

A close-up photograph of a woman and a young child looking out a window. The woman is in the foreground, looking slightly to the left with a thoughtful expression. The child is leaning against her, looking down. The background shows a window with a view of a building.

MISSION
AUSTRALIA

**A safe place
to call home**

Mission Australia's Homelessness and
Stable Housing Impact Report 2023



Contents

Executive summary	04
Introduction	11
Section 1: Our homelessness and housing support services	15
Section 2: Measuring our impact	18
Section 3: Demand for our services	21
Section 4: Our impact	29
Access to safe housing	29
Improved health and wellbeing	34
Better support and connections	37
Increased independence	39
Section 5: What works in practice?	41
Section 6: What more needs to be done?	47
Appendix	51

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Australia and we pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold memories, culture and dreams of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land and we recognise the importance of the young people who are our future leaders.

Our thanks to the Mission Australia staff who provide support every day to Australians in need and who are

committed to using evidence and insights to ensure they are delivering the best possible services. Our thanks also extend to our funders and supporters who enable us to deliver services across the country.

Finally, a special thank you to the people who shared with us their experiences of homelessness and housing instability via surveys, consultation¹ and information collected through our services. Your insights are invaluable to understand the human experience and devastating impacts of the national housing and homelessness emergency.

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national Christian charity that has been standing alongside Australians in need since 1859. Our vision is for an Australia where all of us have a safe home and can thrive. Backed by our supporters, funders and community and faith-based partners, we combat homelessness, provide housing, assist struggling families and children, address mental health issues, fight substance dependencies, support people with disability and much more.

Given the right support, we believe everyone can reach their full potential. That's why we stand together with Australians in need, until they can stand for themselves.

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¹ Names and images used in case studies have been changed to protect the identity of people we help.



Executive summary

This Homelessness Impact report presents a summary of the evidence that Mission Australia has been gathering over the last three years, including rich data from our services, experiences of our practitioners and the voices of people with a lived experience of homelessness.

We hope that by sharing our evidence we can shine a light on the experiences of individuals and families across the country who are facing the prospect of not having a safe or affordable home, reinforce what is working well in practice and illustrate where urgent action is needed to end the national housing and homelessness emergency.



Homelessness and stable housing support services

Mission Australia provides a range of services to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This includes homelessness and stable housing support services, social and affordable housing, specialist residential aged care homes, and assertive outreach services, which are often complemented by other specialist support such

as mental health counselling, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, Domestic Family Violence (DFV) support or children and family services.

This report focuses on 63 of Mission Australia's homelessness and stable housing support services, which were delivered nationally from 2020 to 2022. These services include:



Early intervention services work with people to prevent them becoming homeless when staying at home is a risk



Crisis services support people who are currently homeless or would be homeless without immediate accommodation



Recovery services support people who have moved into stable accommodation but continue to require support to avoid re-occurrence

Demand for our services

Over the last three years there has been a critical need and growing demand for Mission Australia's homelessness and housing support services.

Demand for Mission Australia's homelessness and stable housing support services has grown year on year. Since 2020, our services have supported 21,871 people, including 9,468 people who were

experiencing homelessness and 8,194 people who were risk of homelessness. Of most concern is the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness who were either living in improvised homes, streets, parks, cars and tents, or experiencing hidden homelessness living in short-term temporary accommodation. For many people (22%) it had been more than a year since they had a permanent home when they requested a Mission Australia service for help with homelessness.

Housing on entry: 2020 compared to 2022

50% INCREASE in people experiencing homelessness

103% INCREASE in people in improvised homes, tents and rough sleeping

40% INCREASE in people living in short-term temporary accommodation



People accessing homelessness and housing support services

Most people experiencing or at risk of homelessness had low incomes or were living in poverty.

Low income support payments or low wages, combined with the stark shortage of social and affordable housing, skyrocketing rental stress and the rising cost of living, have escalated Australia's housing and homelessness situation into a national

emergency. Most of the people who sought help from Mission Australia's homelessness services relied on income support payments, which are often insufficient to meet the costs of living and are a risk factor for poverty.² Increasingly, we are also seeing a different group of people seek our help in homelessness services: people who are employed, but just cannot meet skyrocketing rents.

Demographics

57% female

43% male

0.4% gender diverse

0.1% unknown







27%

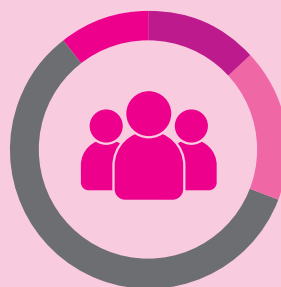
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



20%

Culturally or linguistically diverse

	< 18 years	13.3%
	18-24 years	17.6%
	25-55 years	58.6%
	55+ years	10.5%



² Nationally, high proportions of people relying on income support payments live below the poverty line, including 60% of people receiving JobSeeker Payment, 72% of people receiving Parenting Payment and 43% of people receiving the Disability Support Pension (ACOSS & UNSW, 2023, *Poverty in Australia 2023: Who is affected?*).

