



advance to zero

Memo to the movement

Advance to Zero Database Update

To: The South Australian Advance to Zero Homelessness Movement

From: Michala McMahon, National AtoZ General Manager

Date: 26th March 2026

Subject: Transition to the new AtoZ database and development of a national dataset

Dear Advance to Zero Colleague,

Purpose of this update

This update provides partners and stakeholders with an overview of the transition to the new Advance to Zero (AtoZ) database, why the transition has taken longer than anticipated, and the work currently underway to resolve these challenges.

Reliable data plays a critical role in supporting service coordination, advocacy and system improvement. Public dashboards and shared datasets help demonstrate progress toward ending homelessness, and it is important that the information released is accurate, trusted and reflective of what is happening on the ground.

This memo forms part of a series of updates on the AtoZ database transition. Further updates will be provided as this work progresses and will be available on our website under [Latest News](#).

Summary

1. **Why the transition has taken longer than anticipated** - The transition has taken longer than anticipated because differences in definitions, reporting requirements and service systems across communities and states have made it more complex to ensure the database supports place-based coordination while also producing consistent and reliable reporting for local, state and national.
2. **Work currently underway** - Work is currently focused on aligning key definitions and reporting logic, addressing priority functionality issues raised by communities (such as the inactive protocol, mandatory fields and data access), and strengthening reporting, governance and communication to ensure the database better supports frontline users and coordination.
3. **Next Steps** - Work will progress through three stages: aligning system definitions and addressing priority functionality issues, validating data and developing reporting outputs, and



releasing reliable public dashboards for South Australia followed by the first national Advance to Zero dashboard. The aim is to release a reliable public dashboard within the next six months, supported by ongoing technical improvements and stakeholder consultation.

Background & overview of the AtoZ Database transition

As the Advance to Zero movement has grown across Australia, so too has the need for stronger data infrastructure.

Earlier initiatives were initially managed data through spreadsheets. This worked well while the work was focused on smaller geographic areas and smaller numbers of people experiencing homelessness. As participation expanded, spreadsheets became increasingly unsuitable due to privacy, security and scalability limitations.

South Australia then transitioned to a shared By Name List database, generously provided and supported by Micah Projects. This enabled multiple organisations to participate in coordinated efforts to support people experiencing homelessness while strengthening privacy protections and improving data management.

As additional communities began adopting the Advance to Zero approach across country Victoria, WA and regional communities in Queensland, the opportunity to develop a national dataset also emerged. As the movement expanded, both Micah Projects and participating communities recognised that the existing platform was not designed to support the scale required for growing states and national efforts. Micah Projects identified the need to transition to a new system to support future growth.

In response, the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness developed a new AtoZ database designed to support expansion across states, enable greater consistency in how data is captured and reported, greater local By Name List functionality, and create the foundations for more sophisticated reporting and a future national dataset.

Why the transition has taken longer than anticipated

The transition to the new database represents a significant shift, not only technically but also in how data is used across communities and states.

The AtoZ database captures information about people on the By Name List, while public and internal dashboards interpret and present that data to support service coordination, practice improvement and advocacy. For public dashboards to accurately reflect what is happening on the ground, the underlying database structure, definitions and reporting logic must be consistent.

As communities began using the new system, several challenges became clearer. Differences in definitions, reporting requirements and service systems across states made it more complex than anticipated to ensure the database effectively supports place-based service coordination while also aligning data for reporting locally, by state and nationally. This has contributed to some ongoing functionality issues, particularly in areas such as reporting, data consistency and how some information is displayed in service coordination.

Public dashboards are widely used across the sector to support advocacy, demonstrate progress and inform coordinated responses. For this reason, it is essential that the information they present is



reliable and trusted. Releasing public dashboards before these issues are resolved could misrepresent what is happening on the ground and undermine the credibility of the data. Feedback tells us that the public dashboards were used regularly by organisations, local and state government and external stakeholders, and we are committed to publishing them as soon as physically possible. However, our priority is to ensure the next release of public dashboards is a genuine and reliable reflection of the work happening across communities.

Work currently underway

Significant work is underway to strengthen the database and reporting capabilities. This includes collaboration between state and national partners to align definitions, improve reporting logic and strengthen governance processes. A cross-state database working group is supporting this work, with issues formally logged, prioritised and addressed as they arise.

Feedback provided through frontline workers and local teams using the database is informing ongoing improvements to ensure workflows better reflect frontline practice. Key issues raised by communities have included the inactive protocol (which has resulted in what appear to be higher numbers in some communities), service names not being available for organisations that are not using the database, mandatory fields, the ability to extract data from the system, and access to information entered into the database.

All issues raised are being recorded in an issues log and are regularly reviewed and prioritised. Communities are encouraged to continue providing feedback as this work progresses. Current priorities include aligning key definitions within the system so that inflow and outflow can be accurately counted, reinstating the inactive protocol, implementing appropriate mandatory fields, and strengthening reporting and data access. Alongside this work, efforts are also underway to improve communication and transparency so that stakeholders are better informed about progress and challenges.

Maintaining and updating data during this period remains important. The database continues to support service coordination by helping organisations identify people who may require housing or support, understand who may already be working with someone, and reduce duplication across services. Work is also underway to support communities to clean and update existing data.

Next steps

Over the coming months the work will focus on three key stages -

- **Stage 1 - System alignment and priority fixes (current phase)** - Work is currently focused on aligning key definitions and reporting across communities and states so that inflow and outflow can be accurately counted. This stage also includes addressing priority functionality issues raised by communities, such as the inactive protocol, mandatory fields, reporting functionality and access to information within the system.

- **Stage 2 – Data quality and reporting development**

Once key definitions and system functionality are aligned, the focus will shift to strengthening data quality and validating reporting outputs. This stage will include supporting communities



to review and update existing data where needed, and developing reporting outputs that accurately reflect what is happening on the ground.

- **Stage 3 – Public reporting**

Following data validation, our aim is to release a reliable public dashboard for South Australia within six months, followed by the first national Advance to Zero dashboard. These dashboards will provide a trusted view of progress and support advocacy, practice improvement and coordinated responses across communities, states and nationally.

Work to strengthen the database will continue beyond the release of the dashboards. As initial system alignment and priority fixes are addressed, the database working group will continue to review and prioritise issues recorded in the issues log to guide ongoing improvements. To support this work -

- The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness recently appointed a Power Platform Software Engineer who has already begun implementing technical improvements, including work to strengthen inflow and outflow reporting.
- A draft Advance to Zero Practice Guide will be circulated for community input, and further information will be shared about opportunities for stakeholders to participate in database consultation - More information to follow.
- We are committed to providing regular updates, alongside an accompanying Frequently Asked Questions guide that will be updated as new questions arise.

We acknowledge that this transition has not been as smooth as originally anticipated and we appreciate the patience, commitment and ongoing engagement of communities and partners throughout this process. We recognise that this has required many of you to adapt how you approach aspects of the work while these issues are being resolved, and that for some communities the ability to use place-based data to guide service coordination and inform improvement priorities has been impacted. A key priority during this period has been to minimise additional administrative burden on frontline staff while improvements to the system are underway. Protecting time for direct practice and service coordination has remained central to how this work has been approached. Your feedback has been critical in helping identify improvements and ensuring the database continues to support frontline practice.

As with all Advance to Zero work, we remain committed to learning, adapting and continuously improving so the data infrastructure supporting this work is reliable, useful and fit for purpose as the movement continues to grow. Further updates will be provided as progress continues.

Sincerely,

Michala McMahon, National AtoZ General Manager