



Media release – Monday 29 October 2018

From hospital into homelessness

Around 45 Australians per week were discharged from hospital and psychiatric care into homelessness last financial year due to a shortage of appropriate accommodation for vulnerable people, says Victoria's peak body for homelessness.

In its [State Budget submission](#), the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) is calling for more dedicated housing and support for people leaving hospital and psychiatric care, saying spending money to prevent homelessness for this cohort makes more economic sense than spending money on crisis responses once they become homeless.

There has been a 50 per cent increase over three years in the number of people exiting psychiatric units and hospital and presenting at homelessness services, according to the analysis of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data conducted by CHP.

People who are discharged from hospital and psychiatric units into refuges, rooming houses and couchsurfing situations struggle to stay well, says CHP, and are often re-admitted, or repeatedly present at Emergency Departments.

'Any gains made in hospital quickly unravel when people are discharged into homelessness or substandard accommodation, and many will find themselves back in hospital. It becomes an insidious cycle,' says Jenny Smith, CEO, CHP.

Ms Smith says that Labor's commitment to launch a Royal Commission into Mental Health if re-elected is to be applauded, and hopes that the inquiry extends to examining how homelessness and marginal accommodation impacts people's mental health.

'It's hard to get on top of mental illness at the best of times, but without a safe, permanent, affordable place to live, it's virtually impossible,' said Ms Smith.

'Some people lose their housing while in extended hospital stays, while others had no fixed address when they were admitted. If they're on a low income, there are very few appropriate housing options available when they're discharged,' said Ms Smith.

Number of Australians presenting at homelessness services after being discharged from the following institutions (AIHW, SHS data)

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	3-year increase
Psychiatric hospital/unit	892	1,164	1,403	1,356	52%
Hospital (excluding psychiatric)	696	872	978	1,013	46%

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