at that end and not the transitional end because, as I say, there is often support there, whether that be through non-governmental organizations or whether that be through government organizations. But the group that we were working with, there wasn't a lot of people lining up doing that. (TPP1)

Secondly, participants highlighted how visible homelessness informed TPP's initial targeting of its response to homelessness in Hamilton. Participants described that TPP's goal was to end homelessness in Hamilton by 2016. Here, the use of the term "homeless" however, did not reflect TPP's understanding of the issue, rather, their initial use of the term was a reflection of their goal to end chronic homelessness. Thus, chronic homelessness for TPP staff was synonymous with the hegemonic

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<sup>13</sup> Early in the 2010's, New Zealand experienced an influx of new recreational drugs known as party pills, legal highs and designer drugs. Sold as an alternative to illegal recreational drugs, these legal highs contained no illegal ingredients and were available to purchase from dairies and liquor stores (Brain Health Research Centre, 2017).

representation that so dominated understandings of the issue by key stakeholders in Hamilton as identified in Chapter Five.

We weren't necessarily as clear around homelessness. Homelessness, you know, if you think about the definition from Statistics New Zealand, it is couch surfing, in cars, it's you know, garages, rough sleepers, it's overcrowding and I guess there was some naivety that we said we would end homelessness. (TPP1)

We were kind ahead of the game, if we started two years later, we wouldn't have said that we would end homelessness by 2016 because we would have known that wasn't possible. (TPP2)

The second subtheme, *discrimination in access to services*, coded content from TPP participants that identified stereotypes of homelessness. Influenced by hegemonic representations of homelessness, the focus on visible homelessness resulted in clients experiencing discrimination when accessing services in the public sector. Without TPP as an advocate, discrimination would mean these clients would be excluded from accessing essential services.

If they go to WINZ they get treated a certain way, get looked down on, or feel like they are not respected, or are being judged, so they don't want to go back . . . There are judgements that get made, if he smells like he has been using a solvent, they [WINZ] won't let him in because he is seen as a threat. (TPP4)

I have taken people to Anglesea Clinic <sup>14</sup> and they won't wait inside, so they wait outside, and I have to wait inside so that when their name is called, I go out and get them, because their expectation is that they will face discrimination. (TPP2)

Negative representations and stereotypes around homelessness also resulted in discrimination for clients when they tried to access housing in the private rental market.

A guy [client] told me that they saw his application and he saw them take it and put it in the bin because it had no references . . . Now this guy [client] had a face full of tattoos as well, so there is discrimination. . . Sometimes with mental health or intellectual disabilities, they won't come across the right way and people will judge them. And they won't pick them because the real estate agency, they are looking for someone that the landlord is going to be safe with, and our guys aren't safe mostly. (TPP4)

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<sup>14</sup> A 24-hour emergency medical centre in the Hamilton CBD.

In the private market, just the discrimination factor is quite high you know. Tattoos, burns, you know if anyone has got a deformity or anything like that, debt is a big one, criminal history is probably the biggest. (TPP5)

Our guys look like they might be drug users. Some people are on methadone programs. . . A lot of our clients are Māori, and so people think, I think some real estate agents are judgmental around some of that. Some of our guys will say 'it's because I'm Māori' and they will name it, they know what's going on. (TPP4)

The theme *the role of hegemonic representations of homelessness* provides an example of the narrow framing and understanding of homelessness that TPP are having to address, and how this results in further contributing to individual's exclusion from services.

### 6.3 Discussion

#### 6.3.1 How does The People's Project define and respond to homelessness in Hamilton?

##### *Defining Homelessness*

The finding that *definitions frame homelessness but don't capture the complexity required to address needs and deliver services effectively* reveals how and for what purpose TPP utilises definitions of homelessness. TPP use two definitions of homelessness. Firstly, the more comprehensive New Zealand definition of homelessness as published by Statistics New Zealand provides understanding of the living situations that constitute experiences of homelessness. This means that TPP accepts and supports anyone who is either currently experiencing, or is at risk of, experiencing the living situations included in the Statistics New Zealand definition. TPP also uses the typology comprising of three definitions of homelessness according to chronicity; chronic, episodic, and transitional. TPP uses this typology to model an overall profile of its client population. The theme *the role of definitions in access to services* builds on the simplicity of categorical definition, and explains TPP participants' hesitance toward the dependence on these definitions when determining individuals' access to services because of their oversimplification. Rather, TPP suggests a deeper understanding of the complexity and history of drivers to homelessness, and the use of a common assessment tool such as the VI-SPDAT, particularly in relation to the HF services.

TPP's use of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness confirms findings in the academic literature that explain the role of definitions in establishing boundaries for, and providing descriptions of, the living situations in which

homelessness occurs (Schiff, 2003). TPP's use of definitions in this way also confirms that definitions of homelessness have both conceptual and practical implications; employed as both a tool to frame the issue and as a method through which to classify the population to be served (Arapoglou, 2004b). Part of TPP's ability to adequately respond to homelessness is because their definitions frame homelessness as a dynamic process that occurs along a continuum of living situations (Minnery & Greenhalgh, 2007). In accepting this continuum, TPP incorporates both the range of living situations in which homelessness occurs and accounts for the imminent potential of homelessness occurring.

TPP's use of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness aligns with the understandings of Amore et al. (2011). These authors argue that the usefulness of a definition lies in its ability to identify and classify the homeless population to support the development of policy that determines effective responses to different manifestations of homelessness. Though not in disagreement with this statement, in the absence of a central government policy response for homelessness, the use of the definition by TPP exposes utility for other reasons. The New Zealand definition of homelessness is significant for TPP for challenging the commonly held perception that homelessness equates only to rough sleeping (see Chapter Three). The involvement of public sector staff in TPP means that TPP's utilisation of the broader inclusive definition increases public sector providers understanding around homelessness. In turn, this understanding of the complex continuum that characterises the living situations of homelessness improves the opportunity of public sector services in Hamilton to understand the ways in which they may contribute an appropriate response.

TPP's use of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness is also significant because it confirms that formal definitions may be employed to identify those experiencing homelessness. TPP's definitional success has occurred despite government debates around the validity of the definition, and a lack of public sector recognition and use of published definitions of homelessness. New Zealand academic literature clearly states that central government and service providers struggle to agree upon an adequate definition because no existing definition is thought to capture the complexity of the issue (Spicer, 2017). The findings of this research indicate, however, that the lack of consensus within central government, and the lack of use of published definitions by government agencies, stem from the influence of the dominant

discourse of homelessness as rough sleeping. This narrowing of understandings of homelessness within public sector services has been sustained by the absence of a central government policy within which to frame and define homelessness.

As expressed by participants, TPP is critical of categories and definitions being used solely to determine eligibility for access to services. TPP staff critique the New Zealand government's previous use of the definition of chronic homelessness to restrict access to government funded HF services. Firstly, time spent homeless, on which the typology is based, is not necessarily reflective of a client's level of need and does not align to the themes of system failure and complexity discussed by TPP, as described in this chapter. Secondly, the most acute experiences of homelessness in the New Zealand context do not align with the North America-developed definition of chronic homelessness. Given the welfare system in New Zealand, very few people sleep rough for more than one year. Subsequently, the experience of homelessness for the majority of individuals in TPP's database is episodic, which is defined by short periods of rough sleeping along with general transience associated with cycling between friends' homes, prison (or other institutions) and different tenancies. These situational norms illuminate the importance of considering the context within which definitions are developed (Arapoglou, 2004). Whilst use of the definition of chronic homelessness may accurately target and prioritise the most in need homeless populations for the HF response in such countries as the USA and Canada, in New Zealand, which is characterised by a much different welfare system to these two countries, the definition does not address the most in-need homeless cohort.

Given TPP's HF approach, its adoption of the chronic, episodic and transitional definitions of homelessness is expected. HF was developed as a response to the recognition that different groups of homeless existed, and that the chronically homeless comprise a relatively small percentage of the total homeless, but consumed most of the resources in emergency services (see Chapter One). Given that definitions alone are not sufficient to determine an individual's level of need, TPP, following HF programmes overseas, utilises the VI-SPDAT. This tool facilitates understanding of a client's immediate needs, information that helps determine who to help first and the level of support the client will require once housed. As identified in the HF literature, the VI-SPDAT is one of the most widely used assessment tools for triaging and assessing the needs of those experiencing homelessness within HF programmes (Kanis, 2008).

Whilst TPP participants note the usefulness of the VI-SPDAT in understanding and prioritising client needs, they suggest some changes need to be made to the use of VI-SPDAT in the New Zealand context. Commenting on the observation that a number of their clients would remain homeless if they did not have supporting navigation services, TPP participants suggest that in New Zealand, the assessment needs to also consider an individual's ability to navigate public sector services. This highlights TPP participants' view that the use of the VI-SPDAT across providers, including the public sector agencies, is useful in providing coordinated access to services. Furthermore, it describes TPP's perspective that the consistent use of the VI-SPDAT across public sector services provides the opportunity to break down silos and better coordinate support. This suggestion mirrors the approach taken in the homeless serving systems of Canada, the USA and Australia, where streamlined assessment is utilised to improve access to services and eliminate unnecessary duplication when assessing client need (Baker & Evans, 2016).

