



METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW OF COUNTING THE HOMELESS 2006

SECTOR BRIEFING

Difference between Counting the Homeless Estimate and ABS Estimate

- The ABS has revised the 2001 and 2006 national homelessness counts downwards by approximately 40% from 104,676 people (Counting the Homeless 2006) to 63,472 people (ABS Review 2011).

Table 1.1 below summarises the new estimates for each sector of the homeless population that have been arrived at by the ABS following their methodological review of *Counting the Homeless 2006*. Members should note that the ABS review has determined that there has been an over-count in all categories of homelessness previously adopted but that the ABS has developed a fifth category of homelessness comprised of 1,970 people it does not believe meet the definition of primary, secondary or tertiary homelessness.

Table 1.1: Overview of proposed review changes to homeless estimates, 2006:

Category	2006 CTH estimate	ABS Review estimate (a)	Difference (n)	Difference (%)
Boarding Houses	21 596	16 828	-4 768	-22.1
SAAP	(b) 19 849	17 331	-2 518	-12.7
Friends/Relatives	(c) 46 856	19 579	-27 277	-58.1
Improvised Dwellings/Rough Sleepers	16 375	7 764(d)	-8 611	-52.5
Persons in other temporary lodging	N/A	1 970	+1 970	+1.8
Total:	104 676	63 472	-41 204	-39.3

(a) This is the mid-point of the likely range of the new estimate

(b) This number is derived from AIHW SAAP Collections except for Victoria.

(c) Includes Analysis from non-Census sources.

(d) Also includes a reduction of 200 because of a Census collector error because of inclusion in CTH of system generated records.

Source: Chamberlain Chris, Mackenzie, David *Counting the Homeless 2006* ABS Catalogue #2050.0, Table 3.5, p.21. Census 2006.

Note: The Above estimates are median estimates (mid-point data between the ABS lowest and highest estimates).

As readers will note, all of the reductions in estimates produced in the above table are statistically significant. The ABS claims to have adjusted the 2006 Census figures for each of the homelessness categories after conducting a series of cross-tabulations of Census night data which the Discussion Paper claims excludes large numbers of people when other information provided is taken into account.

A summary of the reasons provided by the ABS for removing large numbers of people from each category is provided in the Discussion Paper and re-produced below:

Boarding Houses

- According to the ABS review, 5300 people were added by Chamberlain and Mackenzie to the raw Census night data on the number of people counted as staying in boarding/rooming houses by Census collectors.
- The ABS review position is to remove 3000 of these people because the review has determined that their inclusion is inconsistent with the methods stated in *Counting the Homeless*.
- The ABS acknowledges that there will be a consequence for the ability to measure changes in the data as a time series. That said, the review concludes that by adding new rules to boarding house definitions in the counting the homeless process without examining the consequences of the change in terms of the people it classifies as homeless breaks the time series and includes people that the ABS does not believe share the characteristics of the boarding house population.

The ABS excluded 2,243 people who were added by Chamberlain and Mackenzie because:

- They reported having a 'real estate agent' or 'landlord' which is more suggestive of living in a group house than a boarding house.
- They indicated that they were paying mortgage repayments.
- They were in a rent to buy scheme.
- They were paying rent to the parent of one of the group members.
- They were a group reporting themselves as 'religious volunteers' (e.g. nuns or monks).

The ABS also removed people from the tertiary homeless count because they were deemed to be in student accommodation or on the basis that their income was too high.

- **Overall the ABS review removes 4768 people from the Counting the Homeless tertiary homelessness count of 21 596 but reallocates 1970 people to a new category of homelessness.**

New Trends in tertiary homelessness: 2001-2006

- **In 2001, the ABS Review estimates that 23 749 people were accommodated in boarding houses on Census night**
- **In 2006, the ABS review estimates that this number had declined to 16 828. This represents a reduction of 29% between 2001 and 2006.**

Even accounting for the fact that the boarding house sector is believed to be in decline, the ABS must be asked to explain why if their new methodology is appropriate for performance indicator construction, the boarding house population declined by 29%. Even accounting for the improved economic conditions described in the ABS paper this is a significant reduction and it warrants further exploration.

