



MEDIA RELEASE

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New data proof of need for homeless action

Data released today shows a jump in the number of people using homelessness support services, confirming yet again the scale of Australia's homelessness crisis.

Today's figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show 187,900 people experiencing homelessness sought help from homelessness services in 2006-2007 – a 16.5 per cent increase on the previous twelve months.

"These figures are further evidence of the size of this problem and the need for immediate action", Homelessness Australia Executive Officer Simon Smith said today.

Domestic violence was the single largest cause of homelessness. "This under-acknowledged cause of homelessness requires a concerted response", said Mr Smith.

The number of children using homelessness services also increased. One in every 42 Australian children under the age of four accompanied a parent or guardian to a homeless service – up from one in 57 the previous year.

More than 69,000 children used a homelessness service, again an increase on the previous year's figure of 54,700.

"The number of Australian children experiencing homelessness remains a national scandal.

"While today's data confirms that homelessness services helped the vast majority of clients to improve their circumstances, much more needs to be done in the areas of early intervention and prevention", Mr Smith said.

The data also revealed a lack of specialist services including counseling, medical and health services.

"This absence of appropriate services coupled with a critical shortage of affordable housing contributes to a revolving door of homelessness which too many people are forced through", Mr Smith said.

"A holistic national response to homelessness must strengthen our crisis response as well as improving prevention and long-term support for people at risk. Today's data confirms the need for significant change as a result of the current White Paper process."

For further information and comment:

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ADVANCE NOTICE: National Homelessness Person's Week 4 – 10 August.

"Homelessness – it's not who you think"