#### Response to homelessness in Hamilton

Findings from TPP participant interviews reveal two core components to their response to homelessness in Hamilton: a system wide approach, and a HF response. The sub-themes *multiagency governance group and multi-consent, drivers of homelessness, filling the gaps*, and *systems disruption* present findings within TPP's conceptualisation of homelessness that show a 'systems' component in its response to homelessness. As explained in Chapter One, a system is an integrated whole comprised of set components working towards a common end (Turner, 2014, p. 7). Thus, in terms of homelessness, a systems approach requires recognition of the 'homeless serving system', a structure that contains a range of "service delivery components that serve those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness" (Turner, 2014, p. 7). This homeless serving system includes stakeholders from public systems. Public systems relevant to homelessness include correctional services, hospitals, mental health facilities police and child intervention services (Turner, 2014). Within TPP's understanding of homelessness as a complex issue beyond housing need, its decision to purposefully comprise its governance group with key stakeholders from core public systems reflects their systems approach focus. Driven by the purpose of connecting people, organisation and community, the multiagency governance group highlights the role that public systems have in responding to and preventing homelessness.

Similarly, the sub-theme *drivers of homelessness* inform TPP's systems approach in its response to homelessness and recognises the role of the public service systems' contribution to homelessness through a lack of understanding and an inability to respond to individuals with high and complex needs. *Filling the gaps* also highlights TPP's system approach in its response to the failure of the public systems to respond to homelessness. This finding highlighted the role TPP plays in advocating for client need and through the development of relationships with key stakeholders. These efforts encourage public services to respond more effectively to TPP clients through their improved understanding of the broad spectrum of the homeless experience and their incorporation of these understandings within the provision of services.

TPP's systems approach, which centres on relationships developed with key stakeholders in the public sector for the governance group, reflects the relationship between power, discourse and practice (Arapoglou, 2004a). As Resende (2009) argues, powerful actors have the ability to shape public discourse, and this discursive power influences practices in response to homelessness. Within its systems approach, however, TPP's relationship with key stakeholders in the public sector gave TPP the power to influence staff understandings of homelessness and, by association, enable a change in the response to homelessness within the provision of services at the local level. However, without guidance from central government, the public sector is constrained in its ability to provide a systems approach.

The TPP governance group and its subsequent multiagency response adheres to the general governance of homelessness identified in the review of grey literature. Multiagency approaches in Canada are evident at the local level through community advisory boards. In the USA, such approaches manifest at the local level through collaborative applicants and at the national scale via the USICH. In Australia, COAG is responsible for bringing together policies on homelessness at the national scale, and community advisory boards decide the nuanced governance of homelessness in local-level communities. An interagency response to, and governance of, homelessness has become standard for those countries included within this research; thus, TPP's governance structure is not a novel approach internationally. For the national level context in New Zealand, however, this approach is innovative considering that the response to homelessness has been haphazard, disjointed and aimed at the emergency end of service delivery (Amore & Aspinall, 2007). Prior to the establishment of the

TPP's connections, multiagency engagements in Hamilton were ad hoc, having no central policy to guide the structure of interactions.

The other key component of TPP's response to homelessness in Hamilton is its HF approach. The findings *drivers of homelessness*, *Housing First- housing and wrap around support*, and *assessing level of need: VI-SPDAT*, are reflective of TPP's HF response to homelessness. Although this research did not seek to evaluate the fidelity of TPP's use of HF, these sub-themes align with some of the HF principles and rationales. Within the finding *drivers of homelessness*, participants acknowledge TPP's understanding around the multiple and complex needs experienced by many of their clients. TPP staff understood that their clients multiple and complex needs tended to act as barriers to their ability to access and sustain housing. HF programmes are typically directed at the chronically homeless, individuals who are regarded as the hardest to house because they have experienced long periods of homelessness and have complex support needs (see Chapter One). Thus, within HF, and as presented in the sub-theme *Housing First- housing and wrap around support*, there is explicit recognition that, for those individuals who have high interaction with the public system, access to housing is required in order to address their complex needs. As participants explained, TPP targeted its response to individuals considered the 'hardest to house'. However, as TPP participants highlighted within *assessing level of need: VI-SPDAT*, the use of the definition of chronic homelessness and of the VI-SPDAT to assess client need in the New Zealand context did not accurately reflect the experience of homelessness and their specific needs. TPP found that their biggest client group with the highest needs experienced episodic homelessness. Even so, the use of the VI-SPDAT aligns with HF responses in that it targets response based on client vulnerability and an associated, appropriate level of housing support.

TPP's response to homelessness aligns with the core HF rationale that stability in an individual's life can only be achieved through provision of stable housing (Tsemberis, 2010). TPP's recognition of the high public system interaction of those who cycle between homelessness, the justice sector and health services inform TPP's key message around consideration of the cost of managing versus the cost of ending homelessness. This mirrors the financial imperative that supports the argument for taking a HF approach. As described in Chapter One, IOYP's are a commonplace policy approach for government responses to homelessness, and HF is a central tool through which the goal of ending rather than managing homelessness is to be reached. Within

ioYPs, the premise of ‘ending rather than managing’ homelessness is a critique of central government’s previous on funding for homeless shelters (Evans & Masuda, 2019). In the New Zealand context, however, TPP’s focus on ending rather than managing homelessness critiques the complete lack of a coherent central government consideration and response to homelessness.

### 6.3.2 What opportunities and challenges does The People’s Project face in the current setting of public sector service provision?

Opportunities for The People’s Project response to homelessness

The enabling of TPP’s response to homelessness can be found within the sub-themes *rough sleeping and “visible homelessness” informing the understanding of homelessness and multi-agency governance group and multi-consent*. In Hamilton, locally specific factors rendered homelessness highly visible in the inner city. In addition, the visible manifestation of homelessness coincided with the selling and use of synthetic drugs in the CBD. Resultant displays of anti-social behaviour reinforced the narrow understanding of homelessness as rough sleeping and aligned with hegemonic representations of homelessness around dirt, drugs and danger (Parsell, 2011; Schmidt, 2017; Toft, 2014; Torck, 2001). Because TPP’s HF response would remove the visible presence of homelessness from the CBD, this representation and understanding of homelessness provided an opportunity for TPP to garner support from key stakeholders at the local level.

This role of representations of homelessness as providing an opportunity for TPP and its HF response provides an example of HF as politically ambivalent. As Baker and Evans (2016) explain, “the politics of Housing First has tended to meld explicit social progressivism with a bundle of attributes commonly associated with (urban) neoliberalisation” (p. 31). On one hand, the punitive motivation for a response was expressed via the wishes of the business community for removal of the visible presence of people living on the streets. A more ambivalent imperative for change than that expressed by the business community came from the local council and police, agencies concerned about city image and public safety as well as the wellbeing of the vulnerable population. A supportive imperative for response is evident in the efforts of key stakeholders from the third sector and their concern for the wellbeing of those on the streets and for those who were at imminent risk of rough sleeping. Whilst neoliberal tendencies are evident in TPP’s role in the removal of the visible presence of people living on the streets (Baker & Evans, 2016), socially progressive tendencies are also

present through elements of HF, such as the provision of permanent housing with minimal behavioural conditions and long-term client-oriented support (Baker & Evans, 2016).

The *multi-agency governance group and multi-consent* finding revealed an additional enabling presence in TPP's response to homelessness in Hamilton. The pre-existing connections between staff within the public sector and the Wise Group in Hamilton provided TPP with an opportunity to use the relationships that it had with key stakeholders to populate its governance group and to support its response to homelessness. The recognition of the need for a cross sector approach to homelessness in Hamilton as present within the earlier HHIG, ensured that at the local level, key stakeholders already recognised that any response to homelessness would best include public sector services in areas such as health, housing, welfare and justice. This understanding supported TPP's response to homelessness as key stakeholders already had buy-in around the need to take a systems approach, particularly for clients with multiple and complex needs. The involvement of influential individuals from public sector services and agencies at the local level afforded TPP the opportunity to change staff and system understandings around homelessness. This shift involved moving from a discourse about individual pathology to a discourse that recognises the important role of the range of public services, the contributions they currently make to ending homelessness, and the role they can have in prevention.

Another key enabling aspect through which TPP influenced local service provision is through the multi-consent that it holds. Multi-consent and the collation of client data provide TPP with a system-wide picture of the needs clients have for support to access and sustain housing. Multi-consent paints a system-wide picture of a client's vulnerability and needs, thus offering an appropriately complex understanding of the central role stable housing plays in an individual's wellbeing. With TPP's ability to share relevant information with the public system, public services understanding around homelessness is transformed from a narrow punitive conceptualisation to a complex comprehension of the issues preceding and accompanying homelessness, and of the ways in which homelessness occurs along a spectrum of living situations (Minnery & Greenhaulgh, 2007).

Challenges for The People's Project response to homelessness

The challenges or conditions which constrain TPP's 'system' response to homelessness revolve around the findings *system failures, the definition of need within contracted service provision*, TPP's multi-consent, and *discrimination in accessing services*. These findings highlight the challenge of TPP trying to establish and enhance the public sector's capability to respond to homelessness in New Zealand where the provision of public services is not designed to respond to the needs of those with multiple and complex needs, yet alone homelessness. For example, whilst TPP's multi-consent assists public sector understandings and their response to homelessness at the local level, the arrangement whereby TPP holds all of the client data means that it is responsible for disseminating the information amongst relevant services. However, with no mandate to change the way in which services are funded or delivered, TPP remain challenged to fill the gap in public sectors lack of consideration and response. TPPs role in filling the gaps does not address, for example, the inadequacy of the current assessments for social housing or the lack of information sharing between HNZA and MSD. This status contrasts with the situation in other countries such as those explored in Chapter Three, where guidance by central government means the homeless serving system has access to funding for the collection and sharing of client information in order to support coordinated access to services.

