



Mission Australia

WINTER SLEEPOUT

Sleep rough to help the homeless WWW.WINTERSLEEPOUT.COM.AU



HOMELESSNESS

QUICK FACTS

On any given night, 105,000 people in Australia are homeless. Of these, nearly 45,000 are under 25 years of age. About 59,000 are male and 46,000 are female. Around 16,000 are sleeping rough, 20,000 staying in crisis accommodation, 22,000 in boarding houses, and around 47,000 are staying with friends or relatives.

Homelessness was recognised as a major social issue by the Commonwealth government with the publication of its White Paper, *The Road Home*, in 2008. The delivery of homeless services is therefore undergoing significant change in Australia at present.

WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

A homeless person is someone who does not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing. Three levels of homelessness are generally recognised in Australia:

- **Primary homelessness** – people who lack conventional secure accommodation and may be living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.
- **Secondary homelessness** – people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another, for example, crisis accommodation or staying with friends or family.
- **Tertiary homelessness** – people who live on a medium to long term basis in boarding houses, where their housing is considered to be below the minimum community standard of a self-contained residence.

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness can be caused by a combination of different individual, social and structural factors. There are many pathways into homelessness and these tend to vary by age and other circumstance. Causes of homelessness can include:

- Poverty;
- Long term unemployment;
- Lack of affordable housing;
- Domestic violence;
- Relationship or family breakdown;
- Mental illness or substance abuse; and
- Exit from institutional living.

Homelessness is sometimes precipitated by a 'trigger' event, such as being evicted from housing or a period of high financial stress. Often it is an accumulation of factors over time that lead to housing instability and eventually homelessness.

Young people tend to have a different experience of entering into homelessness than people who become homeless as adults.

One study found that the most commonly reported reason for young people leaving home was conflict with parents, while other reasons included anxiety or depression, desire for independence or adventure, violence at home, and alcohol and other substance abuse.

EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Some people only become homeless for a short time, while others enter into lengthy periods of homelessness and become chronically homeless. Each homeless person has different characteristics and different experiences. However, many will experience poverty, social exclusion, and a range of health issues including higher rates of mental illness, substance abuse, poor dental health, and eye and podiatry problems.

OUR SERVICES

Mission Australia offers a number of services that are based on our understanding of homelessness as a complex issue that goes beyond a lack of secure housing and involves people with many different needs. Our services include accommodation facilities that offer preventative, crisis and post-crisis support, as well as other complementary services such as mental health, education and living skills programs.

Increasingly, our service approach is focused on early intervention and prevention rather than crisis services. When people do become homeless, we do our best to keep them safe and supported while assisting them back into a healthy and secure environment. Our services include:

Wattle House (WA) is a community centre that offers intensive support to individuals and families on a wide range of issues. Services include support to isolated families, financial and other counselling, and affordable food.

MissionBeat (NSW) is an outreach service that works mostly in inner Sydney, transporting our clients to safe accommodation or medical facilities when needed. MissionBeat also responds to calls from police, ambulances, community service organisations and government departments.

The **Mission Australia Centre (NSW)** provides accommodation and intensive case management for clients in conjunction with a range of professional, educational and training services on the one site.

Café One (QLD) is a Brisbane-based café that is both a hospitality and support service. It serves nutritious and affordable food to the community and also acts as an entry point for people seeking practical assistance and professional support services.

Reconnect (WA, SA, NSW, QLD) provides assistance to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, helping them to rebuild their family relationships where possible and to engage with education, employment or training.

HOMELESSNESS

HELPFUL LINKS

Australian Bureau of Statistics (See Counting the Homeless project, 2006)
www.abs.gov.au

Australian Council of Social Service
www.acoss.org.au

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
www.aihw.gov.au

Australian National Homelessness Information Clearinghouse
www.homelessnessinfo.net.au

Council to Homeless Persons
www.chp.org.au

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
www.fahcsia.gov.au

Homelessness Australia
www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au

National Shelter
www.shelter.org.au

NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre
www.wrrc.org.au

Youth Accommodation Association
www.yaa.com.au

For more information about Mission Australia
and our services go to

www.missionaustralia.com.au

For our research publications go to

www.missionaustralia.com.au/research-and-social-policy

AT A GLANCE

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in Australia are homeless.*

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