



Homelessness

DEFINITION of HOMELESSNESS

The most commonly accepted definition of homelessness is one which comprises three categories, to reflect the diversity of homelessness.

Primary homelessness – that experienced by people without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings).

Secondary homelessness – that experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, "couch-surfing").

Tertiary homelessness – that experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding houses and caravan parks).

This definition is based on the premise that concepts of homelessness and housing are culturally-bound, and that in order to define homelessness it is necessary to identify shared community standards about minimum housing.¹

STATISTICS on HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is difficult to quantify, and over-counting and under-counting of homeless people can occur. Under-counting is most likely in the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out', and over-counting is more likely in boarding houses because of misclassification. The problem of establishing reliable figures is compounded by the fact that homelessness changes over time. There will always be people who are re-entering and leaving homelessness, as well as people moving between different locations.²

QUICK STATS

- According to census, in 2011 there were 1,579 reported homeless people in Tasmania
- 39% of homeless Tasmanians were under 25 years old and 6.5% over 65 years old
- There has been an increase of a total of 434 homeless persons since 2006: in 2011, the rate was 32 homeless persons for every 10,000 persons, up from 24 persons in 2006
- The majority of homeless people were classified as secondary homeless – staying with friends or relatives – around 32%
- Approximately 10% of homeless people were sleeping rough, and 45% were tertiary homelessness
- The most common reasons for homelessness in Tasmania (2012-13) are financial difficulties (21%), interpersonal relations – including domestic violence (26%) and accommodation crisis (32%)
- In 2012-13, an estimated 5,585 Tasmanians received support from a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS)
- More women than men used a SHS, and a mix of singles and family groups presented for assistance (2012-13).
- Tasmania has the highest proportion of people living with the greatest risk of homelessness.

Homelessness Demographics in Tasmania

According to the 2011 census, the total number of homeless people was 1,579 (an increase from 1,145 in 2006). The regional breakdown shows greater Hobart has the highest proportion, at 744 persons (47%); Launceston and the North East have 376 persons (24%); the West and North West coast areas very similar 375 (24%) and the South East region 87 persons (5%).

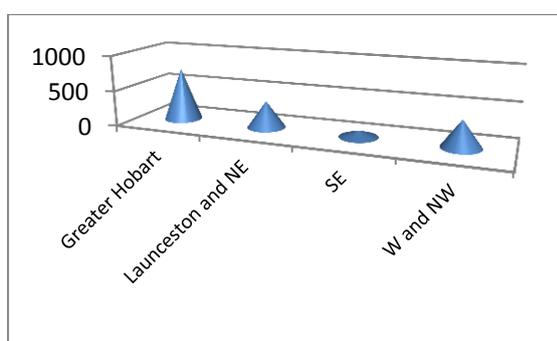


Fig 1. Numbers of homeless people in Tasmania by region, Census 2011

Age Distribution

In 2011 the majority of homeless people in Tasmania were aged under 44 years old. 12-25 year olds comprised approximately one quarter of all Tasmanian homeless people. The next highest group were aged between 25-34 years (16%) and 35-44 (15%) (fig 2).

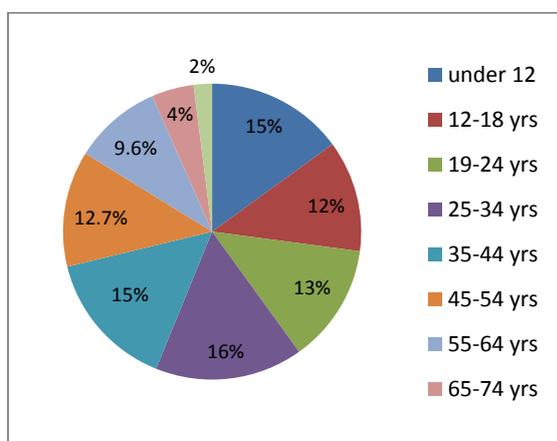


Fig.2 Age distribution of homeless pop, Tas, Census 2011

Sector Distribution

The majority of Tasmania's 1,579 homeless people were staying temporarily with other households (501, 32%) or living in supported accommodation (479, 30%). The remaining majority of people were sleeping rough, that is, in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (155, 10%), or staying in boarding houses (241, 15%).ⁱⁱⁱ Figure 3 provides a regional breakdown of these statistics.

