



MEDIA RELEASE

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CENSUS NIGHT 2011: BECOME A STATISTIC – WRITE *NONE*

Homelessness Australia is urging people experiencing homelessness on Census night, wherever they may be, to ensure that they become a statistic and are identified as homeless on Tuesday 9 August.

“The Census data provides a critically important point in time count of homelessness in Australia. It is immensely valuable in helping us to understand the overall level of homelessness in Australia as well as homelessness in particular regions. It is vital that people without a usual address write ‘none’ on the Census form no matter where they are staying on the night,” Homelessness Australia’s Chief Executive Officer Nicole Lawder said.

The 1996 Census was the first to target Australia’s homeless population in a special enumeration strategy. Since that time the Australian Bureau of Statistics has worked closely with the homelessness sector to improve the strategy but some groups are not easily identifiable on a Census form.

“Some groups of people experiencing homelessness such as young people who are couch surfing, women escaping violence and staying with a friend or relative and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people staying with kin may not identify themselves as homeless and may tick the box indicating that where they are staying is their usual address,” Homelessness Australia’s Chairperson Narelle Clay said.

“It is vital that people who are staying temporarily with friends or relatives but do not have a permanent address are identified as homeless on Census night. Householders filling out the Census form should stipulate that people only staying on a temporary basis are identified as having no usual address elsewhere. In this case, they should write *none*,” Ms Clay said.

Homeless Persons’ Week concludes on Sunday and this year’s theme “MY Address: *diversity in homelessness*” ties in strongly with the need for an accurate count.

“People experiencing homelessness come from diverse backgrounds and will be staying in diverse addresses on Census night while a small number will have no roof over their heads at all. It is vital that all people are counted in the Census on Tuesday night as this is the first Census since the release of the White Paper with target of reducing homelessness by 20% by 2013,” Nicole Lawder said.

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