Persons staying in SAAP Accommodation

- The ABS review has removed 2518 people from the SAAP estimate reached by Chamberlain and Mackenzie in *Counting the Homeless 2006*.
- The ABS review does not believe that counting 'support periods' that cover a period of time beyond merely Census night is appropriate when seeking to enumerate a point in time count of the number of people accommodated in specialist homelessness services.
- The ABS believes that it has corrected estimates to align with the stated methodology in the *Counting the Homeless* reports. The ABS believes that this correction will eliminate the possibility of double counting of people whose support periods include Census night but who were not staying in a homelessness service on Census night and hence may have already been counted elsewhere in the Census data.
- **Overall the ABS Review has removed 2518 people from the Counting the Homeless Secondary Homelessness (people in SAAP) count reducing the figure from 19 849 to 17 331.**

New trends in persons accommodated in SAAP based on ABS review.

- **In 2001, the ABS review estimates that 13 420 people were staying in SAAP accommodation on Census night.**
- **In 2006 the ABS review estimates that this number had increased to 17331. This represents an increase of 29.1% between 2001 and 2006.**
- **If we analyse the SAAP data for the period 2001/02 to 2006/07, we can see that the number of clients supported increased for 93,000 to 118,800 during that period, an increase of 27.7%. This broadly accords with the increase in persons staying in SAAP on Census night between 2001 and 2006.**

Friends and Relatives

The ABS review has drastically reduced the number of people counted as experiencing secondary homelessness (staying with friends and relatives) on Census night.

The review has removed 27 277 people from the friends and relatives count reducing homelessness in this category by more than 58%. The new figure was arrived at by the ABS after statisticians cross-tabulated several other sources of data drawn from the Census form.

The ABS pays specific attention to the phenomenon of grey nomads over the course of the discussion paper. The ABS claims that Chamberlain and Mackenzie have assumed that all people reporting no usual address and enumerated in private dwellings are homeless and being accommodated temporarily by friends or relatives.

The ABS has concluded that of the 32 519 people enumerated in the Census in 'visitors without a usual address' (i.e. No tenancy or owner-occupier status to the property), 13 033 people were in visitor-only households (that is, no occupants had tenancy rights or were owner-occupiers of the residence as their primary dwelling).

Of the 13 033 people:

- The ABS excluded 2469 people who were re-classified as grey nomads.
- They were excluded because all members of the 'household' were aged 55 and over and because they were located in collection districts that were 'holiday destinations', particularly in Northern Australia.
- The ABS concluded that this group who were included in the *Counting the Homeless* data, had increased from 1669 in 2001 to 2469 in 2006 but that this was not realistic because economic and social conditions improved between 2001 and 2006. This is highly contentious as the ABS appears to assume that the benefits of economic growth are shared equally.
- The ABS believes that this group will continue to grow as more and more 'baby boomers' retire and seek to become mobile.

The ABS determined that:

- A further 3472 people should be removed from the homelessness count because they were staying in rented cabins, caravans and houseboats and were not with friends or relatives.
- The ABS has assumed that these people were travelling on holiday.

The ABS has further excluded:

- 2351 people who were in properties that they either owned outright or reported having a mortgage. The ABS has assumed that these people were staying in holiday homes or a second home on Census night.

The ABS removed a further group of:

- 2960 people in visitor only households other than caravans, cabins and houseboats that they indicated they were renting on Census night. The ABS believes this group should be excluded because they are likely to be renting holiday homes.

Overall, the ABS has excluded 11 252 people in visitor only households from the homelessness count. This leaves 1781 people for which the ABS could not identify a unifying theme for exclusion from the homelessness count. The ABS does not believe that all of these people are homeless but has left them in the reviewed homelessness count nonetheless.