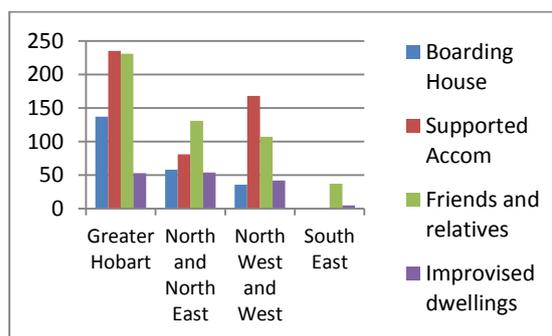


Fig.3 Number of people in different sectors of the homeless population in Tasmania, Census 2011

Caravan Parks

In 2011, there were 157 residents in caravan parks recorded in Tasmania. This is a slight decrease since 2006, and represents approximately 10% of the total homeless population.

Aboriginal People

19,600 people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Tasmania (3.96% of the total Tasmanian population). Aboriginal people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Tasmania: in 2011, 11% (170) of all homeless people identified as Aboriginal.^{iv}

How Tasmania Compares

Tasmania has the highest risk of homelessness in the nation, mainly due to our average low incomes.^v We have the lowest overall numbers of homeless people in Australia^{vi} but proportionately one of the highest rates of homelessness of the southern States (NSW, Vic., SA, Tas, ACT).^{vii} In 2011 (as figure 4 shows), at 31.9 persons per 10,000 of the population.

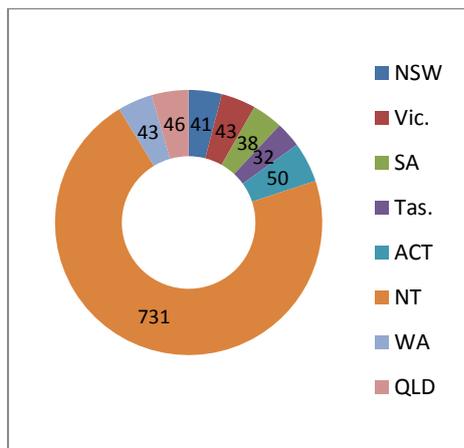


Fig.4 Rates per 10 000 of the population of all homeless persons, by State and Territory, 2011

Homelessness expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population is required to compare state and territories of different population sizes.

These rates have increased since 2001 (fig. 5).

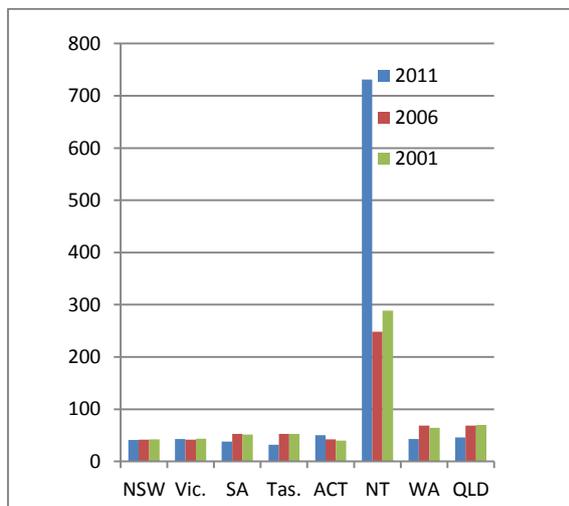


Fig. 5 Rate of Homelessness per 10,000 of the population

Approximately 60% of homeless Tasmanians experience secondary homelessness; that is,

staying temporarily with friends and relatives. This percentage is significantly higher than the other housing options, and differs to other States and Territories; for example, the ACT has high rates of tertiary homelessness (fig.6).

