

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS QLD

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OVERVIEW

Young people become homeless predominately due to family conflict or relationship breakdown. The data shows that when young people drop out of education, many become unemployed and some make the transition to chronic homelessness.

The data has shown that young people form a large part of the homeless population. The 2001 Census data counted 26,060 young people as homeless, this was an 8.4% increase from 1994. Queensland had a higher rate of youth homelessness in the 12 –18 years age bracket than the national average in 2001.

The homeless data demonstrates that young people form a large part of the client group of SAAP—the main homelessness support program in Australia.

The 2001 Census data showed that only 1 in 10 people who were homeless in Queensland were able to access a homeless persons service—this is higher than the national average where 1 in 7 people were able to enter into a SAAP service.

When compared to children in the general population 1 in every 70 children (or just over 1% of Australian children) aged 16-17 years becoming a SAAP client in 2004–05.

The responses to young homeless people needs to change as they become older both due to their changed circumstances and their developmental changes— ie the young ages tended to return home, were still at school, had no income while the older ones tended to rotate through SAAP or find independent accommodation, did not go to school and had income support from a government benefit, The extended level of stay in SAAP improved the outcomes for young people

DEFINITIONS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) enumerates the homeless population using the cultural definition of homelessness (Chamberlain 1999). This identifies 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness. Primary homelessness is the same as literal homelessness or 'rooflessness'. Secondary homelessness includes people who are staying in any form temporary accommodation, with no other secure housing elsewhere. Many homeless people move frequently from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Tertiary homelessness refers to the occupants of single rooms in private boarding houses who live there on a long-term basis (three months or longer).

FACTORS LEADING TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

In 2004/2005 NDCA data showed that most of the young people between the ages of 12–17 years who presented independently to a SAAP agency did so because of issues in their interpersonal relationships (52%). In particular most presented due to family or relationship breakdown (24%) and time out from family or other situation (13%).

GOVERNMENT POLICY/PROGRAM RESPONSES

There a range of services that focus on young people who are at risk of homelessness and who are homeless.

In terms of early intervention services there is the federally funded Reconnect Program. In Queensland the State funds the Youth Support Coordinator Program which is funded out of Education Queensland but managed through the Department of Communities.

The main program that focuses on homeless young people is the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and its capital arm program—Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP).

In Queensland there has been a focus on a whole of government response to homelessness and funding within this initiative has included;

- Specialist mental health outreach services
- State Penalties Enforcement Registry
- Public space responses such as Police Liaison Officers
- VSM responses for young people
- Additional support for people in Boarding houses

For young people the Job Placement Employment Training (JPET) program assist young people at risk of homelessness.

NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

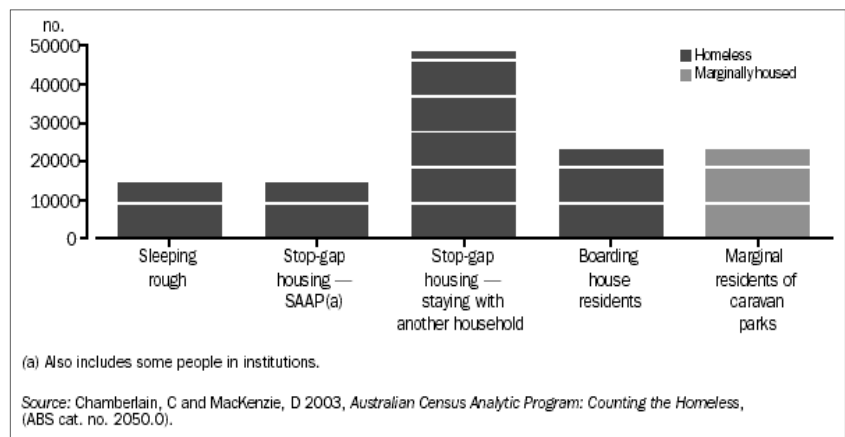
The 2001 Census counted that there were 99,900 people who were homeless (52.3 per 10,000 population). A quarter of these homeless people were living in Queensland at a rate higher than the national average (69.8 per 10,000). The Census 2001 reports that close to half of the 99,900 homeless people were less than 25 years of age (46%), with those aged 12–18 years a prominent group (26% of all homeless people). In the report *Youth Homelessness 2001*, using the census data, it noted that there were 26,060 homeless young people in Australia and that this was an 8.4% increase from 1994. The table below from the *Youth Homelessness 2001* report demonstrates that Queensland had a higher rate of homeless in the 12–18 age bracket when compared to the national average.

