

# Housing Australia factsheet

A quick guide  
to housing facts and figures

**Prepared for National Shelter by Shelter NSW**

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Enquiries:

Mary Perkins, Shelter NSW, (02) 9267 5733, [www.shelternsw.org.au](http://www.shelternsw.org.au)

Adrian Pisarski, National Shelter, (07) 3393 2433, [www.shelter.org.au](http://www.shelter.org.au)

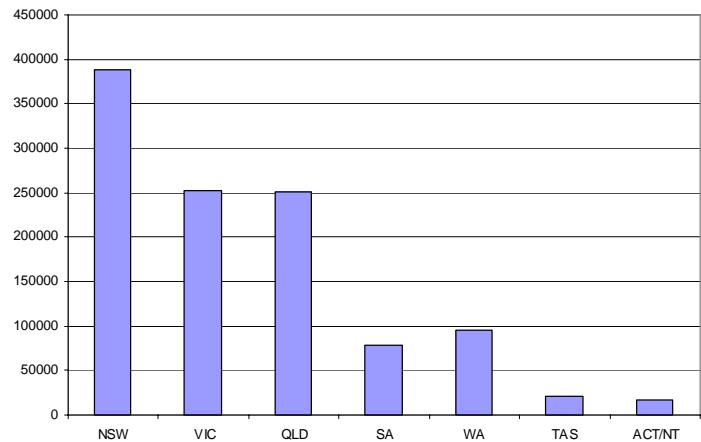
## Housing stress

There are over 1,100,000 Australian families in housing stress, i.e. they pay more than 30% of their income on recurrent housing costs.<sup>1</sup> The total number of households in housing stress has increased, as the number of households has increased with population growth and new household formation.

Those families in housing stress comprise 10% of Australian families.<sup>2</sup>

Housing stress varies by tenure, with private renters comprising over half of the families in housing stress.<sup>3</sup>

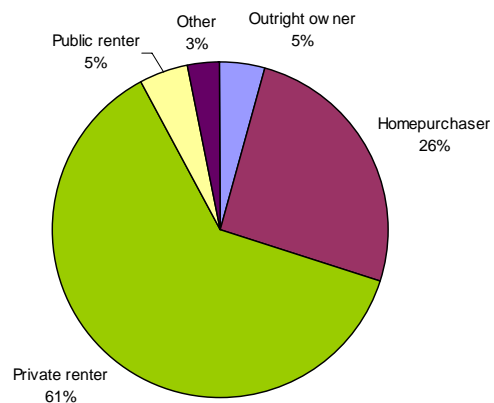
Number of Australian families in housing stress, by state



Proportion of families in housing stress, in each state



Tenure profile of families in housing stress



## Home purchase

House prices across Australia have more than quadrupled in the last 20 years.<sup>4</sup>

New South Wales has the most heated market for private housing in Australia, with median house prices in Sydney 2% higher than in Canberra, the second most expensive city for home purchase, followed by Darwin.<sup>5</sup> Median prices for non-strata houses between the September and December quarters 2008:

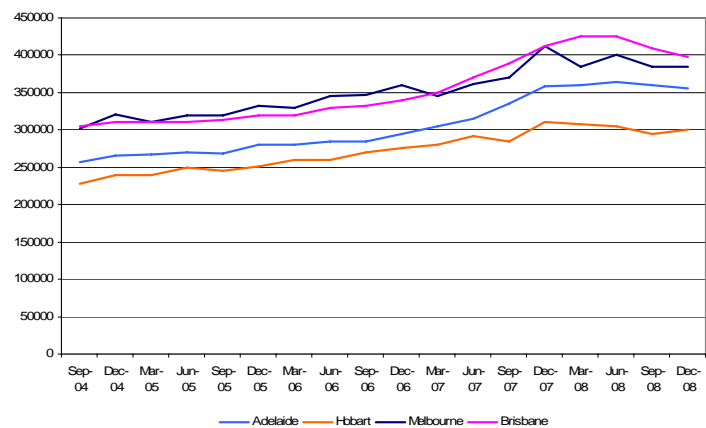
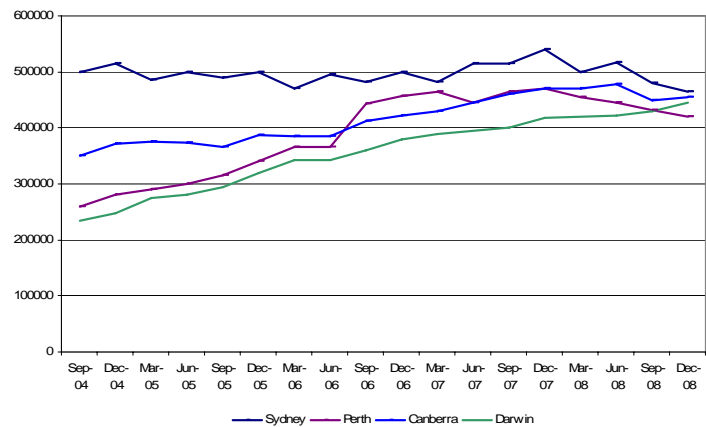
- decreased in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth;
- increased in Hobart, Canberra and Darwin; and
- did not change in Melbourne.

High house prices present two barriers to homeownership for low-income households:

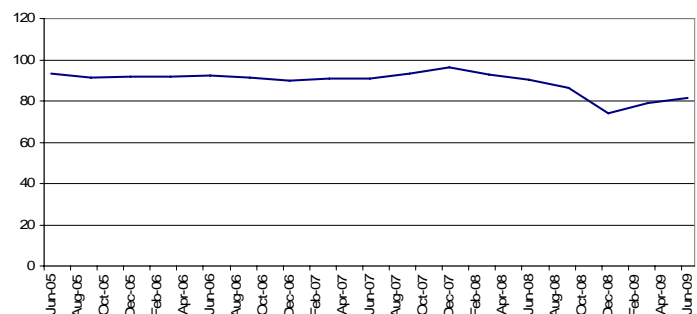
- an initial (or ‘market entry’) barrier when seeking to meet the upfront costs of buying a dwelling; and
- an ongoing issue with meeting recurrent costs.