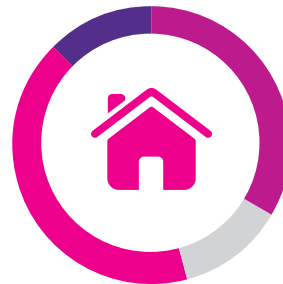
People accessing homelessness and housing support services

Trying to cope with these compounding factors, people were experiencing a range of life challenges and/or vulnerabilities when presenting to a homelessness service.

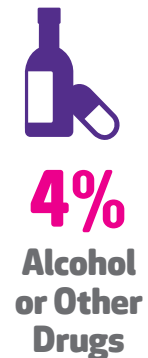
People told us that they needed help to maintain their housing, improve their physical and mental health, navigate the service system, form connections with the wider community and to set and achieve their personal goals.

Housing when presenting

■ Short-term or emergency accommodation	33.6%
■ Rough sleeping	12.3%
■ At risk of homelessness	41.6%
■ Unknown	12.5%



Vulnerabilities



Education and employment



Our impact

Mission Australia's homelessness and stable housing support services play a critical and effective role in ending homelessness. Over the last past three years, we found the following differences between when people first sought help from one of the services, and when they exited the service:



ACCESS TO SAFE HOUSING

- 94% of people at risk of homelessness remained living in their home and avoided homelessness. This highlights the importance of investment in early intervention and prevention to sustain tenancies.
- Only a third of people who were experiencing homelessness exited into a secure long-term home. And half could only be supported into short-term or emergency accommodation due to the severe lack of long-term housing.
- 66% of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness had improved satisfaction with their standard of living. At exit, almost half of people were within the Australian average, an increase of 127% compared to entry.

Person-centred goal-based support, delivered by highly skilled staff and multi-disciplinary teams, is highly effective in improving wellbeing and supporting people to achieve their goals.



IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 81% of people experienced improvements in their personal wellbeing. The average wellbeing score increased from 60.0 at entry to 73.1 at exit, a 144% increase in the number of people within the Australian average for overall wellbeing.
- More than half of people reported improvements in their health (60%), safety (58%) and personal relationships (56%).



BETTER SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS

- 79% of people who received goal-based support were connected to their community or with other services.
- 69% of people felt more confident in their ability to find services to meet their needs.
- 59% of people felt more satisfied with their community connectedness.



INCREASED INDEPENDENCE

- 89% of people with a support plan made progress towards their goals at exit from a service, including those with education (80%) and employment goals (73%).
- 71% of people felt more in control of their lives, and most people felt more satisfied with their achievement in life (62%) and their future security (66%).

What has been the most significant change for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability?

"Getting a house, getting out of the situation I was in, as it wasn't good and wasn't safe. [This is important] because it made me happier, it made me heal more as a person. It kept me safe and gave me independence on my own."



"Guidance and support to make important decisions in my life. Increased awareness of services locally to support me with my tenancy...It has improved my confidence and ability to reach out for help when I need extra support."



What works in practice

- ✓ Genuine and effective relationships based on trust
- ✓ Person-centred and holistic support
- ✓ Assertive, proactive and responsive engagement
- ✓ Housing First approach
- ✓ Brokerage and emergency relief
- ✓ Highly skilled staff, specialist roles and multi-disciplinary teams
- ✓ Partnerships and collaboration



Length, intensity of support and brokerage are critical service elements that contribute to positive housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

What more needs to be done?

Mission Australia's homelessness and stable housing support services, and others like ours, are finding it increasingly impossible to help vulnerable families and individuals to find safe long-term accommodation because the housing stock simply isn't there.

Our finding that only a third of people who were experiencing homelessness were able to exit services into a secure long-term home is consistent with national data from other Specialist Homelessness Service providers.

This can only be remedied through increased investment in social and affordable housing, delivered alongside evidence-informed support models which address the range of complex systemic, structural and individual drivers of homelessness.

The following policy measures need to be put into place to better support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, so that together across all parts of Australian society we can end homelessness.



1 Deliver a national plan to end homelessness



2 Increase social and affordable housing stock



3 Provide sufficient financial assistance to private renters



4 Boost income support to lift people out of poverty



5 Shift to a greater focus on prevention and early intervention



6 Support service and housing models must meet diverse needs



7 Adopt strategic commissioning approaches

**We stand together
with Australians in
need, until they can
stand for themselves**

Contact us

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