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Caravan park closures drive homelessness

The Council to Homeless Persons has warned that the spate of suburban caravan park closures in recent years is contributing to the increase in homelessness, as low-cost housing options become scarcer and scarcer.

The peak body says that at least six suburban caravan parks home to hundreds of people on low incomes will have closed by the beginning of 2018. Two - in Brooklyn and Williamstown - have already shut their doors on the 200+ people that call them home; often very disadvantaged, very vulnerable people.

“Each closure of a caravan park means one less option of last resort. The next step is often the street,” said Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

“This explains why we’re seeing more people sleeping rough on our streets. Our homelessness services support residents who are being evicted, but with so few affordable housing options left, ex-caravan park residents often end up in rooming houses or worse, on the street,” she said.

Last year 1,425 Victorians living in caravan parks last year needed help from homelessness services, according to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

In its pre-Budget Submission, CHP is calling for 10,000 additional one-bedroom public housing dwellings over the next five years. It says that single people often struggle the most to find affordable housing options because renting is so expensive, and one-bedroom public housing is in the scarcest supply.

CHP says that the State Government’s recent social housing announcements are encouraging, delivering around 6,000 dwellings over the next five years, but that the first of those won’t hit the ground until the end of the year, and will take years to reach the 6,000 target. There are currently 33,000 people waiting for public housing.

“To solve a big problem, we need a whole of government response, and it’s time for the Federal Government to step up to the plate and increase public and community housing.”

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