New Migrants

- The ABS excluded 1309 more people from the friends and relatives count on the basis that they were new migrants who had been in Australia for not more than 7 months. “It is assumed that they had not yet had the time to decide upon the purchase or rent of a particular dwelling and report correctly in the Census as not having a usual address at which they had spent or expected to spend 6 months or more in the Census year (ABS review, p.41).
- **Note: If they have not yet had the time to purchase and/or rent a property, by definition does this not make them homeless?**

People returning from overseas

- The ABS has determined that 837 people who returned from overseas in the 12 months prior to the Census should also be excluded. It notes that 64% are aged 20-39 and 120 were earning more than \$70 000 per year.
- **The removal of this group requires further explanation by the ABS.**

Totality of Exclusions

- **Overall the ABS has excluded 12,940 adults from the friends and relatives count for the reasons outlined above. Homelessness Australia is not convinced that these exclusions are appropriate. This is a significant number of people and the new assumptions require more explanation from the ABS.**

Young People

The *Counting the Homeless* methodology initially classifies 6378 young people aged 12-18 as experiencing homelessness on Census night. Adjustments are then made by Chamberlain and Mackenzie to account for what they and many people within the youth sector believe is a significant under count of youth homelessness that can be attributed to the way in which the Census is conducted and the hidden nature of youth homelessness.

The Counting the Homeless methodology also uses non-Census data sources including SAAP Data and data obtained from the National Census of High School Students (NCHSS) to arrive at the figure of 21,940 people.

Before dealing with the new assumptions made by the ABS to account for what is a drastic and significant reduction in the youth figure I did want to draw the sector's attention to a definitional issue. The ABS paper refers to young people consistently as 'runaways' in its descriptions. As a peak body, Homelessness Australia rejects this reference entirely.

It is outdated and does not accurately reflect the complex nature of youth homelessness. I believe we should bring this to the attention of the ABS.

The Review

- The ABS Paper states that there were 39 966 people aged 12-18 who were visiting private dwellings The ABS paper states that this is the pool from which Chamberlain and Mackenzie source the 15 562 young people not immediately enumerated in the Census data.
- The review notes the difficulty that exists in trying to differentiate between young people who were ‘sleeping over’ at friends or relatives places with the permission of their parents and those unable to return home who are couch surfing.
- The ABS states that after applying its own corrections to some of the *Counting the Homeless* methodology, the gap between the Census based count and the Chamberlain and Mackenzie figure rises to approximately 16,500 young people.
- The ABS has assigned young people enumerated in the Census as staying in other households to five categories (see table 1.2 below).

Table 1.2: Visiting youth with a reported usual address (aged 12-18)

	Visiting Circumstance	Number
A	Visitor Only Households	6200
B	Travelling with one or both parents or other young people	8600
C	Youth accompanied by children aged <12	2100
D	Lone youth visiting a lone person household	3100
E	Other	20 000
	Total visiting youth	40 000

a) Visiting youth in visitor only households

The ABS does not believe that these young people should be classified as “running away” but it does not go into great detail to explain why they should be excluded from the homelessness count other than that they were spending time away from home either in the company of one or both parents or with other young people. The ABS does concede that some of this group ‘could be homeless’ but they are ‘few if any’ in number.

According to the ABS, of the 6200 in visitor only households:

- 2400 were travelling with both ‘parents’;
- 1700 were travelling with at least one ‘parent’;
- 500 were travelling with other youth.

b) Visiting youth travelling with ‘parents’ or other youth

The ABS has identified 8600 visiting young people in households where “usual residents’ were also present, who it claims were travelling with either parents or other young people, of whom:

- 1600 were travelling with both ‘parents’
- 2500 were travelling with their ‘father’; and
- 3500 were travelling with other youth and visiting either a family or lone person households.

The ABS claims that a majority of young people across all of these groups were enumerated in holiday/tourist destinations. This is used as the basis for their exclusion from the count as they are visiting dwellings in ‘desirable destinations’.

