

Victorian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Homelessness



Aboriginal Australians are overrepresented in the homelessness system. Indigenous Australians make up **0.9%** of Victorians, but **9.8%** of homelessness service users.



In 2017-18
9,428
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians sought help from a homelessness service [1]

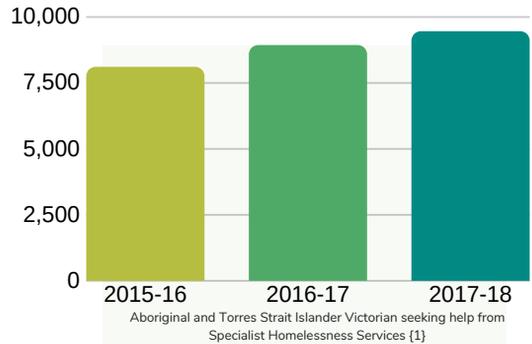
Why are Aboriginal Victorians people overrepresented in the homeless population?

There are a number of historic and current reasons that can help to understand why Aboriginal Victorians are over represented in the homeless population.

The history of colonisation in Australia, in which Aboriginal land was taken, resulted in significant dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal communities.

Government officials were empowered to control the movement of Aboriginal people, removing them from their land, and creating what we now recognise as spiritual homelessness.[2] Officials were also empowered to remove Aboriginal children, resulting in what is now known as the Stolen Generation. The intergenerational trauma experienced by people of the Stolen Generation continues to impact on a range of wellbeing outcomes, including homelessness.

Today, rental discrimination on the basis of race also continues to perpetuate homelessness among Aboriginal Australians.[4,5]



Homelessness among Victoria's Aboriginal community has risen, both in the number of people experiencing homelessness, and also in proportion to the rest of the population.

In the three years to 2018 homelessness among Victoria's Aboriginal community grew by **22%**, compared to 10% for other Victorians. [1]



■ What it means to be 'home' for Aboriginal Australians

The meaning of 'home' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities can be different than that of other groups in Australia.

While many people associate 'home' with having a house, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the concept of 'home' can include connection to country and community.



■ Future directions in addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness

Working together to build a shared future means ensuring that Aboriginal Victorians can determine the solutions and programs to meet their own needs. This has been shown to result in more service utilisation and better outcomes.[3]

Achieving this requires strong and well-resourced Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations that are empowered to develop and deliver unique, responsive solutions to Aboriginal homelessness. Ensuring that mainstream services are culturally competent is a complement to this capacity.

References

1. Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2019, Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, Canberra.
2. Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2014, Homelessness Among Indigenous Australians.
3. Behrendt, L., Jorgensen, M., and Vivian, A., 2016, Self-Determination: Background Concepts, Scoping paper 1 prepared for the State of Victoria, Department of Health & Human Services, Melbourne, pp. 12-15.
4. Shelter South Australia, 2019, "I'm tired of being treated like a second-class citizen!"; Racial Discrimination in the Private Rental Market, Adelaide
5. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2012. Locked out: Discrimination in Victoria's private rental market



■ Who are they?

Aboriginal clients in Victoria using Specialist Homelessness Services are:

39% Male

61% Female



■ 17% are children under 10 years old.

■ As with the non-Aboriginal population, the most cited reasons for seeking help from a homelessness service were family violence and housing crisis.[1]