The deposit required for a first home loan for a median-priced dwelling is an amount equivalent to 81.3% of the average household disposable income as at June 2009.<sup>6</sup>

Median price of non-strata houses, capital cities



First homebuyer deposit gap as % of average household disposable income, Reserve Bank of Australia



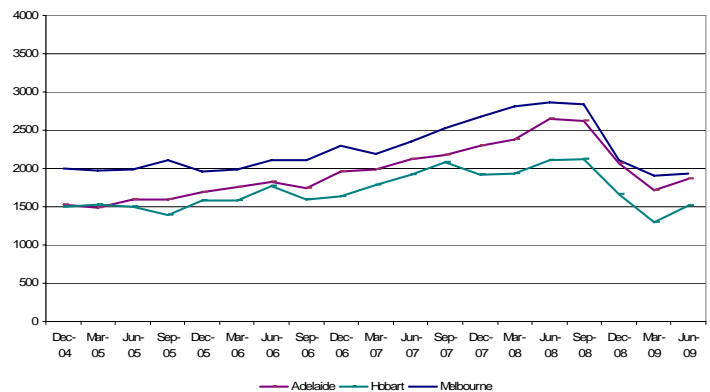
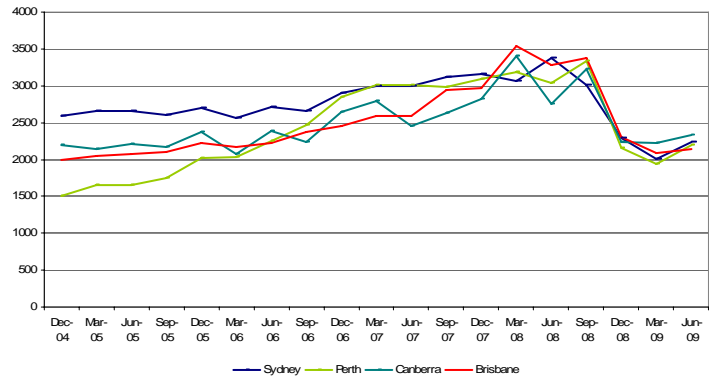
### Home purchase

Required loan repayments for dwellings bought at a median price with the help of a loan from the Commonwealth Bank vary from \$1,520 a month in Hobart to \$2,241 a month in Sydney.<sup>7</sup> Monthly mortgage repayments have dropped since the September quarter 2008.

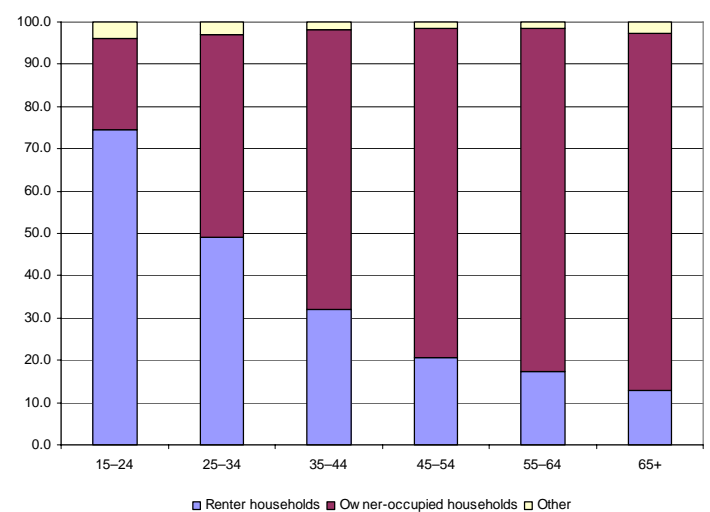
There is a direct relation between age and tenure, with households headed by a younger person much more likely to be in rental housing than households headed by an older person.<sup>8</sup>

- While 75% of households headed by a person aged 15-24 are in rental housing, 13% of households headed by a person aged 65 and over are in rental housing.
- While 21% of households headed by a person aged 15-24 are in owner-occupation, 85% of households headed by a person aged 65 and over are in owner-occupation.

Monthly loan repayments for median-priced dwellings



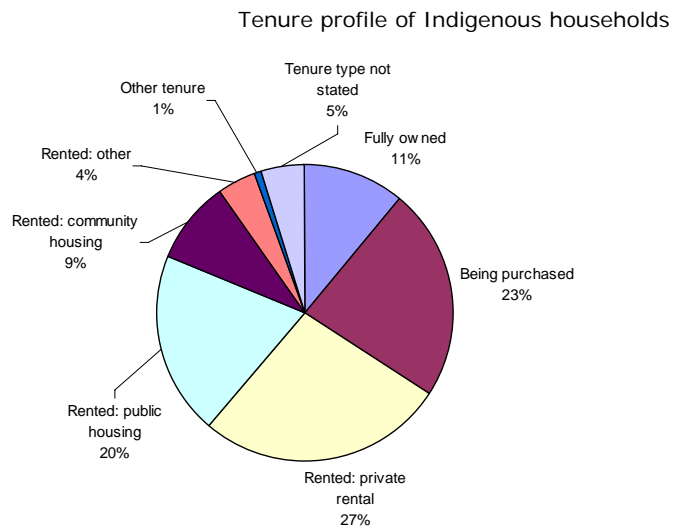
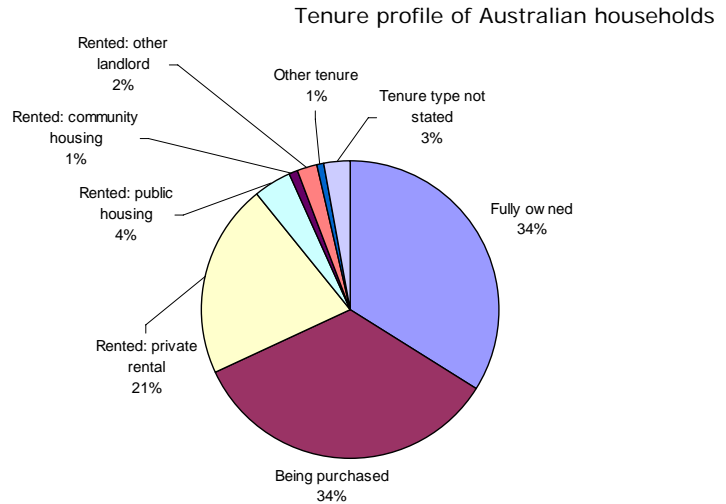
Age of householder and housing tenure



### Home purchase

The home ownership rate has been stable in the last 3 censuses, at around 65%.<sup>9</sup>