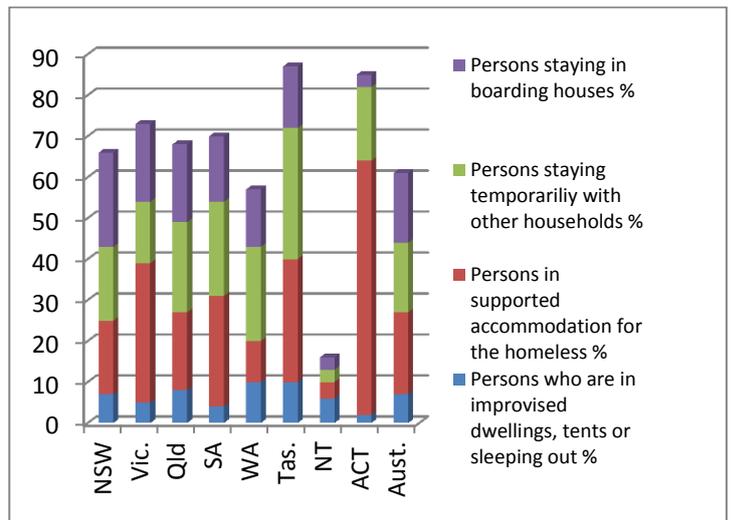


Fig.6 Percentages of homeless population across accommodation options, by State and Territory, Census 2011

Across the nation, homeless people have very high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment (fig 7).^{viii}

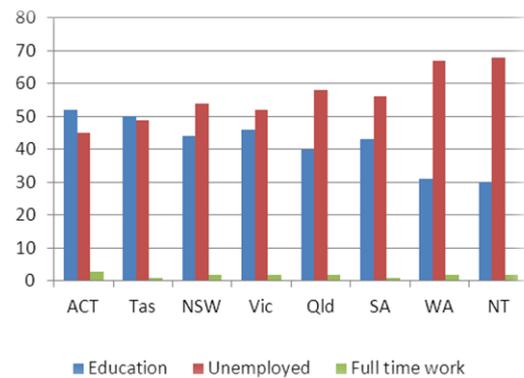


Fig.7 Homeless young people in education, unemployment and work, 2006

Specialist Homelessness Services

Approximately 60% of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) in Tasmania provide housing and accommodation.^{ix} This includes immediate emergency accommodation (including shelters), supervised accommodation and placement support services for young people and transitional support services for homeless people to establish themselves in independent living. These services also provide information and advice, advocacy and financial supports.

Who Uses SHS?

In 2012-13, an estimated 5,585 Tasmanians received support from an SHS. Of these, 3,860 presented alone, and 1,725 were some form of family group (fig 8). 791 clients identified as Aboriginal.^x Compared with 2011-12, there has been a slight decrease in overall presentations (from 6,175), an increase in the number of singles presenting (from 3,540), and a corresponding decrease in family presentations (from 2,064).

Use of a Tas SHS by family group

- Alone/not part of family
- Couple with child/ren
- Single with child/ren
- Couple without children
- Other family group
- Other group

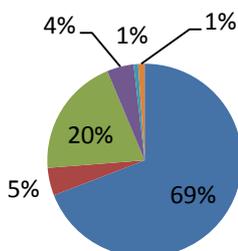


Fig 8. Composition of Tasmanians presenting to SHS 2012-13

The majority of people presenting are in the 18-45 age group, mirroring the group comprising the highest numbers of homeless peoples (fig 9), and women outnumber men 2,944 to 2,642 (53% to 47%).^{xi}

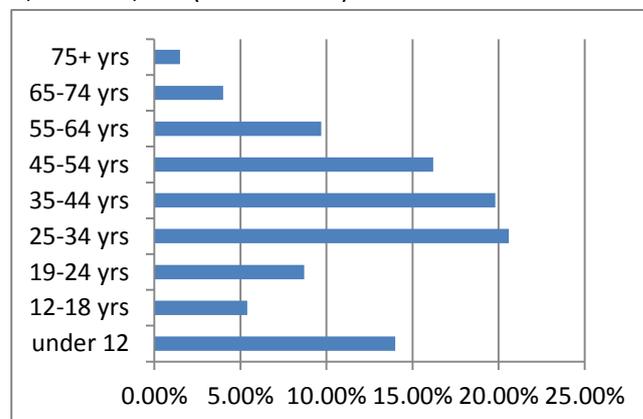


Fig 9. SHS presentations by age, as a percentage of total presentations, 2012-13

Tasmanian SHS Profile

Tasmania has a total of 34 SHS agencies, servicing on average 221 people per day.^{xii}

In Southern Tasmania there are 3 women’s refuges, 2 youth refuges and 2 supported accommodation for young people, 1 crisis accommodation facility for men, 3 transitional housing and support services and 2 SRSs.

