



Media Statement – Homelessness in Tasmania

20/3/18

- The homelessness occurring at the Hobart showgrounds highlights a larger problem that is wide spread across Tasmania and not as visible. The Census 2016 Homelessness Estimates released last week showed 1,622 Tasmanians are homeless, an increase of 2.7% since 2011.
- Most of the homeless population is hidden:
 - Only 137 people (8%) live in tents, improvised dwellings or are sleeping out.
 - Nearly half (47%) couch surf or live in severely overcrowded dwellings.
 - 35% stay in supported accommodation.
- A network of Specialist Homelessness Services across Tasmania provides assistance to help house and support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These are professional services employing highly skilled and experienced staff well equipped to support people in trauma. In the past year they assisted 7,789 people, operating from Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.
- Responses provided to people who are experiencing homelessness in any location are best provided for by using this existing network of support and expertise.
- Homelessness services have been making daily visits to the Hobart Showgrounds to assess homeless people's needs and offer assistance; as they routinely do at other known hot spots, including caravan parks, where people seek shelter.
- There is no single answer or quick solution to Hobart or Tasmania's housing problems. We do need alternatives to sleeping rough, but they need to be viable and long lasting. Any immediate responses must be embedded in longer term solutions to avoid returning people to homelessness when the short term option expires.
- There is also a need to increase the funding for existing services to help them keep pace with the growing demand. All homelessness services report they are operating above their capacity and the data shows that on average, 25 requests for assistance go unmet each day.¹
- Providing housing is the proven way to end homelessness. We must make sure that we plan ahead for our long term housing needs, and keep an emphasis on supplying public and community housing.

For more information and comment, contact:

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¹ AIHW 2018 Specialist Homelessness Services 2016-17