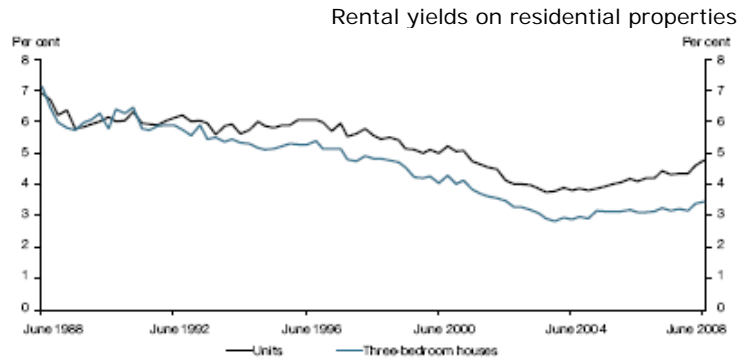
The tenure profile of households with an Indigenous person differs from the Australian total. They are less likely to be homeowners (34%, compared to 68%), more likely to be in private rental (27%, compared to 21%), more likely to be in public housing (20%, compared to 4%), and more likely to be in community housing (9%, compared to 1%), than Australian households generally.<sup>10</sup>



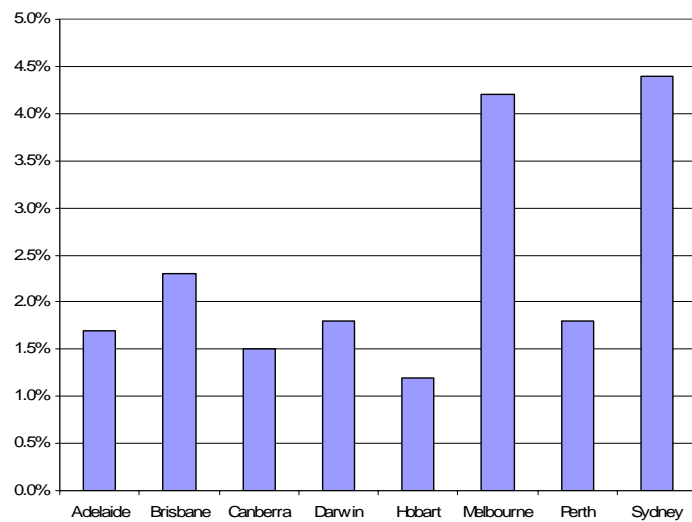
## Rental

The supply of rental housing is dependent on many factors. These include the relative attraction of investment in housing compared with the returns on investment in other areas, which is influenced by the taxation treatment of each. Short-term income from rents has not been a significant driver of investment in this sector. Gross yields (the ratio of yearly rents to purchase price) from investment in rental dwellings average some 4%.<sup>11</sup> The lower the gross rental yield is, the more overvalued the property is.

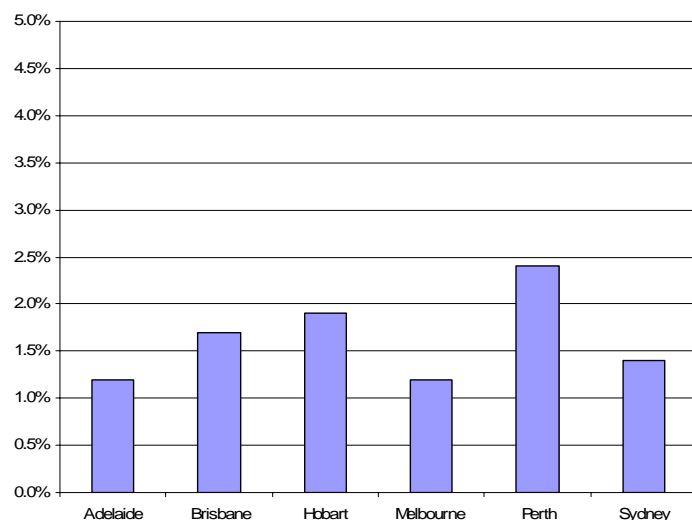
Vacancy rates for dwellings in the private housing market are low. They also vary between states as indicated in two data sources.<sup>12</sup>



Vacancy rates for private rental housing, July 2009



Vacancy rates for private rental housing, December quarter 2008

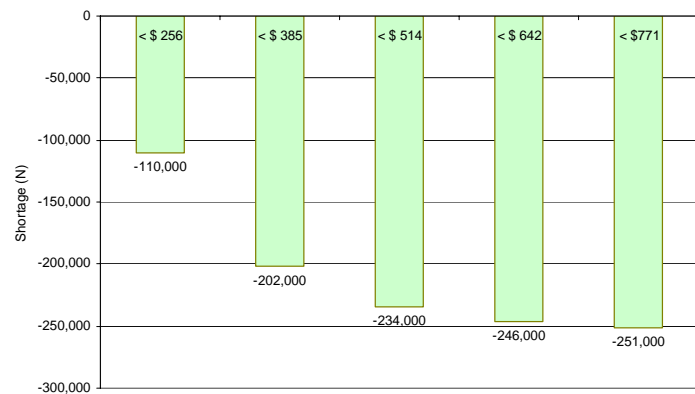


## Rental

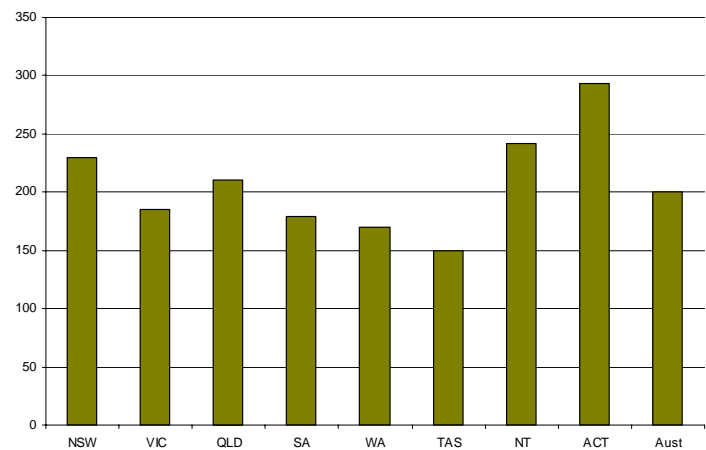
There is a shortage of affordable and available dwellings for rental in the private market for households with low-moderate incomes (the bottom two income quintiles). There was a shortage of 110,000 such dwellings for households earning less than \$256 a week, a shortage of 202,000 such dwellings for households earning less than \$385 a week, and a shortage of 251,000 such dwellings for households earning less than \$771 a week (i.e. for all low-moderate income households), in 2006.<sup>13</sup>

