

What is Functional Zero?

Fact Sheet | CQ Zero



What is it?

Functional Zero is a measurable milestone in ending homelessness. It means a community has built a system where homelessness is:

- Rare
- Brief
- Once-Off

This does not mean that no one ever experiences homelessness again. Instead it means the system is strong enough to respond quickly and effectively whenever it occurs.

Where did it come from?

Functional Zero is a core outcome of the Advance to Zero (AtoZ) methodology, led in Australia by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness. It provides a practical and achievable benchmark for communities working to end homelessness.

What does it look like in practice?

More People Housed Than Becoming Homeless

- The system is reducing homelessness over time
- Housing placements consistently outpace inflow

Short Period of Homelessness

- People are quickly identified and supported
- Time spent without housing is minimised

No One Left Behind

- People with the highest needs are prioritised
- Chronic homelessness is actively reduced

A Responsive System

- New cases are identified quickly
- Services act in a coordinated way
- People are supported before situations escalate

Why it matters

Traditional Systems	Functional Zero
✗ Respond after people become homeless ✗ Work in silos ✗ Focus on activity, not outcomes	✓ Prevention and rapid response ✓ System-wide coordination ✓ Measurable reductions in homelessness

Functional Zero provides a **clear, shared goal** that communities can work toward, **together**.

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What it requires

✓	A shared By-Name List across services
✓	Regular case conferencing and coordination
✓	Use of real-time, person-level data
✓	Strong local leadership and accountability
✓	Access to housing and support pathways

What it means for communities

Reaching **Functional Zero** signals that a community has:

- Built a coordinated, outcomes-focused system
- Reduced long-term and repeat homelessness
- Strengthened collaboration across sectors
- Created a foundation to sustain progress overtime

Functional Zero **does not** mean homelessness is solved completely

It means:

The system can keep homelessness at very low levels and quickly resolve new cases when they occur.

It is not the end of the work – it is proof that the system is working.