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## ‘Chaos’ of homelessness jeopardising the education of thousands of kids

The peak body for homelessness has warned that the chaos and transience of homelessness is jeopardising the education of thousands of children, and has called for a specialised program to support kids experiencing homelessness to stay in school.

New data reveals that nearly 11,000 primary and secondary students sought assistance from homelessness services in Victoria in 2016-17 - an 11% increase on the previous year.

“It’s hard to stay in school and get a proper education when you don’t have a stable home,” said Ms Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

In its [State Budget Submission](#) CHP has called on the Victorian Government to invest \$17.6 million over four years to improve education outcomes for kids without a home.

The four year investment would support 12,000 students to stay in school by expanding an already existing program called LOOKOUT that is currently only available to kids in out-of-home care.

Nearly half of all households experiencing homelessness in Victoria include children and young people – with many young people presenting to services alone.

**Table: No of Victorian school students who sought help from homelessness services in 2016-17**

School type	2015-16	2016-17	% increase
Primary school students	5663	6,246	10%
Secondary school students	4050	4,739	17%
TOTAL	9,713	10,985	13%

“Homelessness isn’t just the rough sleeping we see on the street. Living in your car, hopping from couch to couch or constantly moving suburbs in seek of affordable rent is a chaotic and transient lifestyle that seriously jeopardises a young person’s schooling.

“We need to remove the barriers that prevent them achieving their full potential,” said Ms Smith.

If funded, the expanded LOOKOUT program would see teams (including psychologists, learning advisers and a Koori consultant) placed in key regional and urban locations to target kids experiencing homelessness who are at risk of disengaging from school; supporting their families, assist with schooling costs and providing better support to schools and teachers in relation to homeless students. The funding boost would also enable 17 new specialist children’s homelessness workers at homelessness services.

“This sensible investment will save taxpayers in the long run because more kids will stay in school and avoid a lifetime of poverty, unemployment and the cycle of homelessness,” said Ms Smith.



CHP emphasized that prevention of homelessness was the ultimate goal, and called on the Federal Government to step up to the plate. “To eliminate homelessness, we need the Federal Government to deliver a huge boost to social housing, so that vulnerable families are not forced into homelessness in the first place.”

**Available for interview:** Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons

**Media enquiries:** *Lanie Harris, Council to Homeless Persons, 0418 552 377 or [lanie@chp.org.au](mailto:lanie@chp.org.au)*