The median weekly rent in private rental varies from state to territory. The highest median weekly rent in 2005–06 was in the ACT at \$293, and the lowest median weekly rent was in Tasmania at \$150.<sup>14</sup>

Shortage of low-rent dwellings



Median weekly rents



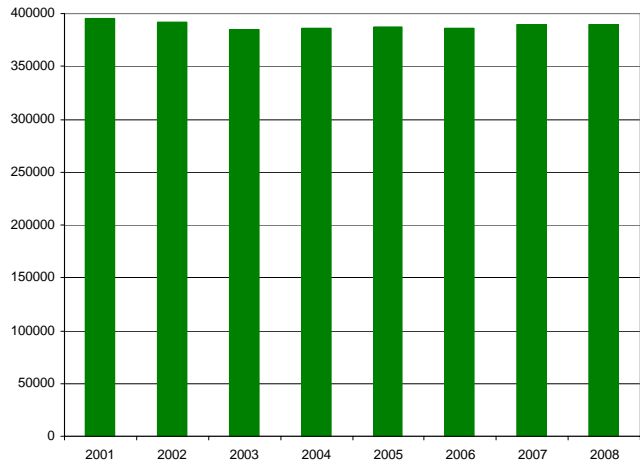
### Social housing

There are around 389,000 social housing dwellings in Australia.<sup>15</sup> This figure covers public housing, government-owned and managed Indigenous housing, government-subsidized community housing, and crisis accommodation program dwellings.<sup>16</sup>

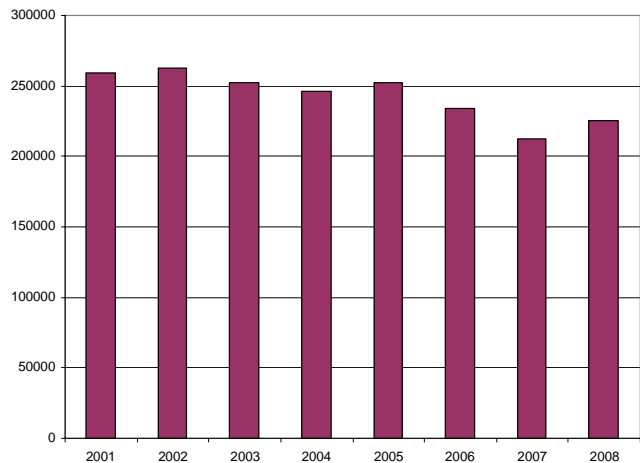
The number of people on the social housing waiting lists has fallen by 13% over this decade. The major reasons for this have been tightening of eligibility criteria in some jurisdictions, and reviews of the status of previous applicants. Even so, there were over 225,000 applicants waiting for social housing in 2008.<sup>17</sup>

Social housing is an important provider of housing to people with disabilities. Australia-wide, 29.1% of public housing tenants have a disability.<sup>18</sup> This proportion is 44.6% in Western Australia. Australia-wide, 18.8% of tenants in government-owned and managed Indigenous housing have a disability. This proportion is 34.2% in Western Australia.

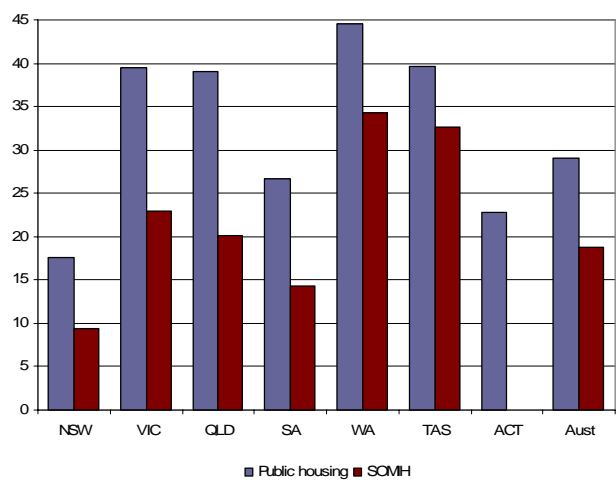
Social housing dwellings



Social housing waiting lists



Proportion of public and Indigenous housing tenants with a disability

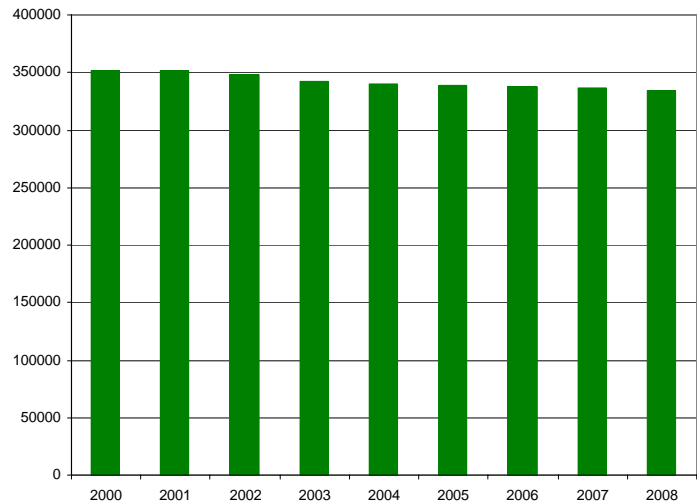


### Social housing

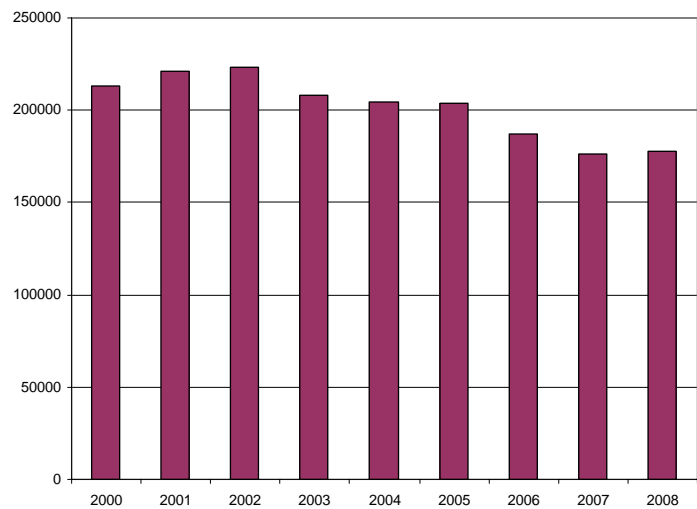
Public housing is the biggest subsector of social housing, providing 85% of social housing dwellings. There has been a 5% decrease in supply in this subsector over this decade.<sup>19</sup>

There are 178,000 applicants on the public housing waiting lists.<sup>20</sup> There has been a 16% decrease in the number of applicants on the waiting lists for this subsector over the last decade. The major reasons for this have been tightening of eligibility criteria in some jurisdictions, and reviews of the status of previous applicants.