As Hambrick and Rog (2000) argue, segmented development characterises homeless serving systems in numerous countries around the world. Thus, a lack of coordinated linkages between various agencies, organisations and levels of government mitigates against effective responses to homelessness (Doberstein & Reimer, 2016). Although TPP coordinates a response to homelessness at the local level in Hamilton, the public sector response remains siloed. Further, central government's lack of consideration for homelessness means that public systems are not set up to support or respond to homelessness, discursively or practically. Despite an absence of top-down understanding of homelessness as guided by a central government policy framework, changes have occurred at the local level. Thus, the absence of national level direction restricts the ability of TPP to achieve system disruptions at the local level. This is in contrast to governments in Australia, the USA and Canada, all of which support a systems-based and HF response to homelessness at the local level (see Chapter Three). This allows these communities to develop a centrally-supported and locally adapted response to homelessness

A final challenge for TPP's response to homelessness in Hamilton is the need for a version of VI-SPDAT that accounts for the manifestation of homelessness in the New Zealand context. Furthermore, participants identified the need for more accurate targeting around the Government's support and funding for HF than was initially utilised and for funding to target episodic experiences of homelessness.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings from semi-interviews with TPP participants, presented in the form of themes considering the definition, conceptualisation and representation of homelessness. The purpose of these interviews was to review the way that TPP in Hamilton understands, defines and responds to homelessness, and to evaluate the opportunities and challenges that it faces in responding to homelessness in an environment with no over-arching policy framework. Interviews with TPP participants engaged with the 'true authors of homeless geographies', a focus that facilitated understanding of the nuanced geographies of homelessness in Hamilton.

Findings revealed that TPP utilisation of the New Zealand Definition of Homelessness as published by Statistics New Zealand aligned with Amore's (2019) statement that the usefulness of a definition derives from the ease with which its classifications may be incorporated into policy responses for different manifestations of homelessness. Despite the fact that New Zealand scholars have claimed that the lack of adoption of a definition of homelessness by government has been the result of the absence of an adequate definition, findings revealed that the New Zealand definition was adequate for providing public sector services with an understanding of homelessness as occurring along a spectrum of living situations. In terms of service provision, TPP warns against the use of a definition or categorisation as the sole criterion for access to service provision. This warning is particularly relevant given a context where there is an absence of framework for responding to homelessness across the spectrum of living situations. Findings revealed that the use of the definition of chronic homelessness, particularly when determining access to HF services, was inappropriate for the experience of homelessness in New Zealand. Findings suggest that for assessment tools, such as the VI-SPDAT, an indicator is required that accounts for individual's inability to navigate services.

Findings revealed that TPP's response to homelessness in Hamilton was both enabled and constrained by the local service environment. The dominant impetus for response

to homelessness in Hamilton was driven by locally specific factors which reinforced the subjectification of homelessness as rough sleeping. The findings exposed how, due to a lack of consideration toward homelessness within central government and the public sector, TPP's response to homelessness involved coordinating the public system response to homelessness in Hamilton. This was enabled through relationships between key stakeholders in Hamilton as well as the multi-consent that TPP holds. Some of the factors that provided a challenge and required the system response to homelessness in Hamilton included the lack of consideration of homelessness by government, the fragmented public sector of services, and limited information sharing. Within a policy context where there has been no formal response to homelessness, TPP use the HF approach for recognition of homelessness within the public sector of services. There is a need for central government's support for HF to be cognisant of the specific manifestation of homelessness in the New Zealand context.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis has made a number of important advances in accounting for governmental understandings of homelessness in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. This thesis explored the relationship between the consideration, understanding and subsequent response to homelessness by central government. Specifically, it examined understandings of homelessness presented within academic and grey literature, and it scrutinised previously unexplored understanding of homelessness as expressed by New Zealand governments between 2008 and 2018. Following keyword document analysis, the thesis then considered how central government understandings of homelessness manifested within the public sector of services at the local level in Hamilton. Finally, this research utilised TPP as a case study to analyse some of the opportunities and challenges of implementing a HF, system-wide response to homelessness. The TPP case study was positioned within a national policy context characterised by inconsistency in the use of definitions and discrepancies in guidance around policy implementation. Data collected through semi-structure interview with TPP participants highlighted the complexities associated with homeless clients and with responses to homelessness. This chapter provides discussion of the main research findings; gives consideration to the research contributions of this thesis; addresses the strengths and limitations of the research; outlines future research directions; and, suggests recommendations for policy.

### 7.1 Key Findings

With a focus on conceptualisations, definitions and representations, Chapter Two provided an up-to date overview of academic commentaries regarding understandings of homelessness internationally and in New Zealand. The systematic literature search revealed how service provision and policies in response to homelessness are embedded with particular understandings of homelessness. The social constructionist conceptualisation of homelessness was argued to be advantageous to the ways in which key social actors understood homelessness and, by association, to the nature of responses to homelessness. Beyond social constructionism, the new orthodoxy in understanding homeless causation was well documented within the literature, and the pathways approach was identified was described as offering a critical realist perspective. The pathways approach was of significance because it offered a complex account of causation beyond the simple structure versus agency approaches.

Definitions were identified as conceptual and practical tools useful for framing the homeless population and determining access to services.

Scholars critiqued definitions of homelessness for their lack of clear theoretical rationale, while also questioning the contexts of conceptualisations. Thus, authors argued that because definitions are developed in the context of societal standards of adequate housing, it is important that consideration be given to the temporal and spatial settings within which they are developed. In addition to the influence of socio-spatial contexts, the portrayal of homelessness within discursive representations were found to influence and reinforce dominant societal understandings of homelessness. The consequence of hegemonic constructions is the silencing of more complex accounts and understandings of homelessness. The ideas present within New Zealand literature aligned with advances in the understanding of homelessness that were evident within wider, Anglo-American academic materials. In essence, the New Zealand literature documented the inability of governments, service providers and the public to reach consensus on a definition of homelessness. This lack of agreement underpinned investigation into the problematisation and representation of homelessness by the New Zealand governments and shaped consideration of how understandings of homelessness have influenced responses to homelessness.

Chapter Three provided comparative research on understandings and responses to homelessness by governments in Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand. This analysis informed the exploration and critique of the New Zealand governments consideration of homelessness. The disregard for published definitions of homelessness by the New Zealand government was a catalyst for investigation into patterns of government understanding and response to homelessness. Whilst academic have identified the central role of definitions in enabling the examination of social objects in a conscious and systematic way (Amore, 2019; Danermark, 2002), the literature review undertaken for this thesis confirmed that between 2008 and 2018, the National-led Government, replaced by a Labour-led Government in 2017, had the power to define homelessness as rough sleeping. Despite the presence of a conceptually rigorous definition and reliable data on homelessness in New Zealand, political discourse dominated the government's recognition of, and formal response to homelessness.

The divide between how homelessness was formally defined and how it was understood within dominant political discourse was ignored, with the conceptual limitations of New Zealand governments being expressed through a restricted response in support of HF. In the New Zealand context, the governments support for HF existed in the absence of a wider framework for responding to homelessness. Keyword in context and content analysis of grey literature revealed how the New Zealand Government's initial support for, and utilisation of, HF focused on individual level causation, ignoring structural causes of homelessness. This emphasis ensured that the problematisation of homelessness by government reinforced narrow understandings of homelessness that were dominated by individualist conceptions. Thus, in comparison to Australia, Canada, and USA, the New Zealand government's utilisation renders their understandings and responses to homelessness as policy outliers. With a narrow problematisation and response to homelessness, New Zealand government's support for HF failed to address higher-order structural change.

In Chapter Four, the context and method for utilising TPP in Hamilton as a case study was presented. Beginning with a brief profile on Hamilton city, Chapter Four moves into a consideration of homelessness in Hamilton prior to TPP, a discussion of recent data of housing need in Hamilton, and a historic overview of the emergency and operations of TPP in terms of its response to homelessness in Hamilton. Drawing on the call of DeVerteuil et al. (2009) to engage with the true authors of homeless geography, TPP provided the opportunity to understand how homelessness is understood and responded to by both public sector staff operating at the local level and by TPP in Hamilton. In the absence of a national policy framework for responding to homelessness in New Zealand, the case study adds to the limited amount of New Zealand literature examining local responses to homelessness. Moreover, through the use of TPP in Hamilton, this thesis presents the first account of the opportunities and challenges associated with the delivery of system-wide and HF response to homelessness in the New Zealand context.

Chapter Five presented findings from semi-structured interviews with public sector staff around, understandings of and response to homelessness in Hamilton. In response to questions about their experiences prior to being involved with TPP, participants indicated that the absence of a central government mandate hindered the ability of the public sector of services to respond efficiently or effectively to the needs of homeless clients. The lack of guidance from central government was mitigated by

interagency meetings coordinated by Hamilton City Council. These inter-agency engagements offered a space for public sector staff to consider ways in which to enhance their responses to homelessness in Hamilton. As explained in Chapter Five, the HHIG's focus on addressing the social issues associated with homelessness in Hamilton exposed the influence of the New Zealand governments in defining homelessness through political discourse. Although the consideration of homelessness was overtly informed by the visible manifestation of homelessness in public spaces, the interagency meetings did acknowledge homelessness as a cross-sectoral issue requiring a multi-agency response. Despite the lack of central government mandate to respond, and the absence of formal recognition around the definition of homelessness within the public sector, staff identified the usefulness of a definition of homelessness for extending public sector staffs understanding of homelessness as being more than rough sleeping.