The ABS has concluded that few if any of this group of young people are homeless. The ABS claims “their characteristics do not accord with assumptions made for this group in *Counting the Homeless*”.

c) Visiting youth accompanied by children under 12 years

The ABS has also isolated a group of 2100 young people aged between 12 and 18 who were not accompanied by parents but were in the company of young children.

Of these, they have determined that “200 are old enough and the children, young enough, for there to be a potential parent/child relationship between them”. They then conclude however, that “such a circumstance does not accord with the assumptions made in *Counting the Homeless* for this group.

The remaining 1900 are assumed by the ABS to be “travelling with their younger siblings”. The ABS again concludes that while “it is possible that some of the youth and accompanying children in this group are homeless... This is highly unlikely”.

Homelessness Australia is not convinced that the ABS assumption here is satisfactory. We believe it warrants further exploration and explanation.

d) Lone youth visiting a lone person household

The ABS determined that there were 3100 young people aged 12-18 visiting “lone person households”. Approximately 50% of this group were visiting people aged 36-55 years. The ABS assumes that “it is highly likely that the 2300 youth in these circumstances were visiting a parent or grandparent”.

The ABS again concludes that “while it is possible that some of the youth in this group are homeless... It is highly unlikely...”

Homelessness Australia is again not convinced that the ABS has explained the grounds for excluding this group in sufficient detail. We are also concerned that 2300 does not equate to 50% of the 3100 people assigned to this statistical category. Indeed it is closer to 65%.

e) Visiting youth in other circumstances

The final statistical category of young people devised by the ABS following its review of the *Counting the Homeless* methodology is “visiting youth in other circumstances”, to which the ABS has assigned a pool of some 20 000 young people aged 12-18 years. Of these 20 000 young people:

- 3600 were travelling with their mother. The ABS concedes that it is possible that some of this group *may* be homeless (i.e. staying with a mother escaping violence) but have nonetheless concluded that the vast majority are not homeless. They have therefore decided to exclude them from their revised estimate.
- For the remaining 16 000 young people in this category, the ABS concludes that “it is possible that the scenario depicted in *Counting the Homeless* may play out”. This group were visiting households “by themselves” but the ABS believes that approximately half of the young people in this group should be excluded because they were visiting “holiday destinations”.
- According to the review, “there is no evidence to suggest that a significant proportion of this group are likely to be homeless... indeed the great majority of youth in this circumstance will be having a sleepover or similar visit”.
- The ABS has conservatively concluded that only around 2000 of this group are likely to be “hidden homeless”.

Homelessness Australia does not agree with the new assumptions made by the ABS for this group. The ABS have not provided sufficient justification for the exclusion of so many young people from the homelessness count. The ABS have simply provided vaguely documented assertions as to why they believe 14000 young people should be excluded from the count. Homelessness Australia will urgent seek further evidence from the ABS to justify the blanket exclusion of such a significant pool of young people from the homelessness count.

The ABS claims to have confidence in its revised estimate of secondary homelessness within a margin of +/- 10%. At this stage, neither Homelessness Australia nor practitioners within the homelessness sector share this confidence. We need more information and more evidence to be provided by the ABS to justify what essentially appear to be new assumptions arrived at by simply cross-tabulating Census datasets. We do not believe this is sufficient to arrive at an accurate figure for a population with the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness.

- **The ABS has revised the secondary homelessness (staying with friends and relatives) count downwards from 46 856 people to between 17 500 people and 21 500 people with a median estimate of 19 579.**

Homelessness Australia is not convinced that the ABS have made the case for the removal of 27 277 people from the homelessness count in this category.

We are particularly concerned about the removal of more than 16 000 young people from the homelessness count. We do not believe that the exclusion of 67% of young people from the homelessness count is justifiable.

The National Census of High School Students

The ABS notes that the starting point for the estimate of youth homelessness arrived at in the *Counting the Homeless* report is the National Census of High School Students (NCHSS).

The ABS has expressed the view that they are not in favour of using this data to influence a Census night count of homelessness amongst young people who are aged 12-18 because it collects data over a period of more than one night and because they have concerns about aspects of the methodology and the quality of the data.

