



youth affairs council
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



*National Youth Commission's Inquiry into
Youth Homelessness*

AUSTRALIA'S HOMELESS YOUTH



DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION AND ASSISTANCE ACT (1994)

“A person is homeless if he/she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing. A person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which a person has access:

- (a) Damages or is likely to damage a person’s health
- (a) Threatens a person’s safety
- (a) Marginalises the person by failing to provide:
 - (i) Adequate personal amenities; or
 - (ii) Economic and social support that a home normally affords; or
- (d) Places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.”

CHAMBERLAIN & MACKENZIE:

Primary homelessness:

People without conventional accommodation such as those who sleep out, or use derelict buildings, cars, railway stations for shelter.

Secondary homelessness:

People who frequently move from temporary accommodation such as emergency accommodation, refuges, and temporary basis.

Tertiary homelessness:

People who live in rooming houses, boarding houses on medium or long term where they do not have their own bathroom and kitchen facilities and tenure is not secured by lease.

HOW MANY HOMELESS YOUTH?

1989 HREOC Inquiry:

“Lack of government and other data... it is very difficult to assess how many children and young people are homeless.”

Dr Rodney Fopp:

“At least 20,000 to 25,000 homeless children and young people across the country.... A conservative estimate and the likely figure is actually 50,000 to 70,000 homeless or at serious risk.”

Mackenzie and Chamberlain:

“15-19,000 homeless young people aged 12-24 on an average night.”

1994 – survey of 2000 schools, primary, secondary and tertiary

11,000 homeless students aged 12-18 years



1999 Counting the Homeless

Estimated homeless population using ABS census data, combined with other data on utilisation of SAAP services.

No and rate of youth homelessness (12-18yrs) 2001

| | NSW | VIC | ACT | QLD | SA | WA | TAS | NT | ALL |
|---------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| No. | 6,242 | 4,663 | 400 | 6,381 | 2,394 | 3,508 | 1,008 | 1,464 | 26,060 |
| Rate per 1000 | 10 | 10 | 12.5 | 18 | 17 | 18 | 21 | 69 | 14 |

Age Breakdown

| | N | % |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| Under 12 | 9,941 | 10 |
| 12-18 | 26,060 | 26 |
| 19-24 | 10,113 | 10 |
| 25-65 older | 53,786 | 54 |
| | 99,900 | 100 |

Observations:

- 2/3 of 12-18 outside school system
- 19-24 mostly not in education or training
- 9,941 children under 12, in nearly all cases accompanied
- **46 % homeless population under 25**

Youth homelessness 2006

The number of homeless youth has decreased from 26,060 in 2001 to 21,940 in 2006

No. & rate of youth homelessness (12 to 18 yrs) 2006

| | NSW | VIC | ACT | QLD | SA | WA | TAS | NT | ALL |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|--------|
| No: | 4,987 | 3,896 | 307 | 4,469 | 2,129 | 4,280 | 770 | 1,102 | 21,940 |
| Rate: Per 1000 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 15 | 21 | 16 | 50 | 11 |

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS:

Individual factors:

- Sexual, physical, emotional abuse
- Family conflict
- Mental health
- Substance misuse
- Disability
- Personality issues (impacting on family and home)

Structural factors:

- Macro-factors – labour market, sufficient income to pay rent
- Availability and affordability of housing
- Income support benefits
- Government programs – services and protections, drug and alcohol treatment, juvenile justice

What happened between 2001 and 2006?

- 2001-2006 youth homelessness reduced by 16 per cent, 21,940
- After 2001 there was an increase in early intervention programs targeting homeless and at risk youth
- Reconnect program between 1999 and 2003 by Australian Government targeted at 12-18 year olds
- School welfare resources have improved – SA and Victoria (Student Welfare Coordinators) Other programs – Queensland (Youth Support Coordinators), Victoria (School Focussed Youth Service)
- SAAP youth services more aware of opportunities for early intervention
- “Early intervention appears to account for most of the decrease in youth homelessness since 2001” – Mackenzie and Chamberlain

SAAP Services

- SAAP annual report for 2005-2006 – 161,200 adults assisted through SAAP – 54,700 accompanying an adult parent
- In addition to accompanying children, 35.5 per cent or 36,700 were young people
- 2000 under 15 years of age / 19,100 were 15 to 19 years / 15,600 were 20-24 years
- Total 91,400 children and young people receiving support between 2005-2006

Unmet need:

- Daily average of 251 valid requests for immediate accommodation could not be provided
- About 54 % of those seeking help from SAAP services are turned away each night

Turn-away rate, daily requests, unmet demands

| | NSW | VIC | QLD | WA | SA | TAS | ACT | NT | ALL |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Total daily requests | 105 | 61 | 81 | 44 | 29 | 16 | 11 | 13 | 360 |
| Turn-away rate from youth services % | 65 | 66 | 51 | 76 | 51 | 32 | 44 | 54 | 33 |
| Total turn-away rate% | 55 | 59 | 53 | 49 | 47 | 57 | 71 | 36 | 54 |

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1989 HREOC concerned about lack of data on homelessness
- Collection of data on people using SAAP services began in early 1990s, evolved
- ABS data available on homeless population
- 2001 36 per cent of the homeless population were under the age of 25.
- 1991 estimated homeless 10,000 homeless young people – increased to 26,060 in 2001
- 2001-2006 number of homeless youth aged 12-18 years dropped from 26,060 to 21,940