



Media release – Thursday 29 June 2017

Why are people sleeping on the street in Victoria?

Media interest in Victoria has returned to the question of why people are sleeping rough in our streets.

“The simple answer is that more people are becoming homeless every day than are able to be housed,” says Jenny Smith CHP CEO.

This is evident when we look at recent data from homeless services.

An analysis of the Rough Sleepers Initiative since January that reaches out to people sleeping rough in inner Melbourne shows the challenge of housing people who are already sleeping rough. Of 82 clients the service was in contact with:

- only 6 were able to gain long-term housing or will soon be housed (4 in public housing, 1 in a share house, 1 soon to be housed at Commonground)
- 26 were not able to obtain emergency accommodation or any other housing outcome.

The remaining 50 were provided with temporary accommodation; some would have had multiple episodes of different forms of temporary housing but may have exited this temporary housing back into homelessness because of the absence of long-term solutions.

- 9 were accommodated in transitional (medium-term) housing
- 48 were provided with emergency accommodation in motels or rooming houses (typically only for a few nights)
- 15 were accommodated in supported crisis accommodation (6-8 weeks)
- 1 went to a psychiatric unit interstate
- 9 were referred for more intensive support to access housing on account of severe health challenges

The flow of people into rough sleeping is apparent when we consider the demand at access points (the services that are the entry point to homeless support, temporary accommodation and housing). A recent analysis by just one homeless service access point over a month revealed:

- of 823 people coming to the service, temporary accommodation in motels or rooming houses was only able to be provided to 85
- the service made 50 referrals to crisis accommodation facilities, but only seven were accepted.

“While the Victorian Government has made some welcome new investment in homeless services and housing over the past year, the reality is that the scale of the problem continues to massively exceed

capacity to respond. Access to housing that people can afford is the major constraint fueling growing homelessness.

“Unless the Federal government joins the State Government in funding more public and community housing, the crisis of homelessness will continue to grow.”

Quick facts

How many people are homeless in Victoria?

- 23,000 Victorians are homeless (ABS, 2011), including 1,000 people rough sleeping
- Rough sleeping represents just 5% of all homelessness in Victoria (n = 1,092)
- Half of all those experiencing homelessness in Victoria are under 25
- 105,000 Victorians sought help from homelessness services and more than 60% of them were women (AIHW, 2015-16)

Housing affordability and homelessness

- Just 4 in 1000 private rentals in Melbourne are affordable to someone on Newstart
- There are 35,000 people waiting for public and community housing in Victoria
- 120,000 low-income Victorian households are living in rental stress
- Newstart recipients receive \$268/week + up to \$66 Commonwealth Rent Assistance. The median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Melbourne is \$340/week (DHHS, 2016).

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