Public housing dwellings



Public housing waiting lists

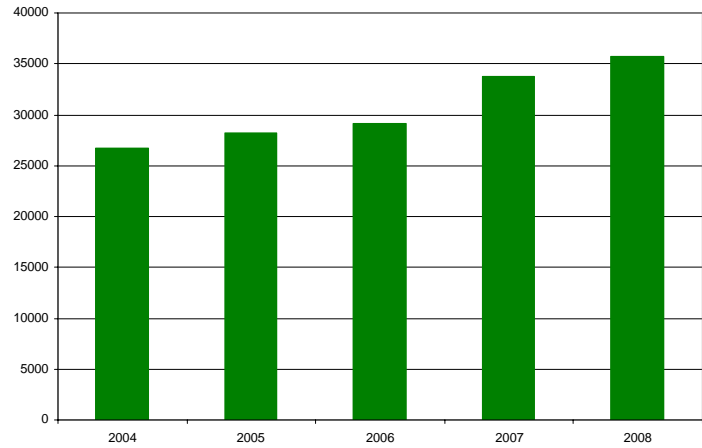


### Social housing

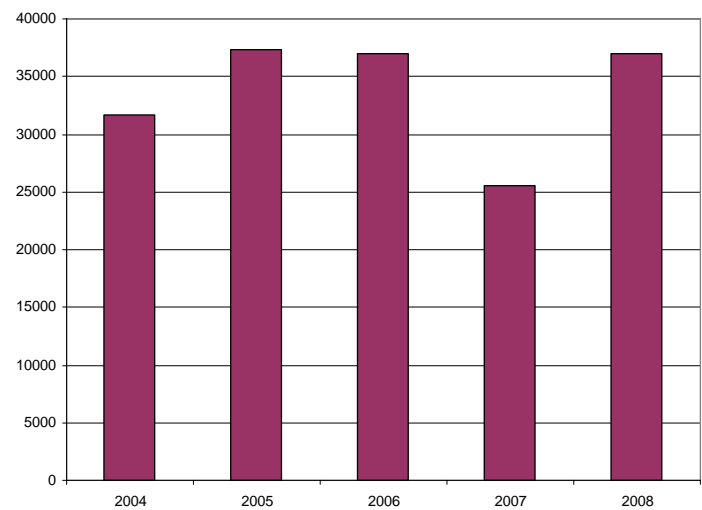
The community housing subsector has around 35,700 dwellings.<sup>21</sup> There has been a 33% increase in supply in this subsector over this decade.

There are nearly 37,000 applicants on the community housing waiting lists.<sup>22</sup>

Community housing dwellings



Community housing waiting lists

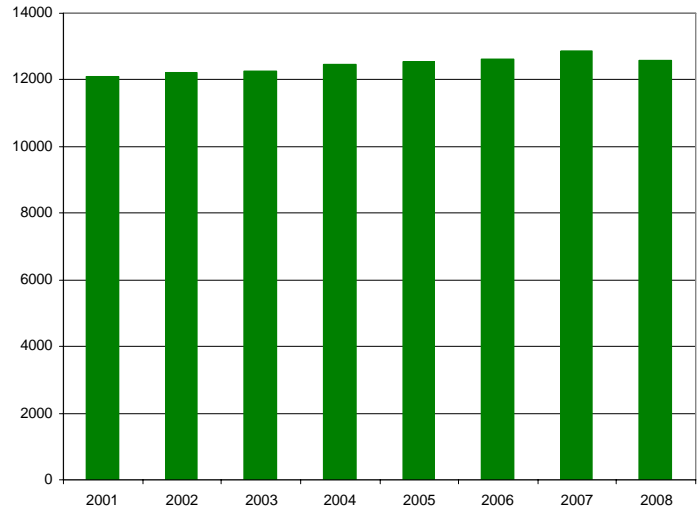


### Social housing

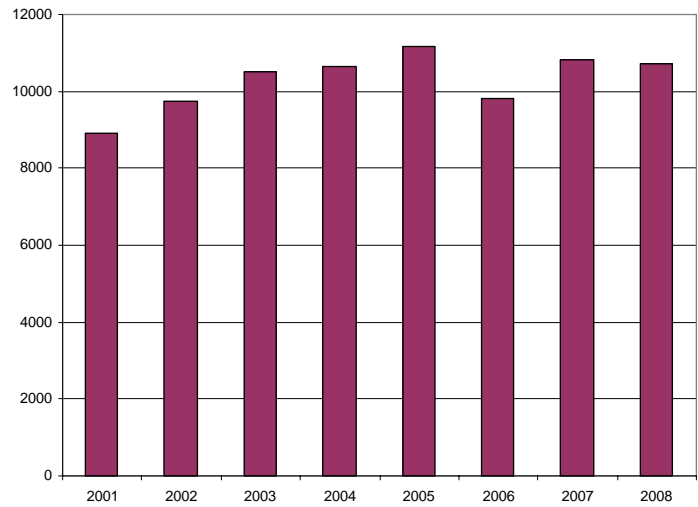
The government-owned and managed Indigenous housing subsector has around 12,500 dwellings.<sup>23</sup>

There are over 10,700 applicants on the waiting lists for government-owned and managed Indigenous housing.<sup>24</sup>

Indigenous housing dwellings



Indigenous housing waiting lists



## Homelessness

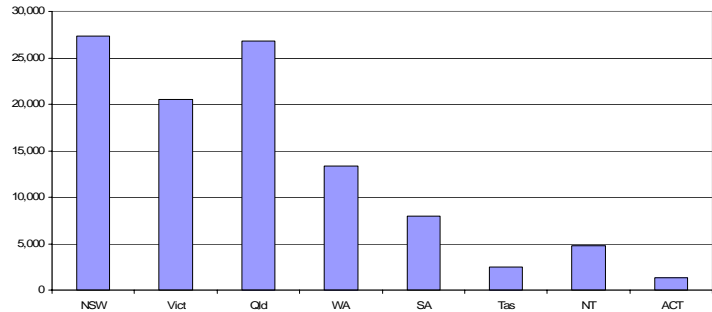
On census night in 2006:

- there were 105,000 homeless people in Australia;<sup>25</sup>
- 19,849 or 18.9% of the homeless population was staying in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services;<sup>26</sup>
- 16,375 or 15.6% of the homeless population were classified as rough sleepers – 4,327 or 26% were located in capital cities, 1,985 or 12% were located in regional centres and 10,063 or 62% were located in rural and remote communities.<sup>27</sup>

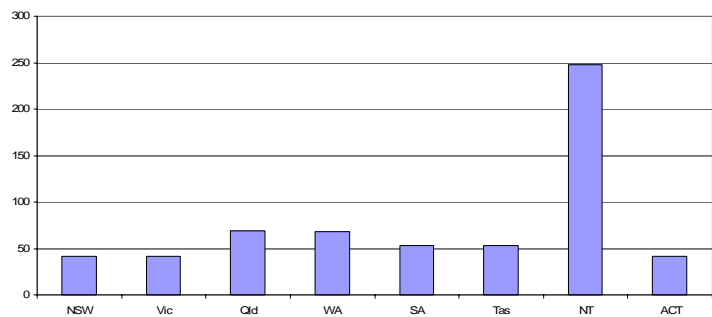
The rate of homelessness in Australia has remained constant between census nights in 2001 and 2006, at 53 homeless people per 10,000 of the population.

- The Northern Territory has the highest rate of homelessness, at 248 homeless people per 10,000 of the population.<sup>28</sup>
- New South Wales has the largest number of homeless people at 27,374.<sup>29</sup>

Number of homeless people by state and territory



Rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population, by state and territory



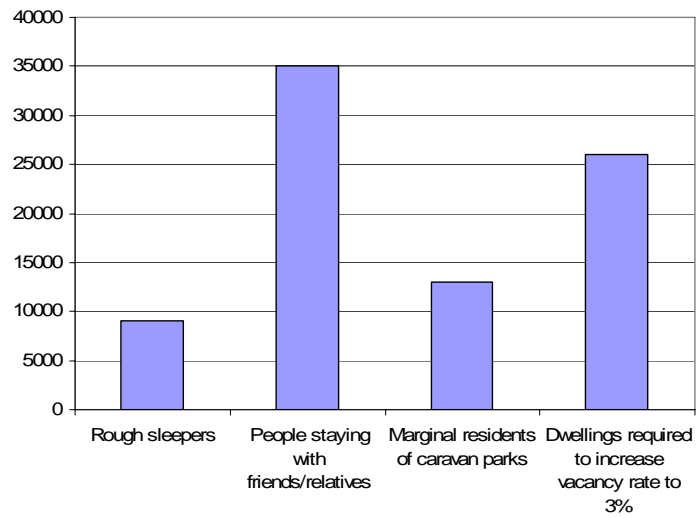
Homelessness

There is a gap of some 85,000 dwellings to accommodate the housing needs of homeless people.<sup>30</sup>

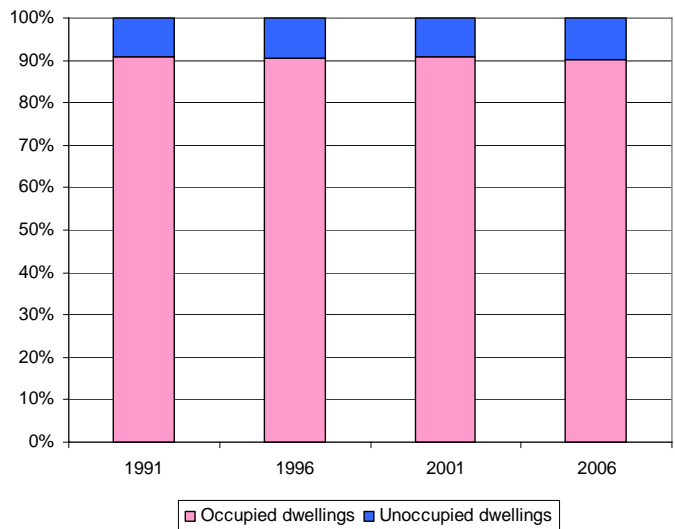
The shortage of housing for homeless people contrasts with the paradoxical situation that there are some 830,000 dwellings, 9% of the total Australian dwelling stock, that are unoccupied.<sup>31</sup>

As at 2008, there were 7,516 Crisis Accommodation dwellings nationally.<sup>32</sup>

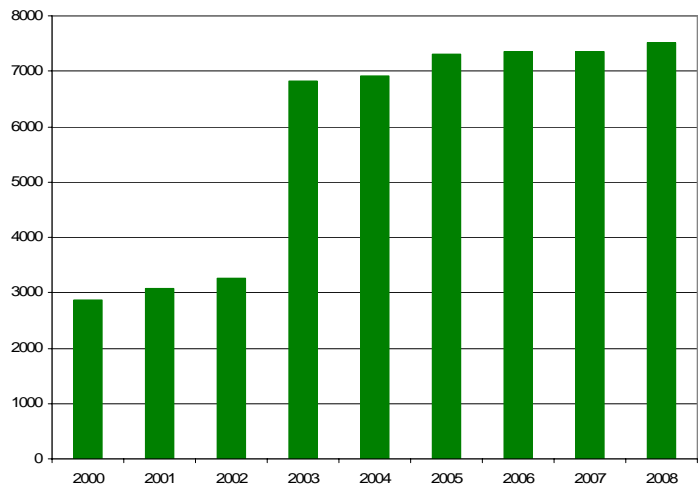
Dwellings required to accommodate homeless people



Unoccupied dwellings in Australia



Crisis Accommodation Program dwellings in Australia



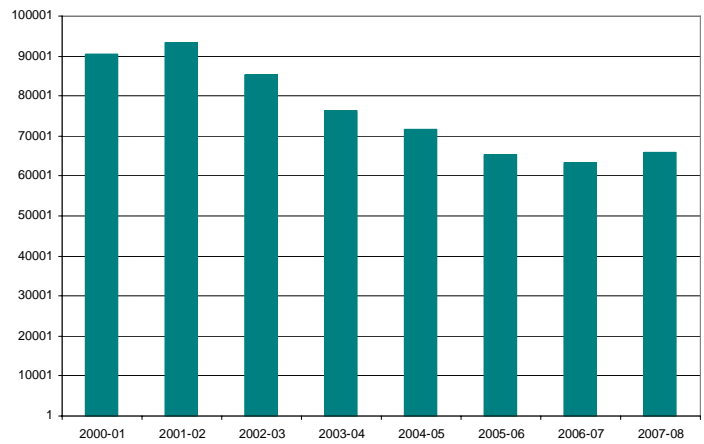
## Homelessness

The number of support periods in the form of accommodation provided to homeless people by homelessness agencies was around 66,000 in 2007–08.<sup>33</sup>

