



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

Media Statement 13 December 2018

Dubious report denies the reality of people living without a home

Research released today by conservative think tank, the Centre for Independent Studies suggests that the only homelessness of concern is rough sleeping, ignoring the devastating impact of the insecurity and inability to perform the ordinary activities of daily living experienced by people living in crisis accommodation, rooming houses, or severely overcrowded dwellings.

“Our homes are the base for living our lives, and provide far more than simply a roof over our head”, says Jenny Smith, Chair of Homelessness Australia.

“People in rooming houses, crisis accommodation and couchsurfers may be hidden from public view, but the impacts of their homelessness are no less damaging and long-lasting.

“Families experiencing homelessness who spend weeks or even months moving between cheap motels, the lounge room floor of friends and family and dangerous rooming houses, report a profound sense of dislocation accompanied by extreme stress. They also face a plethora of practical challenges, including struggling to remain at school, to work, and prepare meals. All of these experiences reflect their lack of a home and underscore the importance of the current ABS definition of homelessness.”

“Homelessness also affects people’s health, education and labor market participation. These impacts cannot be understood and effective solutions developed, unless homelessness is properly quantified. Effective public policy development relies on the definition of homelessness reflecting the point at which lack of a home impacts on health and wellbeing.”

“The Centre for Independent Studies also recommends the long-term incarceration of drug users and people with mental illness who are sleeping rough. This extraordinary proposal to return to the 18th century model of locking people away in institutions is shocking.

Typically chronic rough sleepers have experienced profound histories of trauma, and a significant body of research and practice has demonstrated that secure housing combined with effective support enables even the most entrenched rough sleepers to maintain that housing and exit rough sleeping. Where this successful model has been implemented in Australia it has proved to be highly successful, but implementation has been hampered by inadequate access to enough suitable housing options.

This conversation is a backward step, leaving us debating definitions instead of the tackling the real issue of fixing our broken housing market so that every Australian has a safe, permanent home. It’s a smokescreen to distract us from the fact successive governments have let this problem get away from us and we are now facing an epidemic.”

Media Enquiries: Kate Colvin, 0418 103 292, kate@chp.org.au