Chapter Six reviewed how TPP understands, defines and responds to homelessness in Hamilton. This chapter also evaluated the opportunities and challenges faced by TPP in relation to its use of a systems approach to homelessness in Hamilton. This systems approach and TPP's HF response, expressed TPP's new orthodoxy conceptualisation of homelessness. Within this conceptualisation, systems failure and TPP's subsequent role in filling the gaps emphasised the failure of public services to protect vulnerable individuals against structural causes of homelessness. The new orthodoxy also underpinned TPP's understanding of homelessness as a cross sectoral problem that can extend beyond housing need. TPP's recognition around their client population's level of unmet needs and their high public service interaction emulates the multiple exclusion homelessness (MEH) conceptualisation, a theorisation informed by the critical realist "pathways" understanding of causation. Interview data did not explicitly identify commentary around TPP's position on specific conditions and causes of homelessness causation; interview comments were limited to the discussion of the variety of drivers of homelessness that contribute to homelessness in Hamilton. TPP's use of the New Zealand definition of homelessness, the categorisation of its client population via designations of chronic, episodic and transitionally homeless, and the use of the VI-SPDAT provided a practical example of Amore's (2019) statement that the usefulness of a definition lies in its ability to identify and inform responses to the different manifestations of homelessness. TPP warned against the use of simple definitions or categorisations being used as the sole determinant of access to services within the public services. To overcome the problems of simple definitions, TPP

suggests that the VI-SPDAT be adjusted to incorporate issues around the navigation of public services and that it be employed by public services in New Zealand. TPP also cautioned against the use of the definition of chronically homelessness included in the New Zealand Government's initial funding for HF programmes, highlighting that it is an inadequate reflection of the experiences of homelessness in New Zealand. In essence, TPP argued that homelessness in New Zealand is influenced by a welfare system that differs significantly from those employed by its North American counterparts.

TPP was both enabled and constrained by the local service environment and the wider New Zealand policy context in its response to Homelessness in Hamilton. The problematisation of the visibility of homelessness, concerns around public safety, and stakeholder awareness of the value of adopting a multi-agency response, worked in combination to provide TPP with the opportunity for TPP to take a system-wide and HF response to homelessness. TPP's multi-consent was a useful tool through which to advocate to service providers the benefits of adopting new approaches to client interaction and service delivery. Relationships between TPP and key stakeholders in Hamilton's core public services provided the opportunity for the disruption of some of the response systems employed among public sectors agencies. TPP's systems approach was limited by the public systems service architecture and the lack of a mandate for the public sector to respond to homelessness. Siloed services, strict rules around the funding of services and lack of information sharing between services limit TPPs ability to build the capacity of public services to respond to homelessness.

Taken together, the findings from these chapters resonate with the four-part framework proposed by DeVerteuil et al. (2009). Influenced by recognition for the benefits of moving literature away from the US metric of knowledge, the framework of DeVerteuil et al. (2009) is a tool through which to account for the New Zealand and Hamilton specific production of, and response to, homelessness. Drawing on findings reported by Laurenson and Collins (2007) research, DeVerteuil et al. (2009) explain that whilst "anti-homelessness policies do exist in New Zealand, local authorities have tended to respond to rising levels of homelessness with funding for supported housing and social welfare programmes" (p. 658). However, no New Zealand research has investigated the cultural signification of homelessness in relationship to some of the broader drivers of homelessness. The following section explores this nuanced geography of homelessness in Hamilton, New Zealand.

### 7.1.1 Nuanced Geographies of Homelessness in Hamilton

This research reveals the nuanced geography of homelessness in Hamilton and offers some insights regarding homelessness in New Zealand. The broad context of homelessness in New Zealand reveals the role representations of homelessness have in shaping official responses and the ‘ambivalent’ context within which the governance of homelessness is set.

Drawing on the findings around representations of homelessness and incorporating the four-part framework presented in DeVerteuil et al. (2009), this research accounts for the local Hamilton context, the wider New Zealand context, and the competing agendas of different actors in their motivations for responding to homelessness. This framework draws on both micro- and macro-scale contexts, an approach that moves toward a nuanced geography in Hamilton. The local Hamilton context within which is set reveals the “messy middle ground” of responses to homelessness. This “messy middle ground” refers to the co-existence of coercion and care by key stakeholders in their response to homelessness. Whether a response to homelessness is “more obviously punitive and more obviously accommodative” (DeVerteuil et al., 2009, p. 654) depends on the presence of different kinds of organisations. The balance between responses to homelessness being punitive and accommodative is also shaped by the variety of motivations of different agencies that respond to homelessness and “the balance of power between these agencies in any one place” (DeVerteuil et al., 2009, p. 654).

The first factor in the four-part framework posed by DeVerteuil et al. (2009) builds on recognition that the size and characteristics of the homeless population changes in response to broader shifts in housing and labour markets, as well as changes to state welfare regimes. In terms of the size and characteristics of homelessness in New Zealand, or the homeless population of cities and towns, no systematic enumeration has been undertaken (see Chapter Four). The data that do exist on severe housing deprivation for 2013 and 2016 show that it is increasing rapidly. These data provide a conservative estimate of the size of the severe housing deprived population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and living situation (Amore, 2016). The most recent data for severe housing deprivation showed that between 2013 and 2018, severe housing deprivation for Hamilton increased by 145 individuals, all of whom were living in overcrowded private dwellings (Amore, Viggers, & Howden-Chapman, 2020; The People's Project, 2020). This enumeration of severe housing deprivation is too recent

to enable links to be made between the size and characteristics of homelessness and changes in New Zealand's housing and labour markets and welfare regimes. Furthermore, no data for the floating homeless exists, a population which consists of those individuals who cannot access government assistance or who are turned away from those community housing providers that lack the resources to respond to requests for assistance (Johnson et al., 2018).

The other information potentially relevant to levels of homelessness in New Zealand is limited to data and estimates around the demand for social housing. As explained in Chapter Four, government reports from as early as 1959 made reference to increased waiting lists for social housing as well as levels of overcrowding. In 1988, for example, a state funded National Housing Commission study estimated that serious housing need was affecting 17,500 New Zealand households. This estimate did not include those sleeping rough but enumerated the reporting of overcrowding and inadequate housing from a number of service providers. Focusing on the more specific enumeration of demand for social housing, by 2017, when a national stocktake focused on the specifics of demand for social housing, it was reported that an all-time high of 5,844 households were on the waiting list for social housing. This total included those who were seeking social housing and those who were assessed as having a serious enough housing need to be included on the waiting list; 70% of those on the waiting list were assessed as the highest priority for assistance (Johnson et al., 2018). For Hamilton, recent reports document that in 2019, there was a shortage of 4,000 dwellings in the city and, between December 2017 and December 2018, demand for social housing increased by 135%. By December 2018 there was an excess demand of 19% for social housing (Brame, 2019). However, as explained by Johnson et al. (2018), waiting lists as an indicator of social housing need are unreliable due to administrative practices, biases in recognising unmet housing need, and failure to record the number of enquiries that do not pass an initial vetting process (Johnson et al., 2018).

Although no systematic monitoring of homelessness in New Zealand exists, and whilst the data on housing need is likely an underestimate, the general observation of increased housing need and estimates of increased homelessness in New Zealand have coincided with changes in the housing market and changes to the provision of support for housing need. As outlined in Chapter One, social housing in New Zealand remains under-resourced. Both a shortfall in social housing and an inability to get the right type of housing in the right areas continues. Furthermore, the neoliberal social housing

reforms implemented in the 1990s coincided with a rapid increase in market rents which left many social housing tenants worse off. Additionally, attempts made by central government to diversify the provision of social housing continue to be hindered by inadequate funding. The introduction of reviewable tenancies, combined with the lack of regulation in private market rentals, has meant that many of those who transition from social housing into private-market rentals end up residing in poor quality housing, negotiating unstable tenure, and experiencing diminished social and health outcomes (Amore, 2019).

The second factor in the four-part framework draws on the understanding that state welfare regimes determine the problems of homelessness and the nature of place-based responses to homelessness (DeVerteuil et al., 2009). What is unique about the New Zealand context has been the absence of central government responses to homelessness (see Chapter One). In New Zealand, the issues and problems of homelessness have largely been rendered culturally invisible and have remained on the margins of social policy. This is because, until recently, New Zealand's welfare regime, which provides rights in access to housing and welfare assistance, protected central government from the need to respond to homelessness. The access to social housing provided for within the state welfare regime was, for the majority of the twentieth century, adequate in preventing and minimising homelessness in New Zealand. One outcome of this has been that the welfare regime in New Zealand has fostered a lack of need for government responses to homelessness in New Zealand. The nature of welfare provisions in New Zealand, which cover basic daily living expenses, resulted in the problems of homelessness manifesting in terms of overcrowding, doubled-up housing, and cycling in and out of institutions, and precarious living situations. Recently, central government responses to homelessness have been directed toward those who sleep rough, a cohort of which represents the smallest proportion of New Zealand's homeless population. The recent actions of central government indicate a change in approach given that, in general, responses to homelessness in New Zealand have remained in the realm of third sector, non-governmental organisations.

New Zealand's welfare regime has minimised problems of visible homelessness and rough sleeping, hence, until recently, central government's response to homelessness has been absent. Beyond visible homelessness, however, New Zealand's welfare regime has created problems of homelessness that are assumed by central government

to be responded to through the provision of social housing and welfare assistance. The inadequacy of this assumption is evident in the most recent estimates available for severe housing deprivation that indicate that homelessness is still increasing. Latest severe housing deprivation data showed that since 2013, severe housing deprivation had increased by approximately 4,400 people in 2018 (Amore et al., 2020).