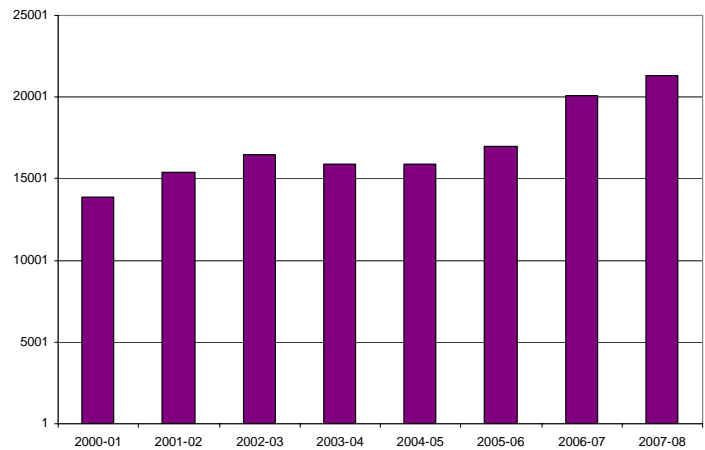
Indigenous peoples are heavily ‘over-represented’ as clients of homelessness services. The number of Indigenous people accessing homelessness agencies is increasing.<sup>34</sup>

The average daily number of requests for immediate accommodation that could not be met by homelessness agencies was 295 in 2007–08.<sup>35</sup>

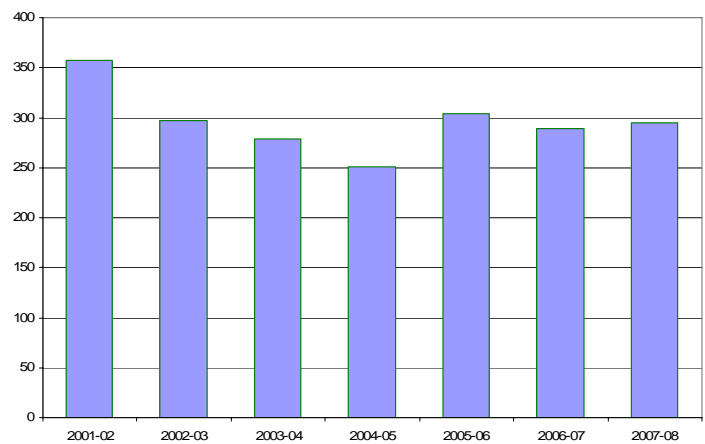
Clients of homelessness services



Indigenous clients of homelessness services



Daily requests for SAAP accommodation within 24 hours which were not met



## Sources for figures

- Number of Australian families in housing stress, by state. Ryanti Miranti and Binod Nepal, 'Housing stress in Australia 2007', National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra, 2008, Table 1a.
- Proportion of families in housing stress, in each state. Ryanti Miranti and Binod Nepal, 'Housing stress in Australia 2007', National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra, 2008, Table 1a.
- Tenure profile of families in housing stress. Ryanti Miranti and Binod Nepal, 'Housing stress in Australia 2007', National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra, 2008, Table 3a.
- Median price of houses, capital cities. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'House price indexes: eight capital cities – June quarter 2009', ABS cat. No. 6416.0, Canberra, 2009.
- First homebuyer deposit gap as % of average household disposable income. Reserve Bank of Australia, unpublished data provided to Shelter NSW, 29 September 2009.
- Monthly loan repayments for median-priced dwellings. *HIA–Commonwealth Bank affordability report*, June quarter 2009.
- Age of householder and housing tenure. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005–06 survey of income and housing; data supplied to Shelter NSW, 28 April 2009.
- Tenure profile of Australian households. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 census data.
- Tenure profile of Indigenous households. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Indigenous profile: 2006 census community profile series', cat. no. 2002.0.
- Rental yields on residential properties. Real Estate Institute of Australia data cited in National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, 2009, p.26.
- Vacancy rates for private rental housing, July 2009. SQM Research, <[www.sqmresearch.com.au](http://www.sqmresearch.com.au)>, viewed 23 September 2009.
- Vacancy rates for private rental housing, December quarter 2008. Real Estate Institute of Australia, media release, 'Market responding to interest rate cuts and stimulus measures', 16 March 2009, viewed on 5 May 2009: <[http://www.reiaustralia.com.au/media/documents/REIA\\_MediaRelease\\_REIAMortgageChoiceMarketFactsReport.pdf](http://www.reiaustralia.com.au/media/documents/REIA_MediaRelease_REIAMortgageChoiceMarketFactsReport.pdf)>. Data for March and June quarters 2009 was not available from REIA media releases.
- Shortage of low-rent dwellings. National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.98.
- Median weekly rents. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Housing occupancy and costs: 2005–06', ABS cat. no. 4130.0.55.001, October 2007.
- Social housing dwellings. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement housing data collections reports.
- Social housing waiting lists. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement housing data collections reports.
- Proportion of public and Indigenous housing tenants with a disability. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's welfare 2007*, Canberra, 2007, appendixes.
- Public housing dwellings. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement public rental housing data collections reports.
- Public housing waiting lists. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement public rental housing data collections reports.
- Community housing dwellings. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement CSHA community housing data collections reports.
- Community housing waiting lists. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement CSHA community housing data collections reports.
- Indigenous housing dwellings. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement state-owned and managed Indigenous housing data collections reports.
- Indigenous housing waiting lists. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement state-owned and managed Indigenous housing data collections reports.
- Number of homeless people by state and territory. Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the homeless 2006*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Census Analytic Program, cat. no. 2050.0, 4 September 2008, p. 46.
- Rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population, by state and territory. Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the homeless 2006*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Census Analytic Program, cat. no. 2050.0, 4 September 2008, p. 46.
- Dwellings required to accommodate homeless people. National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.69.

## Housing Australia factsheet

Unoccupied dwellings in Australia. National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.132.