In North Tasmania there are 2 youth refuges, 1 women’s refuge, 1 men’s crisis accommodation facility, one transitional housing and support service and one SRS. In North West Tasmania there are 2 youth refuges, 1 men’s and 1 women’s crisis accommodation, 1 mixed crisis accommodation, 1 transitional housing and support service and 1 SRS.^{xiii}

Unmet Demand

In 2012-13 the rate of unmet need (when a homeless person or someone at risk of homelessness asks for assistance and it cannot be provided) for short-term or emergency accommodation was 21% (just slightly higher than the national average of

20%), which is the third highest rate in Australia after the Australian Capital Territory (46%) and Victoria (29%).^{xiv} These are very similar to 2011-12 figures.

The service most requested and unavailable of SHS services is consistently short term accommodation (fig.10).^{xv}

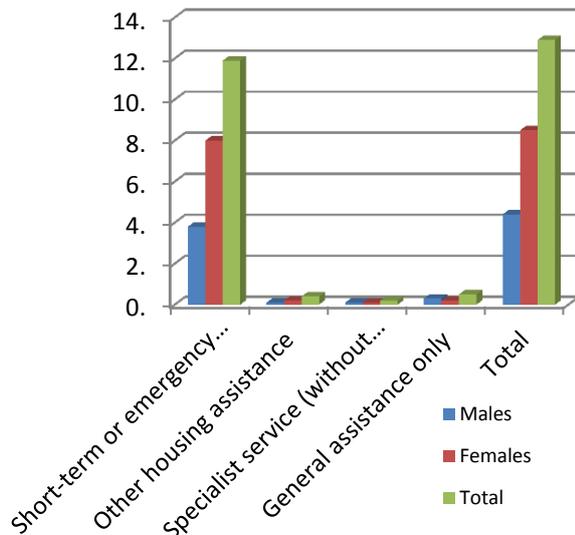


Fig 10. Daily Average of Unmet Need Requests by type of assistance, 2012-13, Tas

Housing Needs Being Met

In 2012-13, SHS were able to provide services for:

- 75.8% of clients requesting short-term accommodation
- 41.1% of clients requesting medium-term/transitional housing
- 5.8% of clients requesting long-term housing
- 86.1% of clients requesting assistance to sustain tenancy
- 74.8% of clients requesting assistance to prevent mortgage foreclosures
- 46.5% of clients requesting financial advice and counselling^{xvi}.

Homelessness Policies and Strategies

The National Reform Agenda

The Tasmanian Government's actions to prevent and reduce homelessness occur in the context of a National Homelessness Agenda. This includes the Australian Government's White Paper titled *The Road Home*, the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

The Road Home (the 'White paper')

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/whitepaper/Documents/default.htm>

The Road Home outlines the Australian Government's strategy to halve overall homelessness by 2020 and 'offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020'. The paper is based on the premise that 'people who experience homelessness should be moved quickly through the system to long-term housing and at the same time should get help to reconnect them with education, employment and the community'. These goals, however, will not be met if current trends continue.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/affordability/affordablehousing/Pages/default.aspx>

The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) articulates the nationally agreed framework to improve housing affordability and outcomes for homeless Australians. Tasmania will receive \$166.47 million over the five years of NAHA, which commenced in 2008-09. The NAHA has been extended until June 2014, and is currently under review. The NAHA aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion
- People are able to rent housing that meets their needs
- People can purchase affordable housing
- People have access to housing through an efficient and responsive housing market
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same housing opportunities as other Australians
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding, particularly in remote areas and discrete communities.

