

Homelessness Support in Australia

Homelessness is a growing issue in Australia. According to the Australian Census (2016), over 116,000 people experience homelessness on any given night.

Being homeless goes beyond 'rooflessness' and a lack of access to safe shelter. Homelessness can look different from person to person and largely depends on an individual's situation.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines homeless as: "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;
- 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."

In simple terms, this means people might experience different levels of homelessness such as:

- **Plugging the gap** – staying with friends or relatives, in temporary housing, or between different places (couch surfing).
- **Boarding** – usually in group houses with little security.
- **Sleeping rough** – in cars, parks or bus shelters, or in empty houses (squatting).

WHAT CAUSES HOMELESSNESS?

There are numerous causes of homelessness. Some of the most common reasons are:

- **Stagnant wages.** While the cost-of-living increases, wages do not keep up with inflation.
- **Unemployment.** Once a person is unemployed for a time, they can easily slip into homelessness. Research shows that most unhoused people want to work but face obstacles, such as not having a permanent address.
- **Lack of affordable housing.** As the cost of housing increases, more people are priced out of buying or renting a property.
- **Domestic violence.** Women and children are especially vulnerable to violence-triggered homelessness. To escape domestic violence, people may flee their homes without a plan.
- **Family conflict.** Closely related to domestic violence, family conflict can also lead to homelessness. This is especially true for the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Societal failures.** Homelessness occurs when society fails to identify and support people at risk of becoming unhoused. Failures in areas like correctional services, healthcare services, and child welfare are very common.
- **Discrimination.** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face many barriers in the housing market, including discrimination.
- **Addiction.** Whether it's a gambling or drug addiction, these can drain both the financial and mental wellbeing of a person, making it harder for them to retain employment and/or maintain appropriate accommodation.

FIND OUT MORE

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- **Poor mental health.** One of the fastest growing causes of homelessness across the globe is poor mental health. A study cited by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found that 31% of homeless people experienced a mental health problem. Of these, about half had a mental health problem before they became homeless, and the remainder developed mental health problems following homelessness.

HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

The Australian Government does provide support to those who require it. [Click here](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/payment-and-service-finder) (https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/payment-and-service-finder) to see what payments and services you may be eligible for.

There are also numerous non-governmental organisations throughout Australia that are there to provide support to those struggling with homelessness. These include:

Askizzy (https://askizzy.org.au) is a free and anonymous website to search for housing, food, health care and legal help in your area.

Homelessness Australia (https://homelessnessaustralia.org.au/homelessness-services) can help you if you're homeless, or at risk of being homeless.

Mission Australia (https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/housing) manages community housing across Australia and can help you look for a home. (1800 269 672)

The **Red Cross** (https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/community-services/homelessness-services) can help you look for suitable shelter. They also provide meals to people with low incomes or housing problems. (1800 733 276)

The Salvation Army (https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/need-help/homelessness-support-services) helps people across Australia to find housing and support services. (13 72 58)

There are various state-based services available for people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness:

QUEENSLAND

Homeless Hotline (http://www.qld.gov.au/homelesshotline) is a phone information and referral service run by the Queensland Government for people who are experiencing homelessness. (1800 47 47 53)

The **Queensland Government website** (https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/emergency-temporary-accommodation/homeless-persons-information-qld) also has information about where you can find temporary and emergency accommodation.

UnitingCare QLD (https://www.unitingcareqld.com.au/services-and-support/homelessness) can also help you find accommodation.

DV Connect (https://www.dvconnect.org) provides pathways to safety, away from domestic, family and sexual violence. Contact DV Connect for support with safety planning, crisis counselling, intervention, information and referrals as well as emergency transport and accommodation for your entire family including pets. (1800 811 811)

NEW SOUTH WALES

Link2home (https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways-are-you-homeless) is the statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service. For information, assessment or referral to homelessness services and support in NSW, call Link2home. (1800 152 152)

The **NSW Domestic Violence Helpline** (https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/helpline) provides counselling and referrals to women experiencing domestic and family violence. Call for support with AVO's, safety plans, emergency accommodation, transport, police, courts and lawyers. (1800 656 463)

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ACT

OneLink (<https://www.onelink.org.au>) provides information and connections for support services in the ACT, including services for families and young people, and services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. (1800 176 468)

ACT Community Services (https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/hcs/services/social_housing/social_housing_and_homelessness_services) can help you with social housing, community housing and affordable housing. (1800 950 255)

Brought to you by VolunteeringACT, the **ACT Community Directory** (<https://vc-act.mycommunitydirectory.com.au>) helps you find services, community organisations and support groups in the Canberra region. ((02) 6248 7988)

VICTORIA

Housing Vic (<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/crisis-emergency-accommodation>) can provide crisis and emergency accommodation for those in need.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (<https://www.safesteps.org.au>) provides specialist support services for anyone in Victoria who is experiencing or at risk of family violence. Services include emergency accommodation, support, referrals to services, advocacy and court assistance. (1800 015 188)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Homelessness Connect (<https://www.entrypointperth.com.au>) is a 24/7 state-wide telephone service for anyone experiencing homelessness in South Australia. (1800 003 308)

Women's Safety Services SA (WSSSA) (<https://womenssafetyservices.com.au>) supports women and their children who are experiencing domestic and family violence. We are an organisation committed to helping people find safety and support during and after experiencing abuse. (1800 800 098)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

EntryPoint Perth (<https://www.entrypointperth.com.au>) is a free assessment and referral service assisting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Western Australia to access accommodation and support options. (1800 124 684)

RUAH Community Service (<https://www.ruah.org.au>) can help you with accommodation, legal advice and wellness advice. (13 RUAH (13 7824))

Women's Domestic Violence (<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/Pages/Women's-Domestic-Violence-Helpline.aspx>) provides support for women, who are experiencing family and domestic violence. (1800 007 339)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

NTShelter (<https://ntshelter.org.au>) can help with suitable and affordable housing in the Northern Territory. (08 8985 4389)

Shelter Me (<https://www.shelterme.org.au>) is a directory of homeless services for homeless people living in the NT. It contains a comprehensive guide to services in all areas of the NT.

TASMANIA

Family Violence Counselling and Support Service (FVCSS) (https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/children/family_violence_counselling_and_support_services) offers information and referral to the full range of response, counselling, information and other support services for people experiencing domestic and family violence. (1800 608 122)

If you require emergency housing assistance or information contact **Colony 47's Emergency Support Program**. (<https://colony47.com.au/emergency-support-program>) The Emergency Support Program identifies and provides housing and support options for people who are sleeping rough in Southern Tasmania (1800 265 669)

You can also find information about housing in Tasmania on the **Hobart City** (<https://www.hobartcity.com.au/Community/Action-on-homelessness>) website.

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