Crisis Accommodation Program dwellings in Australia. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement Crisis Accommodation Program national data reports.

Clients of homelessness services. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program national data collection annual reports.

Indigenous clients of homelessness services. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program national data collection annual reports.

Daily requests for SAAP accommodation within 24 hours which were not met. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people'.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ryanti Miranti and Binod Nepal, 'Housing stress in Australia 2007', National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra, 2008. The NATSEM defines a family as an individual or group of individuals in a household who share their income; this definition does not include shared households, where individuals do not share their income. The NATSEM defines housing stress as the situation where a family's housing costs are more than 30% of its disposable income and the family is in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution.
- <sup>2</sup> Miranti and Nepal.
- <sup>3</sup> Miranti and Nepal.
- <sup>4</sup> Tony Kryger, 'House prices', *Research note*, no.7 200607, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia, 9 October 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'House price indexes: eight capital cities – June quarter 2009', ABS cat. No. 6416.0, Canberra, 2009, p.10. The table presents data for unstratified (city-wide) median prices for established houses, by city, by quarter.
- <sup>6</sup> Reserve Bank of Australia, unpublished data provided to Shelter NSW, 29 September 2009.
- <sup>7</sup> HIA–Commonwealth Bank affordability report, June quarter 2009.
- <sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005–06 survey of income and housing; data supplied to Shelter NSW, 28 April 2009.
- <sup>9</sup> Data from the 2006 census as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Some 540,000 Australians did not report their tenure in the 2006 Census, a 'not stated' rate of 7%.
- <sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Indigenous profile: 2006 Census community profile series', cat. no. 2002.0.
- <sup>11</sup> National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, 2009, pp.25-26, citing data prepared by the Real Estate Institute of Australia.
- <sup>12</sup> SQM Research, <[www.sqmresearch.com.au](http://www.sqmresearch.com.au)>, viewed 23 September 2009. Real Estate Institute of Australia, media release, 'Market responding to interest rate cuts and stimulus measures', 16 March 2009, viewed on 5 May 2009: <[http://www.reiaustralia.com.au/media/documents/REIA\\_Media\\_Release\\_REIAMortgageChoiceMarketFactsReport.pdf](http://www.reiaustralia.com.au/media/documents/REIA_Media_Release_REIAMortgageChoiceMarketFactsReport.pdf)>. Data for March and June quarters 2009 was not available from REIA media releases.
- <sup>13</sup> National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.98.
- <sup>14</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Housing occupancy and costs: 2005-06', ABS cat. no. 4130.0.55.001, October 2007.
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement housing data collections. The number indicates the number of tenantable dwellings as at 30 June each financial year.
- <sup>16</sup> Government-owned and managed Indigenous housing does not comprise the entire Indigenous social housing sector: it refers to that part financed through the Commonwealth–State-territory multilateral funding agreements but does not include social housing provided by Indigenous organizations (e.g. land councils) with finance from other sources. Government-subsidized community housing does not comprise all of the nonprofit nongovernment affordable rental housing sector: it refers to social housing provided through the Commonwealth–State-territory multilateral funding agreements by non-Indigenous organizations and does not include affordable rental housing provided by community organizations with finance from other sources; it specifically does not include submarket rental housing provided under disability and aged care programs.
- <sup>17</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement housing data collections. The data for 2004, 2005 and 2006 do not include the Northern Territory (not available). The data do not include the crisis accommodation program (for which customers do not apply directly).
- <sup>18</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's welfare 2007*, AIHW cat. no. AUS 93, Canberra, 2007, appendixes, tables A5.6 and A5.7, data as at 30 June 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement public rental housing data collections. The number indicates the number of tenantable dwellings as at 30 June each financial year.
- <sup>20</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement public rental housing data collections.
- <sup>21</sup> Community housing here refers to social housing provided through Commonwealth–State-territory multilateral funding agreements by non-Indigenous organizations. It does not include affordable rental

housing provided by community organizations with finance from other sources; it specifically does not include submarket rental housing provided under disability and aged care programs.

- <sup>22</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement CSHA community housing data collections. The data do not include the Northern Territory. The data for 2002 and 2003 do not include Victoria (not available).
- <sup>23</sup> Government-owned and managed Indigenous housing does not comprise the entire Indigenous social housing sector: it refers to that part financed through the Commonwealth–State-territory multilateral funding agreements on housing and does not include social housing provided by Indigenous organizations (e.g. land councils) with finance from other sources.
- <sup>24</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement state-owned and managed Indigenous housing data collections reports. The data do not include the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory (not applicable).
- <sup>25</sup> Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the homeless 2006*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Census Analytic Program, cat. no. 2050.0, 4 September 2008, p. x. Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, *Counting the homeless 2001*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Census Analytic Program, cat. no. 2050.0, 18 November 2003, p. vii. The reports use a cultural definition of homelessness, which is comprised of: primary homelessness (people without conventional accommodation, such as people sleeping in parks and using cars for temporary shelter); secondary homelessness (people who move frequently from one form of shelter to another, such as those in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, people staying with other households because they have no accommodation of their own and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, defined as 12 weeks or less); and tertiary homelessness (people living in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, defined as 13 weeks or longer – that is, they are staying in accommodation which is below the minimum community standard of a small self-contained flat). Table 7 on homeless people by state and territory in *Counting the homeless 2006* on p. x refers to a national total of 104,676 who were counted as homeless in the 2006 census, but p. vii states that for policy and planning purposes, a national figure of 105,000 can be quoted.
- <sup>26</sup> *Counting the homeless 2006*, Table 1, persons in different sectors of the homeless population on census night, p. viii.
- <sup>27</sup> Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *The road home*, 2008, p. 4, Table 1, unpublished table from Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs using ABS census 2006 data.
- <sup>28</sup> *Counting the homeless 2006*, Table 8.3, rate of homelessness per 10,000 of the population, p. 46.
- <sup>29</sup> *Counting the homeless 2006*, Table 8.4, number of homeless people by state and territory, p. 46.
- <sup>30</sup> National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.69.
- <sup>31</sup> National Housing Supply Council, *State of supply report 2008*, p.132.
- <sup>32</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement Crisis Accommodation Program national data reports. The number indicates the number of tenatable dwellings as at 30 June each financial year.
- <sup>33</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program national data collection annual reports. A client might have more than one contact with a SAAP agency in a year, although most do not.
- <sup>34</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program national data collection annual reports.
- <sup>35</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, ‘Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people’.