

A VINNIES REPORT FROM THE FRONTLINE

CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



Vinnies
good works



“The stress of COVID has hit us all hard, but none more so than families without a home.”

AN INSIDERS REPORT FROM VINNIES TEAM MEMBER SARAH CROMIE.

Special Works Manager, Victoria

THE FAMILIES LIVING ON THE EDGE



During the pandemic we saw a huge increase in calls to our assistance line from families who were sleeping in their cars, couch surfing or in temporary accommodation and desperately needing food.

We’ve been delivering food hampers to a lot of families who are calling us in need, with their cupboards empty because they’d spent the rest of their pay on rent. One mum, who rang us in the middle of the night, had fled a domestic situation with her children in only the pyjamas they were wearing – not a change of underwear, not a change of socks.

Even though the worst of the pandemic seems to be behind us, the fallout from COVID is not slowing down. I think this winter is going to be a really hard one for families because rent is creeping up again, the moratorium on evictions has ended, JobSeeker has been reduced, there is not enough social housing and much of the temporary accommodation provided by the government is just not safe for children.

I’m worried about who we’re going to be seeing on the streets and in the lines for help – will it be young children?



**Nearly
1 in 4**

Homeless children aged 14 and under, are in supported accommodation for the homeless¹

Likelihood of children requiring homelessness assistance²

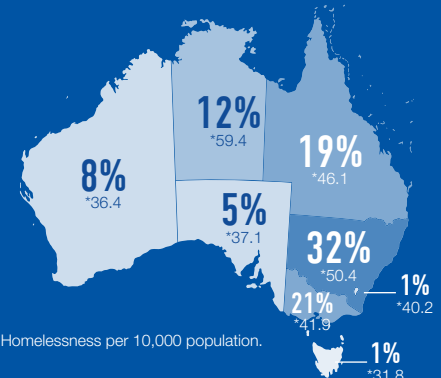
8x more

Indigenous

5x more

Living in remote areas

HOMELESSNESS BY STATE³



THE LASTING IMPACT OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS

It is hard for many of us to comprehend, but trapped within the current political and social system, many children are facing life without a permanent roof over their heads.

The 2016 census recorded more than 116,000⁴ Australians without a home in Australia. This figure is even more sobering when you realise that more than 25,000 of those were children.

Since then the number of people that homelessness services have to turn away has continued to grow each year. A report on the demand for homelessness services showed that during the last financial year, more than two-thirds of those turned away from services were women presenting with young children. Shockingly there were 11,201 children under the age of 10 who missed out on support (AIHW)⁵.

Further research indicates that 956,000⁶ Australian households are already living under housing stress, meaning their accommodation costs account for more than 30% of their income. Families in this situation are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying their rent or mortgage, or buying necessities such as food and petrol.



"Our teams are reporting that financial hardship issues are increasing and cases are becoming more complex. This is due to the issues around COVID-related debt, small business restructure, mortgage and rent arrears."

– Andrew York, Executive Manager,
Community Engagement Services, Vinnies WA

THE HOUSING

AFFORDABILITY CRISIS



For years, Australia's investment in social housing has lagged behind population growth. Now public housing accounts for just 4% of all Australian homes, compared to 15% in the UK.⁴ This lack of affordable public accommodation, coupled with record-breaking real estate prices, is pushing increasing numbers of Australian families into housing insecurity.

VINNIES WA IN ACTION



As a principal partner of the Unlock Housing campaign, Vinnies WA has called on the WA government to provide more social housing to combat the increased demand. Significantly more investment and policy reform is needed from the government if the housing crisis is to be addressed.

Children are key stakeholders of a future Australia. How can they meet their full potential when they are hungry, tired and stressed?

The experience of homelessness inhibits the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioural development of children.

A homeless family's transience takes a toll on children especially those in their formative years. Access to health services and early interventions is hindered, leading to poor physical and mental health. Children are at an increased likelihood of developmental delays and behaviour issues and can suffer discrimination in the school yard leading to low self-esteem.

Education is an important medium of social transformation yet chronic absenteeism plays a significant role in children quickly falling behind in their grades and leaving school early.

Research has shown that approximately half of those receiving support from a specialist homelessness services reported that their parents experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

**BY SUPPORTING VINNIES, YOU CAN
HELP PREVENT CHILDREN FROM
HAVING TO EXPERIENCE THE LASTING
TRAUMA OF HOMELESSNESS.**

YOUR GIFT IN ACTION:



Finding and paying for temporary and permanent accommodation



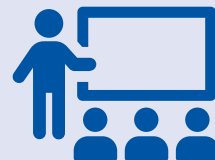
Financial counselling, paying bills and rent to prevent utility disconnections and evictions



Supplying food and household items to assist with cost of living



Covering education costs such as school fees and new uniforms to keep children in school



Providing educational and vocational training to improve employment prospects

You can help protect children from the long term impacts of homelessness.

DONATE TODAY

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