The third factor presented by DeVerteuil et al. (2009) points to the role cultural signification plays in shaping responses to homelessness in different places. Cultural signification refers to whether or not problems of homelessness are recognised, and if they are, how they are constructed by key stakeholders (DeVerteuil et al., 2009). As DeVerteuil et al. (2009) specify, this cultural signification occurs at the national and local scales. Research findings showed that the New Zealand government of 2008-2018 began to recognise a narrowly framed conception of homelessness (see Chapter Three). Despite the development of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness, as well as the definition and enumeration of severe housing deprivation, political discourse of the time positioned homelessness as rough sleeping. Subsequent government responses specifically targeted people on the chronic end of the homelessness spectrum, with there being no significant changes in the provision of social housing to target those precariously housed. This narrow recognition of homelessness excludes the majority of those experiencing homelessness as identified within the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness and as defined within the definition of severe housing deprivation. Central government's narrow definition of homelessness was in contrast with the discursive position of opposition parties, the third sector of services and the voluntary sector; these groups viewed homelessness along a spectrum of living situations that drew on the new orthodoxy on conceptualisations of homelessness.

The government's narrow framing of the issue at a national level is also influential at the local level where the recognition of homelessness was brought to light through a focus on issues of rough sleeping. Although participants in Hamilton's Homelessness Interagency Group (HHIG) meetings between 2010 and 2013 expressed an understanding of homelessness as a cross-sectoral issue requiring a coordinated response, discussion centred on rough sleeping. Moreover, at the time of the inception of The People's Project in 2014, the presence of rough sleepers continued to inform support for a response to homelessness in Hamilton. Evidence from key stakeholder interviews with representatives from Hamilton City Council, local police and the

central business association confirms a focus on homelessness centred around visible homelessness and the presence of people “living” on the streets. Within this emphasis, concern centred on issues of public safety and city image, an aspect of urban governance expressed through debates around the role homeless individuals have on deterring people from entering the dying central city. Here, the theme *the role of hegemonic representations of homelessness* provides some explanation around this focus on rough sleeping.

For the Wise Group, staff from the Ministry of Social Development and Waikato DHB, recognition around homelessness in Hamilton was not based solely around the increased presence of vulnerable people on the streets. Their understanding around homelessness in Hamilton was informed by the observation of individuals cycling in and out of institutions into homelessness, and their concern for the future wellbeing of the residents who would become homeless without intervention. Although particular individuals from agencies held complex understandings of homelessness. Therefore, some key stakeholders who would eventually support TPP understood homelessness as visible homelessness whereas others understood homelessness as a complex issue that included the displacement of individuals out of institutions into various forms of homelessness.

The final factor presented within the framework considers the locally specific factors that have a role in the production of and responses to homelessness (DeVerteuil et al., 2009). In Hamilton, key stakeholders quickly attributed the increased presence of people on the streets and sleeping rough to the sale of legal synthetic drugs in various shops in and around Hamilton city. The sale of legal synthetic drugs increased the presence of anti-social behaviour in the CBD, behaviour of which is often attributed to homelessness. This factor, combined with Hamilton’s hosting of the Cricket World Cup, the already “dying” central city and the closure of the Cameron Road campground, provided what one key stakeholder referred to as the “perfect storm” for a response to homelessness. Whilst homelessness had been recognised by local government, service agencies and business owners as an issue in Hamilton for some time, the rapid increase in the visible presence of homelessness increased the urgency for a response. These locally specific factors increased the visible presence of people on the streets, and the use of synthetic drugs added to the vulnerability and deteriorating wellness of people on the street. The increase in the number and volatility of people on the streets affected feelings of public safety in the CBD, while

also mitigating against the ability of service providers to provide for in-need individuals. Outside of these immediate locally-specific factors, key stakeholders identified historic factors that they believed contributed to homelessness in Hamilton. These included the deinstitutionalisation of mental health facilities, reduced access to cheap accommodation for single men, a decrease in accessibility to affordable housing, and a shortage of social housing in Hamilton. Additionally, a shortage of drug and alcohol treatment facilities in Hamilton contributed to the cycling of vulnerable individuals into the justice system and exiting into homelessness.

## **7.2 Research Strengths and Contributions**

The findings from this research address an important gap in knowledge around the way in which homelessness was understood by New Zealand governments and by the public sector of services. Despite the availability of data on numbers and types of homelessness in New Zealand, the government's understanding of homelessness remained unclear. Previous New Zealand literature commented how government debates tend to focus on individualist explanations of homelessness (Thorns, 1989), how the general focus on homelessness in New Zealand has been on rough sleeping (Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015) and how government officials, service providers and members of the public have struggled to source an adequate definition of homelessness (Spicer, 2017). Additionally, no researchers had investigated how central governments and public sector agencies understood homelessness. This research provides critical commentary around how this significant population issue and population group remained politically invisible within the work of central government. Furthermore, this research highlights the need for continued academic inquiry to hold the government accountable in its framing and response to one of New Zealand's most marginalised population groups.

In the relatively short history of academic inquiry into homelessness in New Zealand, the subject has been approached from a range of perspectives but has only until relatively recently been considered within the discipline of population studies. In 2019, the Population Association New Zealand (PANZ) conference held its first ever session on homelessness and in 2020 a webinar discussed HF as implemented in the New Zealand context (Baker & Pierse, 2020; Population Association New Zealand, 2019). Research and publications on homelessness in New Zealand have been dominated by considerations within sociology, public health, social policy, psychology. Contributions have also been made by scholars from the fields of housing studies,

urban studies and geography. Notably, public health researchers in New Zealand have contributed significantly to the conceptualisation, definition and estimation of New Zealand's homeless population. Given homelessness is an increasingly significant population issue in New Zealand, population scholars have much to contribute to the field of study. Indeed, academics working with population methods and concepts have a role in improving the usefulness of data in the identification of the homeless population and refining the implementation and evaluation of current and upcoming government policies and programmes. Furthermore, population scholars have a duty to critically evaluate the use and role that data, categories and definitions have within policy and to be cognisant of how these coalesce within dynamics of power, discourse and practice.

This thesis provides evidence of and supports the thesis that homelessness needs to be defined and understood consistently and considered across public sector agencies engaged in service provision in New Zealand. Through the use of TPP as a case study and the systematic review of New Zealand grey literature, the findings of this research confirm the narrative and evidence presented in Pierse et al. (2019) around the high service interaction of TPP clients who have multiple and complex needs. The work of Pierse et al. (2019) focused on service usage by a cohort of 390 TPP clients prior to their placement in housing through HF. Whilst Pierse et al. (2019) provides quantitative evidence of the cohorts excess rates of service usage, particularly within justice, health and welfare systems, this research provided explanation as to how and why, despite such high service interactions, these individuals still became homeless. Rich qualitative data derived from analysis of grey literature and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders across core public sector services found that, in addition to the lack of conceptualisation and mandate to respond to homelessness within the provision of public sector services, system architecture and hegemonic representations of homelessness rendered homelessness invisible. Strict eligibility to services, inconsistencies around the provision of services, and the lack of capability for the public system to respond to the needs of individuals with multiple and complex needs, were identified as drivers of homelessness. Underpinning these drivers is the absence of the problematisation of homelessness within policy and inconsistent understanding of homelessness within central government. These underpinning conditions occur despite the existence of a formal definition of homelessness.

Whilst research into homelessness in New Zealand is sparse when compared to relevant outputs in Australia, Canada and the USA, scholarly work in this area has increased since the early 2000's. A considerable amount of this small pool of research reports the perspectives of those with lived experiences of homelessness (Groot & Hodgetts, 2015; Groot et al., 2008; Hodgetts, Stolte, Groot, & Drew, 2018; Nairn, 2015; Stolte & Hodgetts, 2013) while very few New Zealand researchers have engaged with the providers of services (Amore, 2007; Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2015; Woolley, 2014). Through the utilisation of the Hamilton TPP case study, this research adds to the handful of existing publications that address local responses to homelessness in New Zealand (see Amore, 2007; Laurenson & Collins, 2006, 2007). In furthering research around local responses to homelessness in New Zealand, this research contributes to the developing a geography of homelessness in New Zealand, building a picture of the varied ways in which homelessness is understood and to which it is responded to. Consistent application of the four-part framework developed by DeVerteuil et al. (2009) provides an opportunity for comparative research and consideration of the nuanced geographies of homelessness within different New Zealand cities and communities.

Chapter Two of this thesis made a methodological contribution to the utilisation of literature reviews within the field of social sciences. Whilst research within the social sciences contributes to the evaluation of policies and programmes and is useful for developing solutions to a range of social problems, the volume and complexity of research can make it difficult for decision makers to navigate conflicting evidence (Littel, 2006). One of the issues identified within the use of traditional literature reviews in the social sciences, particularly in their application or relevance for informing policy is that questions remain about the quality of such social research and its subsequent credibility. Thus, the use of a traditional literature review method, which faces criticism for its lack of thoroughness and methodological rigour (Synder, 2019) was not sufficient to provide a reliable evidence base on which to analyse and evaluate the understandings of and responses to homelessness in the New Zealand policy context. The adjusted framework adopted to conduct a systematic literature review employed aspects of the approach taken by the PRISMA framework. This approach enabled the review of literature to be based on a "systematic attempt to identify, retrieve and assess" (Littel, 2006, p.535) potentially relevant research and literature. Whilst the PRISMA statement, and systematic literature reviews in general, were developed out of the need to synthesise and collate the statistical significance of findings within the medical field, the adjusted framework employed in this thesis was suited to a literature review based

on the collation and synthesis of non-statistical data. By establishing transparency around what literature is deemed relevant, from where literature is sourced, how literature is collected, and consistency around what is included and excluded, the adjusted framework offered a base on which other researchers can build when conducting and reporting non-statistical findings from literature. Through the application of the proposed framework, this research provides the first systematic review around the understanding of homelessness within academic literature and understandings of homelessness by New Zealand governments between 2008 and 2018.

