

# HOMELESSNESS & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Alleviating homelessness.



## OUTCOME 1

Increased supply of quality affordable housing.

## OUTCOME 2

Interventions that prevent entry into or entrenchment in homelessness.

To access in-depth information about the other outcome in the Homelessness & Affordable Housing Impact Area, visit [lmcfc.org.au/our-impact/homelessness-affordable-housing](https://lmcfc.org.au/our-impact/homelessness-affordable-housing)

## Challenge

### Homelessness is on the rise.

In 2018, the latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed an increase of homelessness across Australia.<sup>1</sup> In Victoria, homelessness rose by 43 per cent from 2006 to 2016 with 24,817 people homeless on census night.<sup>2</sup> Rough sleepers account for 5 per cent of the total homeless population.<sup>3</sup> Most of the people who experience homelessness are not visible; 36 per cent of the homeless population are in severely overcrowded dwellings – the highest recorded location for people experiencing homelessness by the ABS.<sup>4</sup>

Across Australia, the need is greater than the response. On average in Victoria, 90 clients are turned away from homelessness services every day due to a lack of housing and resources.<sup>5</sup>

### Certain cohorts disproportionately experience homelessness.

There are certain groups of people who are over-represented in the homelessness statistics:

- Young people, aged 25 and under, make up 39 per cent of the total homeless population.<sup>6</sup> Young people also have high rates of homelessness; 19 to 24-year-olds have the highest rate of homelessness at nearly 1 in 100, compared to 1 in 200 of the general population.<sup>7</sup> This is even more significant when considering that people who experience homelessness in their youth are more likely to experience entrenched homelessness as an adult.<sup>8</sup> For young people who exit state care, including foster care and juvenile justice settings, the picture is even bleaker – with up to 40 per cent of people exiting statutory care experiencing homelessness within the first 12 months of exiting.<sup>9</sup>
- Homelessness for older people is on the rise too, with people aged 55 and over making up 13 per cent of the Victorian homeless population.<sup>10</sup> Women over 55 years are the fastest growing group experiencing homelessness.<sup>11</sup> This is likely to increase, as Australia's overall population ages.
- LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria are twice as likely to experience homelessness.<sup>12</sup>

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- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 4 per cent of the total homeless population yet are less than 1 per cent of the Victorian population.<sup>13</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people make up 25 per cent of 15 to 24-year-olds seeking help for homelessness.<sup>14</sup>
- Men represent the larger portion of the homelessness population at 58 per cent.<sup>15</sup> However more women are supported by specialist homelessness services at 61 per cent.<sup>16</sup>

### **There is no single cause of homelessness.**

There are many contributing factors that can lead to a person experiencing homelessness including family violence, income issues, mental and physical illness, and drug and alcohol abuse. The lack of housing remains the single largest reasons for why people experience homelessness, which is closely related to issues around poverty more generally.<sup>17</sup>

Family violence is the main reason why people, mainly women and children, seek assistance for homelessness, making up 47 per cent of all people requesting help.<sup>18</sup> A woman's ability to maintain housing when escaping family violence is linked to her access to financial and social resources, which can often be an aspect of abuse from a controlling partner.<sup>19</sup> Women escaping family violence may not have a housing history, or may have to leave immediately, limiting their ability to rent.<sup>20</sup>

Women are also more affected by the shortage of affordable housing with cultural and structural trends making them more financially vulnerable. The gender pay gap is currently 17.3 per cent for the base salary of men and women working full time.<sup>21</sup> Women generally earn less than men and are more likely to take leave from the workforce due to caring responsibilities.<sup>22</sup>

Mental health and homelessness is a 'bi-directional relationship' where mental health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness.<sup>23</sup> People who are experiencing acute mental health issues can be at risk of losing their housing. As well, many people who experience homelessness develop a mental illness due to the stress of homelessness.<sup>24</sup>

There is a clear link between trauma and homelessness, with people experiencing homelessness reporting a high number of traumatic events during their life. Many psychiatric disorders are known to develop after traumatic events, including substance use disorders, which can affect a person's ability to maintain a tenancy. A study that looked at long-term homelessness found that 97 per cent of participants had experienced four or more traumatic events in their lifetime, in comparison to 4 per cent in the general community.<sup>25</sup> Most were exposed to trauma during their childhood and 70 per cent experienced at least one traumatic event before experiencing homelessness.<sup>26</sup>

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## Our Response

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation is focused on systemic, lasting interventions that prevent homelessness or stop long-term, entrenched homelessness. For those experiencing homelessness, we support interventions that rapidly rehouse people so that their incident of homelessness is brief and to minimise trauma.

The Foundation recognises that [the lack of supply of affordable housing](#) is one of the primary causes of homelessness. As such we aim to increase the supply of quality affordable housing, particularly for young people and older women. We fund long-term affordable housing for very low and low income people in Victoria. We also acknowledge the need for people to create a home, and support quality affordable housing that fosters social inclusion and value in people's lives.

