

## SHELTER TAS FACT SHEET - HOMELESSNESS IN TASMANIA 2018

Updated to reflect Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016

### Why Homelessness is a Problem

Homelessness is a serious problem in Tasmania that affects people across all ages.

For many people homelessness is temporary, until they are able to recover and stabilise their situation. For others, homelessness can be longer term and difficult to break out of.

Homelessness doesn't just cost individuals, it costs society as well as. Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on housing a homeless person governments can save between \$2 - \$13 in health and justice costs alone.<sup>i</sup>

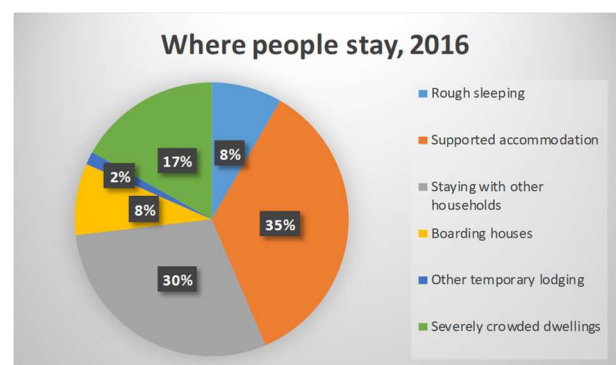
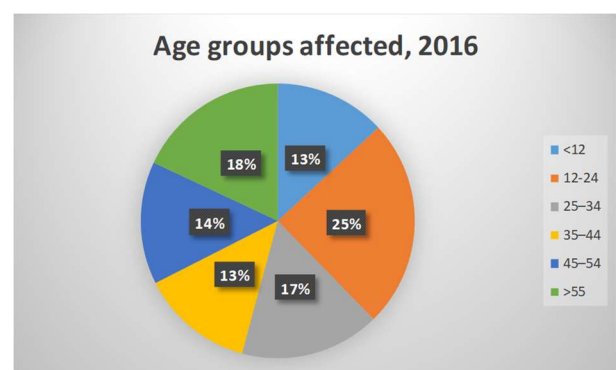
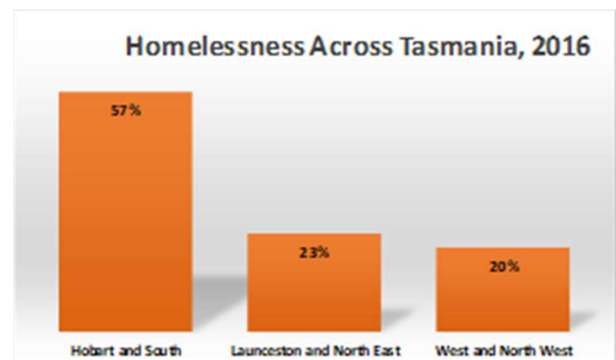
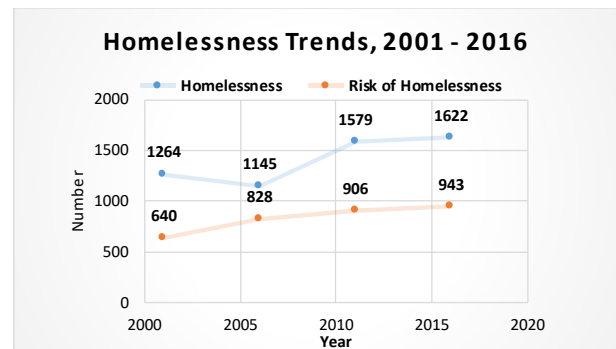
**Having a secure and affordable home is a most basic human need and a human right. It also makes good economic sense.**

### About homelessness in Tasmania

Homelessness has been increasing across the State for over a decade. Census 2016 showed:<sup>ii</sup>

- 1,622 Tasmanians are homeless. Over half are in the south, mainly in Hobart (57%).
- More males than females experience homelessness (58% males, 42% females).
- Most homelessness is hidden. Only 8% of homeless people sleep rough (*137 people*).
- Nearly 4 in 10 homeless people are younger than 25 years (38%). Of these, 48% couch surf or live with severe overcrowding, and 44% stay in supported accommodation.
- Nearly 2 in 10 homeless people are older than 55 years (18%).
- 1 in 10 homeless people are Indigenous (10.7%).