### **7.3 Research Limitations**

Despite the important contributions to knowledge outlined above, this research is not without limitations. One limitation is that the research did not engage with all of the authors of homeless geographies as described by DeVerteuil et al. (2009). Because this research focused on exploring government and public sector considerations and understandings of homelessness, the perspectives of other non-government organisations and those with lived experience of homelessness in Hamilton were not included. Given the lack of government-led response to homelessness, non-government organisations have a lot of experience with responding to homelessness. Furthermore, they are likely to also have a wealth of knowledge around some of the nuanced ways that the public sector provision of services system contributes to homelessness in New Zealand. The inclusion of these perspectives would further understandings of the nuanced and complex account geographies of homelessness that exist in Hamilton.

In addition to the above limitation, this research had very limited access to primary data collection and analysis regarding key stakeholder perspectives from the Ministry of Social Development. As explained in Chapter Four, the participant from the Ministry of Social Development was only available via phone interview, consent was not granted for the conversation to be recorded or transcribed, and the topic of the interview was restricted to description and explanation around the social allocation system used to assess eligibility for social housing. Given that interviews with other participants pointed towards the inadequacies of the social allocation system and the process for applying for social housing, comparable participation of key stakeholder perspectives from the Ministry of Social Development would have been beneficial. The equal inclusion of these perspectives would enhance understanding around the way homelessness is considered within the provision of public sector welfare services.

It would also indicate as to whether the Ministry of Social Development was aware of some of the ways in which its current service delivery, administrative and assessment processes contributed to the inability of clients to access services.

Another limitation of this research was use of desktop policy analysis of homelessness policies and plans in Australia, Canada, and USA. As Baker and Evans (2016) critique, analysis of policies that are reliant on official documents is not indicative of how effective policies are in actually responding to homelessness on the ground. The focus of this research was to explore how governments understand and frame homelessness, and how this influences their response to homelessness. As such, this research was unable to account for the “less-than-straightforward practice of formulating and implementing policy” (Baker & Evans, 2016, p. 29) within the international examples cited. The broad-sweeping analysis of government framings of homelessness in Canada, Australia and the USA then give little weight to how the actions of service providers, city officials, and bureaucrats may, in practice characterise a far more ambivalent, or contradictory responses to homelessness in practice than what is framed within the national policy documents.

Another limitation of this research is the use of a single-case study. As findings from this research are specific to the Hamilton context, not all of the findings can be explicated or are applicable to other cities. The specific opportunities and challenges faced by TPP in Hamilton are likely to differ by place. For example, the pre-existing connections between key stakeholders across sectors and the presence of individuals within these sectors who are willing to drive system disruptions as evident in Hamilton may not exist in the same way in other cities. Other cities such as Auckland, which has a greater demand for social housing than Hamilton, or in Tauranga, where the lack of social housing creates challenges around the availability of housing for clients. Furthermore, problems of homelessness may differ by place and thus the cultural signification or understanding of homelessness by key stakeholders will differ. Beyond these location specific elements, however, other findings such as the lack of mandate for public systems to respond to homelessness and some of the other system-drivers of homelessness identified can be expected to occur in other cities in New Zealand.

## 7.4 Research Implications

### 7.4.1 Recommendations for future research

This research focused on TPP's HF response to homelessness and the public sectors consideration of homelessness in Hamilton. The manifestation of homelessness in other cities in New Zealand, though having some similarities, will have different locally specific drivers of homelessness and a different cultural signification of homelessness. This difference in drivers of homelessness, in the population of homeless and in the local service landscape, influence the problematisation of homelessness at the local level and subsequent responses. Whilst an overview of the homeless population in different locales can be derived from the severe housing deprivation data, and data on the level of social housing stock, further research applying the four-part framework presented by DeVerteuil et al. (2009) to other cities in New Zealand would advance understandings of the nuanced geographies of homelessness in New Zealand. Furthermore, the collation of such findings could assist the Aotearoa/ New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan in its ability to support local providers in their response to homelessness.

Furthermore, additional research into the location specific opportunities and challenges of delivering a system-wide and HF response to homelessness might usefully be undertaken. In Hamilton, a lot of the cross-agency work involved with delivering HF was dependant on the connections and relationships between key stakeholders across sectors. Such relationships brokered priority access to housing for TPP clients. However, it is likely that the connection between key stakeholders in different communities varies, and that such variation is a manifestation of specific pressures in terms of social housing, the private rental market and competition between different service providers in advocating for access to housing for their clients. Thus, future research is required to understand how the access to immediate housing might best be achieved by HF providers in different communities.

This research explored the consideration of homelessness by core government agencies responsible for providing social services in New Zealand. It considered whether the New Zealand definition of homelessness was utilised in any way by different government agencies and it explored whether the provision of public sector services responded to homelessness in any way. It was evident that the New Zealand definition of homelessness was not formally utilised and that government agencies and service providers were limited in their consideration and response to homelessness in

Hamilton. However, this research did not examine the capacity of the information practices of public services and the nature and scope of data collected on those in their respective services. It would be advantageous to incorporate an identification of the homeless or those at risk of homelessness.

#### 7.4.2 Recommendations for policy

The stocktake of New Zealand's Housing reported on in 2018 was followed by the development of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development which, in collaboration with core government agencies, developed *The Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020-2023*. This section will firstly provide a brief overview of the action plan and commentary related to the findings of this research. Secondly, policy recommendations will then be provided.

##### *Overview and commentary on the Aotearoa /New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan Phase one 2020-2023*

In February 2020, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development released the first “central government led, and cross-agency” devised plan to respond to homelessness in New Zealand (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p. i). The *Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020-2023* demonstrates the government's explicit recognition of homelessness as a social issue in New Zealand. Described as a shift in the way government responds to homelessness (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b) the action plan is a “multi-year cross government roadmap towards the government's vision that homelessness is prevented where possible, or is rare, brief and non-recurring” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2021). The action plan, as guided by the overarching vision, has six guiding principles and four action areas or high-level outcomes.

The first action area, prevention, highlights the role of timely support in preventing homelessness. In recognition of the many pathways into homelessness, this action area aims to target individuals transitioning out of acute mental health and addiction services as well as young people leaving state care. The outcomes sought through prevention are for people to be supported to keep tenancies, to access support required to prevent homelessness and to be supported in transition from agency care into appropriate housing (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b)..

The second action area, supply, recognises the importance of having an adequate supply of affordable housing and the need for permanent rather than temporary housing options. Outcomes sought through this action area are for people to access affordable and stable housing, for everyone to have a place and community to call home, and for a reduction in the use of motels as emergency accommodation. Gaps highlighted for supply include demand outstripping supply for public housing, shortages of viable housing alternatives for those in emergency and transitional accommodation and lack of affordable housing (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b).

The third action area, support, acknowledges the central role of support services in assisting people into stable and sustainable housing. It also highlights the need to identify and address the range of needs individuals may be facing. Outcomes sought through support is for people to receive support needed to stabilise their housing situation, for support to be tailored to meet specific health and wellbeing needs, and for support to be provided to help people access housing and navigate the private rental market (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b). Gaps identified include lack of a supported pathway to sustainable housing, the absence of continued long-term continued support necessary to limit people cycling in and out of homelessness, the number of people stuck in temporary living situations, and the difficulty faced in navigating services and accessing the private rental market. In addition, there is a lack of support for those who are episodically homeless or who have low-to medium complexity of social service needs, and there are gaps in the visibility of support services and services built around the needs of an individual as gaps (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b).

The fourth and final action area, system enablers, highlights how issues across housing and other government systems fail those who are at risk of homelessness and can exacerbate homelessness. It also outlines how some individuals with multiple and complex needs are still not well connected or visible to service providers. There is also recognition that administrative system settings limit connection between services (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b). The outcomes sought across the system for system enablers includes for all responses to homelessness to be embedded with Kaupapa Māori approaches, for local solutions to be supported, and for those with lived experience of homelessness to be involved in the design of response. Increasing the capability and capacity for the system to respond to

homelessness across the continuum of need, coordination between government agencies and providers to deliver joined-up responses, and the need for understanding around drivers and levels of homelessness are some of the other outcomes sought. Gaps identified within the system include a lack of data and understanding around homelessness, a need to build capacity and capability of the homeless serving workforce, and an absence of central government mechanisms to support local initiatives and plans. In addition, the plan highlights how some system settings are limiting the vision to end homelessness and how there is much to be gained from improved information sharing and coordination between government agencies and providers.

With regards to the definition of homelessness within the action plan, it is clear that some explicit clarifications have been made around the way in which the government understands homelessness. The Ministerial foreword of the plan states that “homelessness is more than rough sleeping. It includes people who are without shelter, in emergency accommodation and living temporarily in severely overcrowded accommodation” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p,i). This in itself represents a stark break from the political discourse that has dominated government understandings of homelessness. In addition, the executive summary of the plan states that “under the official definition. . . [t]here are more than 41,000 people experiencing homelessness in New Zealand” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p,3). Whilst the plan does not include citation for this official definition of homelessness is, it does draw on the data from the enumeration of severe housing deprivation; data that had previously been dismissed by members of the government as including those who are “not actually homeless”. Although the plan formally recognises that New Zealand has an official definition of homelessness and establishes that homelessness is more than rough sleeping, there is no indication yet of how this definition will inform or be utilised in responses to homelessness.

