



### **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.
- people in refuges, crisis and emergency accommodation or living temporarily with family or friends.
- people staying in boarding houses or staying in other temporary lodging.

In September 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released the *Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness* which outlined the new statistical definition of homelessness as that:

"When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations."

It is difficult to count the number of homeless people. For many it is a short term situation, while others struggle with homelessness 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 the ABS publication the *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2011*, released on 12 November 2012. This uses ABS information, gathered on census night 2011, to estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in Western Australia on any one night.

### **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 homeless in WA on Census night 2011 was 9,592. Of these, the number of homeless people sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings was 925 persons.

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

On Census night 2011, there were an estimated 4,902 people experiencing homelessness in the Greater Perth area. The areas covered in Greater Perth include Mandurah and Serpentine-Jarrahdale regions.

**What percentage of homeless people are indigenous in WA?**

In WA, 35 per cent of homeless people were identified as being Indigenous.

**What regional area has the greatest number of homeless people?**

In regional WA, the Kimberley had the highest number of people experiencing homelessness with a total of 1,877.

**What is the largest group of homeless people?**

Homeless people living in severely crowded dwellings formed the largest group of people. In WA, 43% of homeless people were living in severely crowded dwellings.

**What is overcrowding?**

ABS has used the term overcrowding as defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard as living in a dwelling which requires 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there.

**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, \$45.8 million per annum is provided through the joint **Commonwealth/State National Affordable Housing Agreement** for 115 specialist homelessness services for a range of crisis and medium term accommodation and support services, meals and day centres.

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.

***Projects Underway to address homelessness are:***

- The **Common Risk Assessment and Management Framework for Domestic and Family Violence** (Phase 1) was implemented by the Department's Domestic Violence Policy Unit across domestic violence accommodation services in 2011-12, with 2012-13 (Phase 2) targeting other specialist homelessness services across the State to increase safety outcomes for people impacted by domestic and family violence;
- An **assessment and referral service** to further streamline responses for people who are homeless is currently being developed. The service will contribute to maximisation of resources, and improve consumer access to appropriate accommodation and support services. This service is expected to commence in late 2013.

***New Accommodation for the Homeless***

- **Lime Street** – St Bartholomew's House new facility at Lime Street opened in September 2012. Lime Street doubled the capacity with 40 aged care beds, 12 crisis, 42 transitional and 54 long term places;
- **Rebecca West House** – Commenced in October 2012, a purpose built refuge in the northern suburbs providing crisis accommodation for up to six women with accompanying children and two transitional places;

- **Kalgoorlie Indigenous Visitor Accommodation** – Able to accommodate up to 41 people (families and singles), the Kalgoorlie Indigenous Visitor Centre commenced in December 2012;
- The **Derby Indigenous Visitor Accommodation** – Cabinet has approved Royalties for Regions funding to build and operate a new Indigenous Visitor Centre in Derby which will be able to accommodate up to 54 people (families and singles). Construction of the facility will commence in early 2013.
- The **Busselton Women’s Refuge** includes crisis accommodation in 12 rooms for up to 35 women and children at risk of homelessness due to family and domestic violence or other life crisis. It is anticipated the Busselton Women’s Refuge will commence operating from 1 May 2013;
- **The Salvation Army’s Beacon Project** - Commenced construction in September 2012. Due for completion in July 2013, it will provide 25 additional places for homeless men;
- **Oxford Foyer** – Construction commenced in April 2012 on the Oxford Foyer which will support 98 young people when construction is completed in mid 2013. While the Foyer is under construction an interim Foyer is operating for up to 14 young people, including young parents; and
- **Tom Fisher House** – A site for a new homeless night shelter, construction will commence early 2013 with completion expected in mid 2014.

#### **Where can I find out more information?**

Visit the Department for Child Protection’s website:

<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/servicescommunity/Pages/Homelessness.aspx>

Visit the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ website:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features22011?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2049.0&issue=2011&num=&view=>