What is homelessness?

Homelessness is when you don’t have a permanent, safe or secure place to live. This includes:

- people on the streets ‘sleeping rough’ or in makeshift dwellings (known as primary homelessness)
- people in refuges, crisis and emergency accommodation or living temporarily with family or friends or even couch surfing (known as secondary homelessness).
- some people who have insecure tenure such medium to long term boarding house residents (known as tertiary homelessness).

It is difficult to count the number of homeless people. For many it is a short term situation, while others struggle with homeless for long periods of time. For some, homelessness may become an entrenched cycle. The most recent information and statistics on this topic is found in a report titled Counting the Homeless 2006. This uses Australian Bureau of Statistics information, gathered on census night 2006, to estimate the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Western Australia on any one night. A Census undertaken since then in 2011 will provide new information from the ABS in the future.

How does someone become homeless?

People become homeless for many reasons, some of which can be complex. These include breakdown of relationships, domestic and family violence, financial difficulties, eviction or ending of previous accommodation, substance abuse, mental illness, or a lack of affordable and accessible housing and accommodation.

Statistics:

What is the estimated number of people who are homeless in WA?

The total estimated number of people who were homelessness in WA on Census night 2006 was 13,391. This includes primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.

Of these, 2,392 people experienced primary homelessness where they were sleeping rough or in make shift dwellings in WA.

What is the estimated number of people who are homeless in Perth?

On Census night 2006, there were an estimated 6,720 people experiencing homelessness in the Perth metropolitan area. This includes primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.

Primary Homeless:

What suburb has the greatest number of people experiencing primary homelessness?

The central metropolitan area of Perth had the greatest estimated number of people experiencing primary homeless in Perth (i.e. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings) with a total of 270. This area includes the Perth inner city suburbs and the Perth central business centre.
What regional area has the greatest number of primary homeless?
The Kimberley region of WA had the highest number of people experiencing primary homelessness (i.e. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings) with a total of 477.

Services:

What role does the State Government play in helping people who are homeless?
The State Government does a number of things to assist people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. It assists through direct service provision and by contracting and funding non-government agencies to provide services to the homeless.

In Western Australia, approximately $43 million per annum is provided through the joint Commonwealth/State National Affordable Housing Agreement for 117 specialist homelessness services for a range of crisis and medium term accommodation and support services, meals and day centres.

In addition, through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, the State Government has made an additional $68 million financial commitment over four years to provide a comprehensive range of facilities and programs to improve and expand existing homelessness services, and break the cycle, so that fewer people remain or re-enter homelessness.

In the 2011/12 Budget, the State Government allocated $5.4 million for building a new acute homeless night shelter in Perth’s inner city.

Services provided directly by Government
The Department for Child Protection operates the Crisis Care Unit which provides 24 hour assistance to people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The contact numbers for the Crisis Care Unit are (08) 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008 (free call).

Where can I find out more information?