In their view:

“...the NCHSS may over count the number of homeless youth in public and Catholic secondary school systems, largely due to:

- *Some ambiguity in the questions asked of schools;*
- *The nature of reporting, for such a mobile population, being unlikely to approximate a Census night measure; and*
- *The methodology to upwardly adjust by 20.5% may not be well founded.*

However, the estimates for homeless youth outside these settings may overstate the count even more”. (ABS, p.47)

It is clear that the ABS do not believe that the youth homelessness problem is as significant as either practitioners or other researchers in the field of homelessness.

Whereas the Burdekin Report *Our Homeless Children*, the National Youth Commission Report, *Australia’s Homeless Youth* and Chamberlain and Mackenzie believe that one third of homeless young people remaining enrolled in schools is a reliable estimate, the ABS disagrees believing the figure is closer to 50-60%. They offer little in the way of supporting evidence to justify this new assumption which automatically reduces the youth homelessness (12-18 y.o) estimate by one third.

They refer to SAAP data which shows that of the young people who present to homelessness services in this age group as accompanying children, 59% are still enrolled in school. Conversely, it could be argued that young people who are experiencing homelessness in family units that have managed to stay together are significantly more likely to remain enrolled in education than young people who have left or have been forced out of the family unit.

The final conclusion for young people reached by the ABS in its review is extremely concerning:

“...The conclusion reached in this review is that the methods used by Chamberlain and Mackenzie appear to create a very large youth homeless population on Census night that cannot be reasonably related to Census data...” (ABS p.48)

Improvised Homes, Tents and Sleepers Out: Primary Homelessness

Consistent with the rest of the new assumptions made by the ABS in the Discussion Paper, the ABS believes that the figure of 16,375 for people experiencing primary homelessness on Census night overestimates the number of people sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings.

Unlike many of the other assumptions in the paper, Homelessness Australia believes that some of the exclusions from the category of primary homelessness flagged in the ABS paper are appropriate.

There are examples of people living in dwellings that would appear to be improvised to Census collectors that are in fact functioning as housing that does not meet the definition that the ABS believes is appropriate for primary homelessness. The ABS cites a number of examples including:

- Construction workers who are employed in the development and construction of new suburbs and are living in on-site sheds but who may own a home or be renting a property elsewhere.
- “Hobby farmers” and other owner-builders living in sheds that the ABS describes as “part of the property’s ongoing infrastructure” and “quite habitable” albeit by people “not living in a standard suburban way” (ABS, p.51) but which the ABS determines that Census collectors would incorrectly identify as ‘improvised dwellings’, thus including occupants in the primary homelessness count. The ABS states that “particular examples were reviewed in the context of a wide range of reported Census variables to establish the nature of these “hobby farmers”/owner-builders and general rules were applied to the entire group of people enumerated in improvised dwellings to establish likely homelessness” (ABS p.51).

While Homelessness Australia believes it is appropriate to review this category and to exclude some people from the primary homelessness count due to home ownership status we are concerned that the ABS has excluded a very large number of people from this category of homelessness. Given that “offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020” is one of the two headline goals articulated in the White Paper it is imperative that the primary homelessness count derived from the Census is as accurate as possible. Below is a summary of the people the ABS has determined should be excluded from the count and their stated reasons for doing so:

- 5052 persons who reported a tenure type ‘owned outright’, ‘owned with a mortgage’, ‘being purchased in a rent-buy scheme’ ‘being rented’, ‘being occupied under a life-tenure scheme’, and with at least one person in the dwelling reporting being ‘employed- full time’.
- 2356 persons with a tenure type ‘owned outright’ and no-one in the dwelling reporting being ‘employed-full time’.
- 382 persons who reported a tenure type ‘owned with a mortgage’, no-one in the dwelling reported being “employed-full time” and the monthly mortgage repayments were \$1050 or more per month.