The “Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020-2023” also shows a considerable shift in the government’s conceptualisation of homelessness compared to findings from the 2008-2018 analysis presented in Chapter Three. Beyond the significance of the central government’s problematisation of homelessness within a plan, the explicit recognition of social, transitional and emergency housing as part of the response to homelessness is a point of departure. Previously, the government made a distinction between the provision of social, transitional and emergency housing as a

response to housing need and the delivery of HF as a response to homelessness. Whilst the distinction between a response to housing need and a response to homelessness may seem arbitrary, the framing of homelessness as a social issue occurring along a spectrum of living situations is evidence of an expanded conceptualisation of homelessness. Additionally, the action plan highlights the association of homelessness with “poor social and economic outcomes” and acknowledges that those experiencing homelessness “face other disadvantages and vulnerabilities, including low income, poverty, experience of trauma, poor mental health and physical health” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p. 2). The plan describes structural issues and system failures as drivers of homelessness and acknowledges the central role that the “dispossession of land, social disadvantage, institutional racism, cultural disconnection and poverty” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p. 21) has on the overrepresentation on Māori experiences of homelessness and housing need. In comparison to structural causes of homelessness existing as a textual silence, as was discussed in Chapter Three, the action plan places structural causes and system failures at the forefront of explanations around the causes of homelessness in New Zealand.

Recommendations for policy/ the action plan

### **Application of the official definition of homelessness**

#### **i. Formal adoption of the New Zealand definition of homelessness across government agencies and providers**

Although the action plan is collectively owned by; MHUD, MSD, Kāinga Ora-Homes and Communities, the Ministry of Health, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ara Poutama/Department of Corrections, New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki- Ministry for Children; the plan does not indicate as to whether these government agencies and providers are formally recognising the official New Zealand definition of homelessness. The adoption of the New Zealand definition of homelessness across the entire system of support and housing is, in addition to the action plan, a central component for ensuring a consistent understanding of homelessness. Such consistency has particular relevance given a context where political discourse has dominated understandings of homelessness. Thus, formal implementation of the definition of homelessness is a central mechanism through which to identify and prevent some of the ways the system may contribute to homelessness.

## **2. Alignment between the New Zealand definition of homelessness and assessments for social housing**

The Ministry for Social Development through Work and Income New Zealand is responsible for assessing eligibility for social housing. Given the action plan identifies a need to “enhance assessment processes. . . including ensuring the Social Allocation System for public housing is working effectively” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p.12), and that the current “lack of data and understanding around homelessness in New Zealand” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b, p.51) is a barrier in providing an effective response, there is a clear opportunity for the SAS categories to assist in the collection of data around applicant living situations.

### **Supporting coordination between services**

#### **3. Data linkage or homelessness information system**

As demonstrated by Pierse et al. (2019), experiences of homelessness are often accompanied by a high level of interaction with government services. Primary qualitative data from this research confirmed that lack of information sharing between government agencies and service providers contributed to ineffective responses to the needs of clients and to the state of homelessness. TPP’s multi-consent has assisted in the response to homelessness in Hamilton by improving knowledge of a client’s overall need for housing and other support services. Overseas examples confirm the advantages of adopting standardised information systems for coordinating responses to homelessness, for evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and for monitoring the homeless population. Whilst improving evidence and data on homelessness is an action identified as a goal for implementation in 2020, it is unclear as to how providers will be supported in improving their access to data and whether service providers will have access to a data management system.

#### **4. Standards for local interagency or cross sector meetings**

One of the guiding principles of the plan is to support and enable local approaches. The plan recognises that locally tailored approaches driven by knowledge, strengths and connections between service providers is key to responding to different drivers of homelessness in different communities. Whilst the plan aims to

support local initiatives in their response to homelessness through setting a national framework and through the provision of a local innovation and partnership fund, the plan doesn't indicate any requirement around who is involved in the local coordination of responses to homelessness. As the examples from Australia, Canada and the USA show, access to government funding in support of local initiatives requires the inclusion of specific stakeholders and the development of a local plan and strategy in alignment with the national policy frameworks or plan. Given the sometimes disparate motives for, and responses to homelessness at the local level in New Zealand, it is imperative to ensure key stakeholders coordinate their responses and that these align with the guiding principles and action areas as outlined in the plan.

### **Systems supporting responses to homelessness at the local level**

#### **5. Greater transparency in eligibility for assistance and administrative processes**

Within the key action area 'prevention', the plan lists 'enhance referral and information processes' as a longer-term action to be implemented between 2020 and 2023. The plan acknowledges that some people become homeless due to their inability to access the appropriate support services required to maintain their tenancies. Findings from the research provide evidence of inconsistent delivery of public sector services, and examples of administrative processes exacerbating individual's homelessness. Access to public service support and housing assistance needs to be delivered consistently, with complete transparency around to what clients are entitled in terms of support. Furthermore, administrative processes need to be made simpler as to prevent the delay of access to supports or to housing that can prevent homelessness.

#### **6. Central government support for coordination between and flexibility in the provision of public sector services**

System architecture should be redesigned to support the ability of public sector services to respond more flexibly to the needs of their local community and to coordinate delivery of services. Rather than being bound to the strict ways in which services are funded and contracted, providers need to have some autonomy in being able to coordinate the provision of services to their clients. In the 'system enablers' action area, the plan lists "explore the potential for legislative change"

(Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020, p.53) as a longer-term action for MHUD to progress in 2020-2023. Such legislative change needs to “place a duty of care on government agencies, local councils and other organisations to provide services” (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020, p.53). Legislative change also needs to accommodate an overhaul of the way in which public services are contracted and funded so that the system is responsive to needs that cross the traditional boundaries of public system provision.

#### **7. Increase capacity and capability for services to respond to the needs of individuals with multiple and complex needs**

Frontline services, particularly agents of the Ministry of Social Development who are the key access point for welfare assistance, need to accommodate individuals with multiple and complex needs. This includes having systems in place to provide access to services for those with substance abuse issues, and increasing staff numbers to accommodate individuals who are illiterate or who lack computer skills. This thesis identified that a significant gap in Hamilton was the inability for agencies to provide access to services for those with multiple complex needs. This gap exists because staff do not have the capability to respond to complex needs, or staff deemed such individuals to be too high risk to be helped. The need for services that focus on health and addiction was identified as a key gap in the plan; no immediate action or longer-term action was included in response to this gap.

#### **8. Increase service accessibility for those with moderate needs**

There needs to be increased funding or services to meet the needs of those who are ineligible for services that target individuals with high and complex needs, yet whose needs cannot be met by the provision of mainstream services. Within the ‘support’ action area, the plan identifies the lack of support “for people who experience repeat homelessness, or sleep rough for short periods, and have low-to-medium complexity of social service needs” as a gap in support services (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020, p.46). This gap identified within the plan supports findings from this research around TPP clients deemed ineligible and who are falling below criteria for access to services that they need.

### **New Zealand relevant assessments and definitions for Housing First responses**

#### **9. Adjusted version of VI-SPDAT for the assessment of need across services**

When providing HF services, the use of a service prioritisation decision assistance tool such as the VI-SPDAT by service providers should be implemented. However, there is a need for the VI-SPDAT to incorporate assessment around the capability of individual's to interact with and navigate public sector services. This stems from evidence that client capability is a barrier to individuals accessibility to services.

**10. Utilisation of a chronic and episodic definitions of homelessness for use within government funded Housing First arrangements**

Within New Zealand, HF providers are being funded by central government to provide services in areas of high need. Within the plan, HF is identified as providing effective responses to chronic homelessness. The New Zealand government needs to be cognisant of the funding parameters and targeting of HF. In the New Zealand context, HF needs to be extended to those who are episodically homeless, or, alternatively, the definition of chronic homelessness needs to be adjusted to reflect the experience of homelessness in New Zealand which very rarely manifests through long periods of sleeping rough.

# Appendices

## Appendix One

### Research Ethical Approval

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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Renee Shum  
John Ryks  
Colin McLeay

12 June 2017

Dear Renee,

**Re: FS2017-17 Geographies of Homelessness: A case study of The People's Project**

Thank you for submitting your revised application to the FASS Human Research Ethics Committee. We have reviewed the final electronic version of your application and the Committee is now pleased to offer formal approval for your research activities, including the following:

- interviews with key providers for the homeless population.
- employing a Q Sort methodology ('statement card sort') with key providers for the homeless population.

As a matter of note we would like to mention that there are potential opportunities to include/implement the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi beyond what you have mentioned in your application and would encourage you to continue to explore these as you move through your project.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank-you for engaging with the process of Ethical Review.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Naomi Simmonds'.

Naomi Simmonds  
on behalf, Chair  
*Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.*

## Appendix Two

### Research Information Sheet

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#### Geographies of Homelessness in New Zealand: A Case Study of The People's Project

I am a doctoral student at the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis (NIDEA) at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. The aim of my doctoral research is to explore the concept of homelessness in New Zealand. As part of my PhD thesis, I am undertaking research on the understandings of, and responses to homelessness within New Zealand.

Despite the existence of the *New Zealand Definition of Homelessness* and the more recent definition of *Severe Housing Deprivation*, perspectives on what constitutes homelessness remains a topic of debate amongst politicians, bureaucrats and service providers. This is important because defining homelessness is a political project that directly affects who is eligible for available assistance and services.

#### Semi-structured Interview:

I am interested in conducting interviews with 15–20 individuals who provide or facilitate the delivery of social services to the homeless population in Hamilton, Tauranga and Auckland. The purpose of the interview is to understand how homelessness is defined and responded to within your line of work. I will utilise this information to consider the research questions:

- How is place important in terms of how homelessness is understood and represented?
- How do social service providers respond to homelessness?
- How is homelessness described and defined?

I invite you to participate in an interview that should take approximately 60 minutes. Your opinion is important so you are welcome to bring up any issues that you view as important to my research. I would like to audio-record the interviews so that I have an accurate account of your views and opinions.

