



MEDIA RELEASE

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Too many homeless on International Women's Day

More than 46,000 Australian women are homeless this International Women's Day.

While the common public image of a homeless person is of an older man, almost half our homeless population is female.

Women make up 40 per cent of those sleeping rough or in improvised shelters, and 28 per cent of people living in boarding houses with no security of tenure.

48 per cent of Australia's nearly 47,000 'couch surfers' - homeless people depending on the charity of family and friends – are women.

The largest single cause of homelessness in Australia is domestic and family violence, which overwhelmingly affects women and children.

66 per cent of children who sought refuge in a homeless service last year were in the care of a woman made homeless by domestic violence.

The majority of people who are reluctantly turned away by homelessness services each night are women and their children. An astonishing 50% of people seeking assistance must be turned away due to high demand and under-resourcing.

"International Women's Day is a day to reflect on the achievements of women", Homelessness Australia spokesperson Pauline Woodbridge said.

"We must acknowledge the strength and resilience of women with experiences of homelessness, among them many mothers who are committed to providing care for their children in very difficult circumstances."

"The statistics show that we have a long way to go in addressing women's homelessness, and its primary drivers, domestic and family violence. The needs of Indigenous women, and women of non-English speaking backgrounds, demand particular attention in this area".

Homelessness Australia is hopeful the Federal Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children, which was due for release last year, will overlap with reform priorities outlined in the Homelessness White Paper.

Simon Smith, Executive Officer, said "This is a priority, with economic downturn likely to swell the numbers of people who are homeless, and further stretch a homelessness sector already undergoing far-reaching reforms".

For comment: Pauline Woodbridge, Homelessness Australia Board Member and Women's Services Network Chairperson, 0419 739 774 or Simon Smith, Executive Officer Homelessness Australia, 0418 452 830

The Women's Services Network is a Founding Council of Homelessness Australia, the national peak body for homelessness.