

Fact Sheet



HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA – KEY STATISTICS

September 2010 #01

In Victoria 23,299 people were recorded as homeless on Census night in 2006. They included people sleeping outside or in impoverished dwellings, sleeping temporarily with friends or relatives, staying at caravan parks or in rooming houses, and staying in government-funded crisis or temporary accommodation.

Homelessness occurs when a person or family does not have access to a safe, secure, affordable home. Many situations trigger homelessness including lack of access to affordable housing, leaving state care as a young person without accommodation and escaping violence at home. Physical and mental health issues and financial hardship can also contribute to a person becoming homeless.

Snapshot of homelessness in Victoria

On Census night 2006:

- 23,299 people were counted as homeless, including 2,204 people 'sleeping rough' (without any shelter or accommodation at all) and 2,789 living in caravan parks
- Single people made up the majority (54%) of the homeless population, followed by families with children (26%)
- Almost half of the homeless were young people under 24.
- One in three homeless Victorians was a child under 12.

Specialist homelessness services reported in 2008-09:

- 58,600 men, women and children accessed homelessness services in Victoria
- Nationally, more than half of all people and 70% of children needing immediate accommodation were turned away.

Who experiences homelessness in Victoria?

Young people (12 to 25):

- Approximately 6,408 young Victorians between 12 and 25 have nowhere to call home
- Government-funded homelessness services reported that 11,400 young people accessed support in 2008-09. Of those, 5,700 were aged 20 – 24; 5,700 were 15 -19; and 700 were under 15.

Families and children (under 12):

- The number of homeless families increased by about 17% between 2001 and 2006
- More than 23,000 children accompanied their families to homelessness support services in 2008-09, the highest number ever recorded in Australia. Of these, 9,800 were under five and 16,200 under 10.

People experiencing family violence:

- Government-funded agencies reported that one in every two women with children seeking homelessness services was escaping a violent home situation
- In 2008-09 in Victoria, almost 9,000 young people and adults who accessed services cited family violence as the reason for their homelessness.

Indigenous:

- Indigenous people continue to be over-represented in the homeless population. The 2006 Census reported that while Indigenous people make up only 0.6% of the total Victorian population, they account for 3.8% of the homeless population.

Older people:

- People aged 45 or more made up 29% of the recorded homeless population in the 2006 Census, a 26.5% increase on 2001.



What is needed to end homelessness?

Affordable homes

Many people in Victoria are struggling to pay the rent because of the increased cost of housing. In 2007 more than one million Australian families were experiencing housing stress – paying more than 30% of their income on housing.

As of 30 June 2010, 41,017 applicants were on the public housing waiting list in Victoria.

State and federal governments have responded to the housing affordability crisis by providing new money for social housing through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, which will deliver more than 4,400 new social homes in Victoria.

Homes and education for children and young people

Almost half of the young people who are homeless are not in school. For those at school, many are forced to change schools several times to follow whatever temporary accommodation is available. We must permanently house families and young people to cut down on frequent moves and give them the best chance of finishing their education.

Around 400 young people leave state care each year. A recent survey found that 48% of young people who left their placement after exiting care in Victoria experienced homelessness during the first year of their independence.

Homelessness support services

Some people need support services to help them avoid homelessness, or to stabilise their life during and after homelessness. Their needs may include primary health care, employment, treatment for substance use and mental health services. In many cases these services are the reason people are able to work and meet their responsibilities as a tenant.

Investment in the homelessness workforce

To respond to an issue as complex as homelessness, the homelessness and family violence sectors need experienced and qualified staff. These sectors must have the capacity to recruit, retain and train staff.

Further information on the steps needed to end homelessness can be found at www.ittakesahome.org.au

References

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About the Council to Homeless Persons

CHP is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

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