

7 Myths about homelessness in Australia

1 MYTH 1: Our homeless community is made up of middle-aged men

Sadly, homelessness affects all ages, all genders and all backgrounds. Our homeless population includes men, women, children, families, young people and older people. More than 22% of people experiencing homelessness are 18 years of age or under, with 15,827 Australian children under 12 living without a safe, permanent home. Women make up 42% of the homeless population.¹

2 MYTH 2: Homeless people sleep on the street

It's hard to believe only 7% of Australia's homeless are rough sleepers, staying in parks, bus shelters, abandoned buildings or shop doorways.¹ In reality, most homeless people are hidden away, temporarily staying with relatives or friends, moving between shelters and cheap accommodation, staying in over-crowded housing or sleeping in cars and makeshift dwellings.

3 MYTH 3: Being homeless is a choice

Domestic violence is one of the main reasons people seek help from a homeless service. Every week, women across Australia, often with children, escape abusive partners with nowhere to go and no other option. Many other social, economic and health-related factors can also lead to homelessness. This can include shortage of affordable housing, financial problems, relationship issues, unemployment, illness or drug and alcohol problems.

4 MYTH 4: Homeless people just need to get a job

The high cost of rental housing, particularly for low income earners, forces many families and individuals out of their homes with no place else to live. Many of these people have a good education and jobs,

but simply don't earn enough to cover rent and their basic needs. People whose physical or mental disability means they are unable to work or who care for others face additional barriers to finding suitable, affordable accommodation.

5 MYTH 5: Homelessness is simply about physical housing and 'rooflessness'

Having a safe and secure place to sleep is vital to a person's health and wellbeing. For some people, finding somewhere to live that they can afford is all it takes to solve their homelessness. But for most, it takes more than that. They need assistance to gain life skills to be able to stand for themselves. Support such as financial advice, living skills training, mental health counselling, help in overcoming addictions, and job search assistance is crucial for people to break the cycle of homelessness and achieve independence.

6 MYTH 6: Homelessness will never happen to me

For thousands of Australians, the risk of losing their home is only one pay slip away. Factors such as sudden job loss, injury, illness, family breakdown or another unexpected disruption can affect anyone.

7 MYTH 7: We will never solve homelessness

Alarmingly, social and economic factors are contributing to more and more Australians facing the risk of homelessness. However, Mission Australia's work is making a big difference. In 2018, through our 67 homelessness and housing services, we supported 20,264 people to get back on their feet and move towards rebuilding an independent life for themselves. By the community and governments working together, we can halve homelessness in Australia by 2025.

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