### What Census 2016 Shows:<sup>ii</sup>



## What causes homelessness?

Homelessness has many causes, which can include a lack of affordable housing; loss of employment; family breakdown and domestic violence; transition from care or custody; mental health issues; and substance abuse.

More than 74,000 Tasmanians live below the poverty line.<sup>iii</sup> As housing costs rise, it is increasingly difficult for low income Tasmanians to find a home they can afford. Lack of affordable housing is the most common reason for people seeking help from homelessness services (64% of all requests).

As well as being a major cause of homelessness, the lack of affordable housing keeps people in homelessness for longer. More people are also experiencing repeated episodes of homelessness, with returning clients now outnumbering new clients. Extended and repeated homelessness increases the support needs of clients.

Homelessness disproportionately affects young people and children, who now represent 52% of all homelessness services clients. A real concern is that children who experience homelessness have an increased risk of becoming homeless later in life.<sup>iv</sup>

### Data about the use of homelessness services in Tasmania<sup>v</sup>

- Homelessness services assisted 7,789 Tasmanians in 2016-17
- Services are unable to keep pace with growing demand. The average number of daily unmet requests for assistance in the last year has increased to 25 requests (up from 21 in the previous year)
- The average length of support provided has increased to 98 days per client (a 22% increase on the previous year)
- 43% of requests for help are from families with children
- On average each day 14 requests from families with children go unmet (a 25% increase on the previous year)
- Young people and children are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people:
  - 1 in 2 requests for help are from young people under 25 years (52% up from 32% in the previous year)
  - 1 in 5 requests involve children under 10 years (20%)

## Homelessness Support Services

A network of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) across Tasmania help house and support people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These services employ highly skilled and experienced staff well equipped to provide support.

Assistance is provided with finding housing and accommodation, including emergency and supervised accommodation; with issues of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental illness; and support to help people maintain their existing tenancies or to (re)establish themselves in independent living. SHS services also provide information and advice, advocacy and financial supports.

Housing Connect is the first point of contact for help by people in housing stress, or who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Tasmania.

**For assistance call: 1800 800 588**

## What is needed?

Homelessness can be ended by providing access to appropriate, affordable and secure housing, along with the support needed to help people stay housed. A combination of National and State level approaches is needed, including:

- An increased supply of public and community housing to provide rental housing that will remain affordable in the long term.
- Increased investment in Tasmanian homelessness and crisis accommodation support.
- A strategic approach that integrates forward planning for housing with the other key Government portfolio areas (including population growth, land use planning and economic development), in collaboration with the community and development sectors.
- Strengthening and broadening of Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy.
- A review of the Residential Tenancy Act, 1997 to improve housing security for tenants.
- A National Housing Plan to increase the supply of targeted affordable housing and social housing.

Further information is available in [Shelter Tasmania's Budget Submission 2018-19](#)

## Housing ends homelessness

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### ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Bennett V, Young A (2013). *Cost Benefit Analysis of the RESOLVE Program*. Mission Australia. Brisbane; Witte, E. 2017 *'The case for investing in last resort housing'*, MSSI Issues Paper No. 10, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, The University of Melbourne; Wood, L., Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Foster, S., Vallesi, S. and Miscenko, D. (2016) *What are the health, social and economic benefits of providing public housing and support to formerly homeless people?*, AHURI Final Report No. 265, AHURI, Melbourne

<sup>ii</sup> Homelessness Estimates, Census 2016

<sup>iii</sup> Based on Census 2011 and NATSEM (2013) *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Disadvantage in Australia*, prepared for UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families. Canberra.

<sup>iv</sup> Mission Australia (2016). *Home & Away*.

<sup>v</sup> AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data 2013/14-2016/17