Table 2: Estimated number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 and rate of homelessness per 1,000 of the youth population, by state and territory

	NSW	Vic	ACT	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	Aust
Number of homeless	6,242	4,663	400	6,381	2,394	3,508	1,008	1,464	26,060
Rate per 1,000	10	10	12.5	18	17	18	21	69	14

In terms of the 99,900 homeless people in 2001:

- 14,200 (approx) people were in the most extreme situation - 'sleeping rough' (i.e. in improvised dwellings or tents, or in streets, parks, cars or derelict buildings) - 14%
- 14,300 (approx) were staying in emergency or transitional housing—mainly in SAAP services—14%
- 48,600 (approx) were defined as homeless because they were staying with another household and had no usual residence -49%
- Lastly 22,900 people living in boarding houses - 23%



The 2004/05 NDCA data showed that a large proportion of the people who access SAAP services are children. The AIWH report *Homeless Children in SAAP 2004/05* stated that “*Children accounted for over two-fifths (43% or 68,100) of the 157,200 people who accessed a SAAP service in 2004–05, either as children accompanying a parent or guardian who was being*

supported (36% or 56,800 were accompanied children) or directly as clients independently of a parent or guardian (7% or 11,300 were unaccompanied children aged 17 years and under)."

Out of the 11,300 young people, most were female and:

4% were aged 11 years and under

4% were aged 12–13 years

24% were aged 14–15 years

68% were aged 16–17 year

Of more interest is that 5% of these young people had children accompanying them—although the data is not clear whether the children were their own or siblings that they had guardianship over.

Student homelessness

In terms of the 2004/05 NDCA data it showed that the majority of unaccompanied 12–13 year-olds entered and exited the program did so as a primary or secondary school student (85% of closed support periods). This declined however with around one-third of unaccompanied 14–15 year-olds and over half of unaccompanied 16–17 year-olds in SAAP not in the education system. The data showed that SAAP was able to retain young people in education however the program was not able to increase the participation rate of young people in education.

The Youth Homelessness 2001 report indicated a very high rate of student homelessness in Queensland with approximately 15 out of every 1,000 school students identified as homeless. In Queensland there are 38 funded services/113 funded Youth Support Coordinator positions throughout the State. These positions are focussed on working with young people who are at risk of disengaging from school and training. The YSC program works with young people on an individual, group and community level.

Table 1: Number of homeless secondary students (final figures), and rate of homelessness per 1,000 of the school population, by state and territory

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
No. of homeless (final figures)	3,063	2,886	3,073	1,018	829	574	324	460	12,227
Rate per 1,000 of school population	7	10	15	11	7	14	14	37	10

Adolescent development

The Youth Homelessness 2001 report notes that:

As age can be a determining factor in a young person's ability to access services and in the types of services they require, it is not surprising that the main reasons children sought support varied depending on their age. It does, however, highlight the fact that different responses may be needed depending on the age and circumstance of the child. For example, early intervention and family counselling may work well for younger children where family reconciliation is still possible and a homeless state is not yet entrenched as a way of life. However, as unaccompanied children get older and family ties become more eroded more intensive support may be required (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2003). That the family connections for older children have been eroded is demonstrated by the reduced proportion of older children who leave support to live with their parent(s).

The 2004/05 NDCA data notes that as young people get older there is a decreasing chance that they will return to the family home and that a high proportion of 14 –17 year olds living with friends or other unrelated people before they entered SAAP.

The Queensland Youth Housing Coalition recently wrote a paper that explored the importance of considering the developmental needs of young people in youth work practice. The paper explained that program and program guidelines must have built into them flexibility that acknowledges the nature of adolescent development and does not request outcomes that neither young people nor services can attain. Adolescent development is generally seen to be in three stages:

Early adolescence: 12-14 years

Middle adolescence: 15 -16 years

Late adolescence: 17 – 19 years

Adolescence is a time for great change for young people and their families. In the main these changes occur between the ages of 12-15 years and generally young women mature earlier than young men. These changes for young people are at a number of levels:

Biological – physical

Psychological – thinking and feeling

Requests for assistance

In SAAP the NDCA data showed that the majority of requests for assistance for young people 12 –17 years was met.

The main most common unmet need for young people 12 –17 was for housing and accommodation. The data also demonstrated that request for mental health assistance had a high proportion of unmet need and a high level of referral. It was also one area where there was a low proportion of direct service provision.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People

The research over the years has shown that while aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only a small percentage of the Australian population (2% in 2001 census) they are over-represented in the homeless population.

The 2004/05 NDCA data also showed that;

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up a relatively large proportion of the children in SAAP. Nearly a quarter (23%) of accompanied children presented with a parent or guardian who identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 18% of unaccompanied children were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The response to homelessness must have a greater focus on indigenous young people and their families including but not limited to;

- Specific indigenous responses
- Specific indigenous services

Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Inc

Youth Housing Program Area
17 Ross Street Paddington
PO Box 122 Paddington q 4064
Phone: 3876 2088

Youth Support Coordinator Hub Facilitator Program Area
Townsville
PO Box 181 Garbutt East Q 4814
SEQ
17 Ross Street Paddington
PO Box 122 Paddington q 4064
Phone: 3876 2088

1800 177107

Advocating for homeless and at risk young people and the services that work with them

Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Incorporated (QYHC) is a coalition of organisations and individuals advocating for, and improving young people's housing options and related issues.

QYHC has been operational since 1984 and has contributed at both a policy and service delivery level to the provision of services for homeless young people, Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services, young people at risk of homelessness and Youth Support Coordinators throughout the State.

QYHC assists in the development, extension, resourcing and supporting of young people to enable them to undertake life opportunities.