- 57 persons reported a tenure type “being rented”, no-one in the dwelling reported being ‘employed-full time’ and rent repayments were \$300 or more per week; and
- 109 persons reported a tenure type of ‘being occupied rent free’, ‘other tenure type’ or ‘not stated’, at least one person in the dwelling reported being ‘employed-full time’ and the household income was \$2000 per week or more. (ABS, p.51).

The ABS has also determined that:

“...Emerging affluence, ‘tree change’, ‘sea change’ and ageing population are all likely to see this component of the Counting the Homeless population increase as populations move and adapt to their living environment...” but that;

“...The characteristics of those over counted are unlikely to match any homeless population... The improvised nature of their dwellings perhaps represents significant lifestyle choices that they can afford, or cost-effective responses to employer-supplied mobile accommodation that suits their working arrangements. It is likely that most but not all of the people so classified as living in ‘improvised dwellings, tent, sleepers out’ who are not sleeping out do not meet a cultural definition of homelessness...” (ABS, p.52).

ABS Confidence in the revised primary homelessness estimate

- **The ABS has revised the primary homelessness count downwards from 16,375 to 7,764 persons taking into account the exclusions outlined above and the removal of 656 people who were not enumerated in the field but were “system imputed” to be resident in an improvised dwelling. Of these 6000 are rough sleepers and 1764 are residing in improvised dwellings.**

This represents a reduction of more than 50% in the primary homelessness count.

The ABS states that:

“...For this review it cannot be certain which of the people enumerated in improvised dwellings are the travelling construction crews and owner builders etc. An estimate of +/- 20% around the total reviewed estimate of primary homelessness may be appropriate i.e. An estimate in the range of 6000-10 000...” (ABS, p.52)

Homeless Indigenous Australians

The ABS acknowledges in the Discussion Paper that Indigenous Australians are undercounted in the Census data and in the *Counting the Homeless* data for the following reasons:

- Under-enumeration of Indigenous persons in the Census;
- The nature of reporting ‘no usual address’ for Indigenous visitors’ to a dwelling
- The classification of a dwelling structure.

The ABS note that Indigenous Australians have been undercounted in the 2001 and 2006 Censuses by 11.5% in 2006 and 6.1% in 2001.

Homelessness Australia agrees with the ABS about the likelihood that the figure arrived at in both *Counting the Homeless* and the ABS review significantly understates the extent of Indigenous homelessness in Australia. We are particularly concerned about the very low count of Indigenous people experiencing secondary homelessness 'staying temporarily with friends and relatives'. See table 1.3 below:

Table 1.3: Homelessness amongst Indigenous people

Homelessness Category	Number
Primary Homelessness	2 095
SAAP	2 692
Friends and Relatives	872
Boarding Houses	859
Other Temporary Lodging	137
Total	6 655

The above figures are interesting when contrasted with the non-Indigenous population. According to the ABS, the proportion of Indigenous people staying with friends and relatives is just 13.1% of the homeless population compared with 34% for the non-Indigenous population.

Given what we know about the cultural obligation to house extended family and people from kinship/skin groups who may have no tenancy or occupancy rights to the property, a figure of just 872 Indigenous people staying with friends and relatives who are otherwise experiencing homelessness across Australia seems completely unrealistic and completely inappropriate for performance indicator construction given what the ABS' own data tells us about the extent of overcrowding amongst Indigenous households.

Homelessness Australia is not convinced that the above numbers are an accurate reflection of the totality of Indigenous homelessness. We are particularly concerned about the secondary homelessness (staying temporarily with friends and relatives) count.