We encourage the sector-wide adoption of the Housing First model, a 'strategic response to homelessness that prioritises permanent and stable housing for people experiencing homelessness.'<sup>27</sup> We believe housing should not be withheld from those who experience homelessness due to other factors such as substance use, mental illness or incarceration, and we support harm reduction initiatives.

The Foundation contributes to evidenced based approaches and actively funds research into homelessness to better understand the causes and effective responses. We are especially interested in cohorts that have higher incidents of homelessness or are disadvantaged. We fund innovative projects that respond to emerging new data or insights and can demonstrate effective responses.

Affecting homelessness is complex. Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has been working in the area of homelessness for over a decade and we are committed to using our resources to enable and enact solutions.

### **The Foundation's support is focused on:**

- **Organisations and interventions that utilise Housing First principles.**
- **Research to better understand what interventions work.**
- **Collaboration between sectors, to reduce drivers of homelessness.**

**The Foundation will consider other activities that address this outcome.**

## Contact

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> ABS Census, *Estimating Homelessness* (14 March 2018) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>;

Analysis of ABS data taken from Council to Homeless Persons, *Homelessness in Victoria* (2018) <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Homelessness-in-Victoria-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2017-18: Victoria* (2019) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/46473685-40d3-471b-b28d-ae6aaac81e84/aihw-hou-299-vic.pdf.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> ABS Census, *Estimating Homelessness* (14 March 2018) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>;

Analysis of ABS data taken from Council to Homeless Persons, *Homelessness in Victoria* (2018) <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Homelessness-in-Victoria-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> ABS Census, *Estimating Homelessness* (14 March 2018) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>

<sup>8</sup> Schutella et al, *Journeys Home: Research Report No 6.* (2015) [https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/2202865/Scutella\\_et\\_al\\_Journeys\\_Home\\_Research\\_Report\\_W6.pdf](https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2202865/Scutella_et_al_Journeys_Home_Research_Report_W6.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> CREATE Foundation, *Transitioning from Care Report Card* (2011) <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2011-CRE065-F-CREATE-Report-Card-2011-Web-File-webR.pdf>; Homelessness Australia, *Homelessness and Young People* (2016) <https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/sites/homelessnessaus/files/2017-07/Young%20People.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> The rate of older men (55 and older) experiencing homelessness increased by 26 per cent and older women by 31 per cent across Australia between 2011 to 2016. ABS Census, *Estimating Homelessness* (14 March 2018) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. See also Australian Human Rights Commission, *Older Women's Risk of Homelessness: Background Paper* (2019) [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc\\_ow\\_homelessness2019.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_ow_homelessness2019.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> See for instance: Council to Homeless Persons, *Why LGBT Victorians are twice as likely to face homelessness* (2 November 2017) <http://chp.org.au/lgbtq-victorians-twice-likely-face-homelessness/>

<sup>13</sup> Council to Homeless Persons, *Homelessness in Victoria* (2018) <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Homelessness-in-Victoria-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Council to Homeless Persons, *Youth Homelessness* (2018) <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/1.-Youth-homelessness-fact-sheet.pdf> taken from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *Specialist homelessness services 2016-17: Victoria* (2018) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/07441e6f-86f4-46ea-82d6-aba6f811e45e/shs-2016-17-vic-factsheet.pdf.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> ABS Census, *Estimating Homelessness* (14 March 2018) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>;

<sup>16</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *Specialist homelessness services 2017-18: Victoria* (2019) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/46473685-40d3-471b-b28d-ae6aaac81e84/aihw-hou-299-vic.pdf.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> Council to Homeless Persons, *Youth Homelessness* (2018) <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/1.-Youth-homelessness-fact-sheet.pdf> taken from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *Specialist homelessness services 2016-17: Victoria* (2018) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/07441e6f-86f4-46ea-82d6-aba6f811e45e/shs-2016-17-vic-factsheet.pdf.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *Specialist homelessness services 2017-18: Victoria* (2019) <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/46473685-40d3-471b-b28d-ae6aaac81e84/aihw-hou-299-vic.pdf.aspx>

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<sup>19</sup> Council to Homeless Persons, *Fact Sheet: Family violence and homelessness* (2017) <https://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Family-violence-fact-sheet-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Older Women's Risk of Homelessness: Background Paper* (2019) [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc\\_ow\\_homelessness2019.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_ow_homelessness2019.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), *Integrating Australia's housing and mental health support systems* (November 2018) [https://www.ahuri.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/29739/PES-Integrating-Australia-housing-and-mental-health-support-systems.pdf](https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/29739/PES-Integrating-Australia-housing-and-mental-health-support-systems.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Council to Homeless Persons, *5 reasons the Mental Health Royal Commission must examine housing & homelessness* (22 January 2019) <http://chp.org.au/five-reasons-why-victorias-mental-health-royal-commission-must-examine-the-role-of-housing-and-homelessness/>

<sup>25</sup> M O'Donnell et al, *The Trauma and Homelessness Initiative* (2014) <https://www.sacredheartmission.org/docman/publications/trauma-and-homelessness/99-thi-report-research-findings/file>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), *What is the Housing First model and how does it help those experiencing homelessness?* (25 May 2018) <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/policy/ahuri-briefs/what-is-the-housing-first-model>