



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Data Shows Enormity of Challenge

Data released today shows an increase in the number of people assisted by homelessness support services, illustrating the enormity of the challenge of halving homelessness by 2020.

Today's figures released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show 219,800 people experiencing homelessness were supported by specialist homelessness services over the course of the 2009/10 financial year, up from 204,900 in 2008/09.

"These figures demonstrate the importance of continuing the strategies from the "White Paper" to reduce homelessness. Halving homelessness by 2020 will be an enormous challenge. The figures also show that specialist homelessness services have a vital role to play in supporting vulnerable Australians and in the effort to reduce homelessness" Homelessness Australia's Chairperson Narelle Clay, AM said.

The report showed that domestic violence was again the most often cited reason by women for seeking assistance from homelessness services, and that this was a major contributing factor to the very high number of young children who were supported by homelessness services last year. More than 84,000 children used specialist homelessness services in 2009/10; this equates to 1 in every 62 Australian children and 1 in 38 children aged 0-4.

"Today's release shows that women experiencing domestic violence are in urgent need of action that leads to a reduction in violence in the community. The number of children assisted by homelessness services has again increased" Homelessness Australia's Chief Executive Officer Nicole Lawder said.

"1 in 38 Australian children pre-school aged children spent time in a homelessness service last year. This is unacceptably high" Ms Lawder said.

The data also showed that young people aged 15-24 made up nearly one third of all clients supported. 43,300 people aged 15-24 received support in 2009/10, up from just over 40,000 in 2008/09, an increase of nearly ten percent. 1 in 50 Australian women aged 15-19 received assistance from specialist homelessness services in 2009/10.

"The data confirms that youth homelessness remains a significant problem in Australia but that services are responding to their needs." Narelle Clay said.

"We need to support the existing specialist homelessness services to respond to young people and we need to continue the positive directions in early intervention and prevention services to stop young people from entering the homelessness service system. Ending youth homelessness needs to be a national priority" Ms Clay said.

The data also showed that in the overwhelming majority of cases clients had their needs met.



“The good news is that over 95% of clients had their needs met by services. This illustrates the value of specialist homelessness services and the professionalism of the sector” Nicole Lawder said.

For further information and comment, please contact:

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