



UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

What is Homelessness?

Homelessness can mean different things to different people. Indeed, many people who may be viewed as homeless using statistical or research definitions may not consider themselves as homeless.

In September 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness which outlined the new statistical definition as 'home'lessness, not 'roof'lessness. The new statistical definition of homelessness stated: "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."

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 staying in supported accommodation such as refuges, crisis and emergency accommodation or living temporarily with family or friends;
- people staying in boarding houses, or staying in other temporary lodgings; and
- people living in severely overcrowded situations.

What do you mean by overcrowding?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has used the term overcrowding, as defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, as living in a dwelling which requires four or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there.

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. Often, it can be a combination of these issues.