Under the NAHA there are three National Partnership Agreements:

1. The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) - contributes to the above NAHA outcome, which focuses on homelessness. The agreement focuses on prevention, entry and exit points to homelessness through the targeting of key groups; eg. Rough sleepers, women and children escaping violence. The NPAH expires on June 30, 2014.

2. National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing (NPASH) - aims to increase the supply of social housing through new construction, and to provide increased opportunities for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to gain secure long term accommodation.

3. National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPAH) – This 10 year agreement aims to improve the current poor standard of housing and infrastructure, and to address the high levels

of overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

The Tasmanian Reform Agenda

The Tasmanian Government's homelessness reform agenda is articulated in the Tasmanian Homelessness Plan 2010-2013 *Coming in from the Cold* and the Tasmanian Social Inclusion Strategy (currently under review).

The Tasmanian Homelessness Plan 2010-2013 'Coming in from the Cold'

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/tashomelessnessplan

The development of a Tasmanian Homelessness Plan is one of six key initiatives under the NPAH. The aim of the plan is a new approach to homelessness which includes a commitment to intervene early wherever possible to prevent homelessness and recognition that it requires a whole-of-government and community partnership. Key themes include:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Providing new support services
- Engaging the mainstream service system
- Improving assessment referral and discharge planning
- Improving inter-agency collaboration.

Tasmanian Homelessness Charter

http://rainbowtas.org/news/Tasmanian_Homelessness_Charter.pdf

One of the priority actions of the Tasmanian Homelessness Implementation Plan was to develop a Tasmanian Homelessness Charter. The key objectives of the Charter are:

1. To promote community awareness that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be treated in a respectful manner that upholds their basic human rights.

2. To ensure that Tasmanian Specialist Homelessness Services and other mainstream services carry out their responsibilities to deliver services in a manner consistent with the principles outlined in the Charter.
3. To provide guidance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness about what they can expect as standard service practice.

Tasmanian Social Inclusion Strategy

<http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu/strategy/strategy>

The Social Inclusion Unit supported the Social Inclusion Commissioner to develop a strategy for Tasmania.

The Premier released the Tasmanian Government's preliminary response to the

Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania on 19 October 2009.

The preliminary response outlines new actions against the initial priorities:

- meeting the basics through food security and investing in micro-finance
- increasing the capacity of individuals and organisations through micro-credit and the development of social enterprise in Tasmania
- building supportive networks and community capacity through social infrastructure community grants.

The Government's response includes a \$5 million Community Development Finance Fund, incorporating a \$1 million Micro-business Fund, a \$1 million Micro-finance Fund and a \$3 million Social Enterprise Loan Fund.

Notes

¹ Homelessness Australia. 'About Homelessness' , <<http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/site/about.php>>.

² Chamberlain, Chris and David McKenzie. *Counting the Homeless 2006: Tasmania*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Cat. No. HOU 208, June 2009, p5.

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011, Tasmania Quickstats*

^{iv} ABS. *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011* p16

^v NATSEM, "Geographical Analysis of the Risk of Homelessness" National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra, June 2013.

^{vi} Homelessness refers to individuals or families living without secure and/or stable housing, therefore may include those living in a range of temporary dwellings (caravans, tents), without a dwelling of any sort, as well as in emergency accommodation, boarding rooms, and couch surfing (ABS *Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness 2012*)

^{vii} ABS. *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2011, Fig.1.2.*

^{viii} Chamberlain, Chris and David McKenzie. *Counting the Homeless 2006: Tasmania*. Table 4.8.

^{ix} Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP). *Report on Government Services 2013*, Figure 17.5.

^x Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Annual Report: Tasmania Supplementary Tables 2012-13*, Table Tas2.2

^{xi} Ibid, Table Tas 2.3

^{xii} Ibid, p31.

^{xiii} Wylie, Nicole and Guy Johnson. *Mapping Services for Rough Sleepers in Hobart, Canberra and Melbourne*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, June 2012, p27.

^{xiv} AIHW. *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2012-13*, Figure 6.8.

^{xv} AIHW. *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Annual Report: Tasmania Supplementary Tables 2012-13*, Table Tas 6.5

^{xvi} Ibid, Table Tas2.15