#### What are your rights as participants?

If you choose to participate in my research, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question(s).
- Withdraw from the research up to four weeks after the interview has been conducted.
- Decline to be audio-recorded and request that the recorder be turned off at any time.
- Request a copy of interview recordings for personal review.
- Request that any material be erased.
- Ask any questions about the research at any time during your participation.

#### The results.

The results of my research will be used as part of my PhD thesis. As such, four copies of my thesis will be produced, three hard copies and one accessible online. The findings will also be used in a research report written for the use of The Peoples Project. The findings may also be used in presentations and journal publications where confidentiality of participants will remain as indicated within the consent forms.

## Appendix Three

## Semi-structured interview consent form

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**Description of Project:** This research aims to examine the conceptualisation of, and responses to homelessness within New Zealand. I am interested in looking at the different definitions of homelessness used by service providers and the methods of service delivery to the homeless population at the national and local government level.

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM- Interviews

Name of person interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions that I have, relating to the research, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research at any time during my participation, and that I can withdraw my participation up to four weeks after the interview.

During the interview, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can stop the interview at any time, and I can ask to have the recording device turned off at any time.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

*I have discussed the representation of my identity within the research and: (choose one)*

- a) *I would like my identity to be protected through the use of a pseudonym and broad service agency grouping.*
- b) *I would like to be named in the research.*

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
<i>I wish to receive a copy of the interview recording.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I wish to view the transcript of the interview.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I wish to receive a copy of the findings.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant :	Researcher :
Signature : _____	Signature : _____
Date : _____	Date : _____
Contact Details : _____	Contact Details : _____
_____	_____

## Appendix Four

### Semi-structured interview guide for The People's Project interviews



#### Topic: Role as service Coordinators/ Facilitators

Talk to me about the purpose of The Peoples Project, - (the context of the time) in terms of why and how it was started.

P: What was happening in Hamilton around the time TPP was created- why was homelessness a concern suddenly?

P: Are there any limitations (in terms of time frame) on the provision of services related to TPP?

P: TPP facilitate the rehousing of clients, what does this involve? (rapidness, housing type, tenancy agreements, and commitment to rehouse if tenancy lost?)

P: What is TPP role in relation to other service providers?

P: Has the way in which TPP provides services changed over time?

#### Topic: Challenges and opportunities in the current setting of Social Services Provision

*It is my understanding that TPP have a role in facilitating client's access to services. As part of this research, I am interested in understanding the challenges and opportunities that TPP has within the current social services landscape in Hamilton (when facilitating these services).*

*Talk to me about what service providers TPP work with and the different levels of engagement TPP have with them?*

P: What service providers do you view as having an important role in providing services to the homeless?

P: What is TPP relationship with the service providers that you work with?

P: Have you noticed any differences in the way in which service providers understand and define homelessness and what does that mean in regards to TPP relationship with that service provider? – *have social service providers changed the way in which they understand and respond to homelessness according to their relationship with TPP?*

P: Has the way that TPP services are delivered changed in response to opportunities or constraints within the current social services setting in Hamilton?

P: What are some of the main restrictions for your clients in accessing social services?

P: What services, if any, have been created specifically for the homeless population in Hamilton?

P: what service providers would TPP like to engage with more in the future?

P: What sector of service providers is there a lack of in Hamilton in terms of housing, health, justice, welfare etc.?

*In New Zealand, the New Zealand Definition of homelessness published in 2009, however the definition is not necessarily used consistently among service providers; can you tell me about the definitions, sub-categories or typologies of homelessness used by TPP?*

Does TPP have an external (explicit) and internal (implicit= prioritisation) definition?

P: Why were these chosen?

P: What is the relevance of defining homelessness in the nature of your work (especially role in facilitating access to services)?

P: In your opinion, is a definition for homelessness important in providing services to homeless, if so, in what way/ what is it useful for?

P: What is the definition used for? (Eligibility or service prioritisation based on sub category etc.)

P: In your experience, both prior to and during the time of TPP, have you experienced any challenges in working with other service providers due to different definitions or understandings of what homelessness is?

P: New Zealand definition of homelessness: do you categorise your clients by the subcategories of homelessness in the New Zealand definition of homelessness (without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation and uninhabitable housing)?

P: Are there any funding/contractual ties to a particular definition of homeless or particular subcategory of homeless?

P: Do you think definitions of chronic, episodic, and transitionally homeless are reflective of your client's experiences or for the New Zealand context in general? \* **based on time homeless, episodes of homelessness (set number of days homeless) and presence of a disabling condition.**

**- In what ways do you think these categorisations of homelessness could be changed to reflect the New Zealand homeless populations experience?**

P: If you consider the vast number of services in which TPP coordinate, do you have any comments to make about the way in which homelessness is represented through categories and definitions? *(WINZ giving HNZ a category of a client e.g. A15 mental health indication- and the implication of this).*

P: What information do you collect about clients when they access your services

P: Do you collect information about clients' perceived causes of homelessness?

P: Does a client's perceived causes and willingness to address these causes determine their eligibility for services?

*Based on your experience within the sector and as part of TPP, what is your understanding of how the Definition of Homelessness is used in New Zealand by providers of social services?*

P: In your experience, do service providers have a common understanding of what constitutes homelessness?

P: What sub-categories of homelessness do you think service providers have little understanding of and fail to engage with?

P: What **complexities** of homelessness do you think the common understandings of homelessness fail to engage with? (fluid nature of homelessness)

P: Since your engagement with social services in Hamilton, have you noticed a change (implicit or explicit) in the way homelessness is understood and defined?

**Topic: Difference in populations of homelessness and their needs by place**

*Understanding the problems of homelessness= the place-specific pressures that cause homelessness, and who this affects is important as it may influence what the service provider understands about homelessness and how they respond. What would you say the main causes of homelessness are for your core client base?*

P: What are the problems/ main drivers or causes of homelessness for different population groups or homeless cohorts?

P: Have these problems changed over time/ why?  
(increase in demand for affordable housing, increase in need for mental health or addiction services)

P: What are some of the key services that you facilitate for the different sub-categories of homeless and have these changed over time?

## Appendix Five

### Semi-structured interview guide for public sector interviews

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#### Role of public sector agency/service/department

*It is my understanding that in New Zealand, no department, agency or organisation was established to respond directly to homelessness. Rather, service providers are responsible for providing services to those in need of such services- a subset of whom are those who are experiencing homelessness. Talk to me about your agencies role and purpose as a service provider.*

P: What services are provided?

P: What is the eligibility criteria to access these services?

P: Are there any time-frame limitations of the provision of these services?

P: What dictates the parameters of your agencies/organisations service provision? (Policy/ localised funding arrangements)

P: Within the national framework for your services, what local variations (if any) are allowed in terms of service delivery?

P: Has there been any major changes to service provision over the last few decades? (Eligibility or funding, responsibility and roles)

P: What agencies or organisations do you work or coordinate with in relation to your responsibilities as a service provider?

#### Relevance of Service Provision to Clients experiencing homelessness

*I am interested in understanding if and how homelessness is considered by your agency/organisation and whether there are any homeless specific services, or procedures regarding the way in which services are provided to those experiencing homelessness. Talk to me about this.*

P: Does your agency or organisation inquire as to whether a client is homeless or what their living situation is?

P: If a client is experiencing homelessness, what support (if any) is offered and why?

P: Do any of your programs focus on the rehousing, or supporting the rehousing of clients? If so what does this rehousing involve? (rapidness, housing type, tenancy agreements, commitment to rehouse after loss of tenancy etc.)

P: How long have these supports for those experiencing homelessness been in operation? (National/local level?)

P: If no further support for those experiencing homeless can be provided, what restricts further action being taken?

#### Definition or consideration of homelessness

*Despite the existence of the 'New Zealand Definition of Homelessness', there is no policy framework or requirement to utilise the definition. Because this leaves room for various understandings of*



*homelessness, it is useful to understand what definition of homelessness (if any) is adopted, or how homelessness is considered. Talk to me about how homelessness is defined or understood within your agencies service provision.*

**If there is a definition:**

P: Is the definition implicit or explicit?

P: When was this definition adopted and why?

P: What is the definition relevant for?

P: Are any aspects of your service provision bound by contractual funding arrangements?

P: Do you think the definitions are representative of the current context of homelessness in New Zealand, why or why not?

P: Has there been any disagreements with any of the other services you work with, in regards to how homelessness is defined?

**If there is no definition:**

P: Do you think that the eligibility assessment criteria categories are representative of the situations in which people who are homeless find themselves in, why or why not?

P: Do you think service provision practices of your agency reflect an accurate understanding of homelessness, why or why not?

### **Involvement with GG and TPP- changes to service delivery practices**

*Those who are on the governance group for The People's Project have a shared goal regarding homelessness in Hamilton. The people who occupy the Governance Group are key in bringing shared ideas and goals of TPP into their own agencies or organisations. Talk to me about the Department of Corrections interest in homelessness and the context of your involvement with the governance group and TPP.*

P: How did the department of corrections become involved with the governance group/ TPP?

P: What was your interest in being involved and with homelessness in Hamilton?

P: What was your understanding of homelessness prior to your involvement with the GG/ TPP?

P: How do you think your prior understanding of homelessness was developed?

P: Since your involvement with the GG/TPP, how has your understanding or view of homelessness changed?

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P: How is homelessness understood by those who work in the Department of Corrections and how did this change since your involvement with the Governance Group?

P: Since being part of the governance group/ TPP, how has the provision of services to clients who are homeless changed?

P: In your view, what was unsustainable or ineffective about the nature of service provision prior to involvement with the GG / TPP?

P: What improvements still need to be made?

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