Homelessness by Age

Table 1.4 :Homelessness by Age

<u>Age Group (CTH)</u>	<u>Number Homeless on Census Night</u>	<u>(ABS review)</u>	<u>Change (n)</u>	<u>Change %</u>
0-12 years	12 133	7 552	-4 581	-37.7
12-18 years	21 940	5 423	-16 517	-75.3
19-24 years	10 504	7 992	-2 512	-23.9
25-34 years	15 804	11 893	-3 911	-24.7
35-44 years	13 981	10 600	-3 381	-24.2
45-54 years	12 206	8 757	-3 449	-28.2
55-64 years	10 708	6 332	-4 376	-40.8
65 or older	7 400	4 920	-2 480	-33.8
Total:	104 676	63 469	-41 204	-39.3

As the table above indicates, the ABS Review of the Counting the Homeless methodology has resulted in a dramatic reduction in overall homelessness but particularly a major reduction in youth homelessness and homelessness amongst older Australians.

We remain concerned about the statistically significant nature of the differences between the figures arrived at in the *Counting the Homeless* reports and the figures arrived at by the ABS as a result of their review of the *Counting the Homeless 2006* methodology.

Comparison between 2001 and 2006 based on ABS Review estimates

The ABS has also provided a reviewed estimate for the 2001 Census. This comparison data is provided below:

Table 1.5: Change in homeless population between 2001 and 2006

Category	2001	2006	Change (n)	Change (%)
Boarding houses	23 749	16 828	-6921	-29.1
SAAP	13 420	17 331	+3911	+29.1
Friends/relatives	17 877	19 579	+1702	+9.5
Primary H/less	8 933	7 764	-1169	-13.8
Temp. Lodging	1 395	1 970	+575	+41.2
Total:	65 384	63 472	-1 912	-2.9

As the table above indicates, the ABS review estimates that the overall population of Australians who were experiencing homelessness on Census night declined by 2.9% between 2001 and 2006. The ABS attributes this to improvements in economic conditions during that time period.

The statistically significant percentage increase in people accommodated by SAAP on Census night roughly correlates with the increase in the overall number of people supported by SAAP services over the course of the financial year between 2001/02 and 2006/07.

The decline in the number of people staying in boarding houses on Census night between 2001 and 2006 is statistically significant and interestingly corresponds exactly to the percentage increase in the number of people the ABS believes were accommodated in SAAP services, though the decrease in the number of people accommodated in boarding houses was significantly greater given that they were found to have accommodated more than 10 000 more people than SAAP services in 2001.

There is a body of evidence that indicates that the boarding house sector has been in decline for over a decade now and it is likely that boarding houses did accommodate fewer people who were experiencing homelessness on Census night 2006 than they would have on Census night in 2001. The size of the decrease estimated by the ABS is statistically very significant however and may warrant further investigation.

Interestingly despite citing improved economic conditions as a reason to explain the slight decrease in overall homelessness between 2001 and 2006, the ABS review has determined that between 2001 and 2006 the proportion of people staying temporarily with friends and relatives on Census night increased by just under 10% between 2001 and 2006. This may warrant further investigation.

The ABS review found that the population of people they believe meet the cultural definition of primary homeless on Census night (of which they estimate more than 80% are rough sleepers) declined by 13.8% between 2001 and 2006. This is again primarily attributed to improved economic conditions.

The ABS has estimated that their newly devised category of persons 'in other temporary lodging' increased by more than 40% between 2001 and 2006.

Future Directions

The ABS identified four future directions following the review:

- 1) Repeat the very successful 2006 practice of jurisdictional lists and the 'green sticker' approach for supported accommodation arrangements. This generated a count very close to Census week SAAP counts compiled by AIHW, but one which is more complete and does not rely on a usually very slow reporting and compilation process through SAAP agencies to AIHW. For the 2011 Census, the request for lists has also included a request for additional information on tenure arrangements and the facilities available in the accommodation. This aspect of data collection will need to be reviewed as the nature of service provision continues to evolve.
- 2) Extend the list approach in 1 above to jurisdictional lists of registered boarding houses, and new forms of crisis and transitional housing such as foyer accommodation.
- 3) Use the expansion in Census funding and effort for the count of the Indigenous population to reduce the initial Census undercount of Indigenous people.
- 4) Release homelessness related data from the Census coincident with, or as soon as possible after, the standard first and second releases from the 2011 Census i.e., release homeless estimates from the 2011 Census in the second half of 2012.