



MEDIA RELEASE

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Homelessness in NSW needs an election fix

Homelessness NSW is calling on all sides of politics to commit to housing solutions before this weekend's election as new data shows homelessness remains a persistent problem – but one that can be fixed through the provision of housing and support.

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics today show there were more than 35,000 people experiencing homelessness in NSW on [Census night](#) in 2021.

Homelessness NSW CEO Trina Jones said the 2021 snapshot was taken at a time when there was a coordinated push by the NSW Government during COVID-19 to cut down on street sleeping and when a freeze on rental evictions was in place.

The 2021 census reported fewer people were recorded sleeping rough in NSW than in 2016. The number of people recorded in temporary lodgings in the 2021 Census recorded a 542.8% increase in NSW. Data for 2021 is not directly comparable with previous Censuses due to improvements in data quality through greater use of administrative data.¹

“This data shows that homelessness does not have to be a problem that only gets worse and the right government intervention and targeted funding can make a difference to the lives of our most vulnerable people in the community,” Ms Jones said.

“Unfortunately, these one-off arrangements during the pandemic no longer exist and it is well-known NSW is in the grip of a rental and housing crisis that has pushed more people into homelessness in 2023.

“There is still time for both major parties at this weekend's NSW election to announce serious policies to help the 68,000 people that are assisted for



homelessness every year in NSW and the 57,000 households currently waiting for social housing.

“We cannot solve homelessness without more housing, and funding for support services it’s that simple.

“The impact of the rising cost of living, low wages and a dire shortage of affordable rental homes in the cities and the regions is making homelessness a reality for more people. We need action from our leaders.”

Homelessness NSW is urging the major parties to back its [Ending Homelessness Together](#) plan which provides three practical solutions that the NSW Government and its agencies, supported by business, and community can implement to ensure everyone has a place to call home.

They are:

1. Increase net stock of social housing from 4.7% to 10%
2. Properly fund homelessness services to meet rising demand
3. Create a ‘Homelessness Commissioner’ to coordinate across government

“The federal Department of Human Services said it best: ‘Homelessness is not a choice. Homelessness is one of the most potent examples of disadvantage in the community, and one of the most important markers of social exclusion’,” Ms Jones said.

Key Facts:

- 68,500 people supported by Specialist Homelessness Services in NSW in 2022
- NSW currently builds an average 34,000 residential dwellings per year.
- Approximately 700 - or just 2% are social housing
- At the current rate of social housing investment, it will take over 80 years to meet the current demand of the waiting list.

Census Facts

- In 2021, there were 35,011 people experiencing homelessness in NSW, a decrease of 7.2% compared to 2016
- Homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people increased by 10% over the same period
- Children under 12 increased by 6.8%



- Youth 12-18 increased by 3.7%

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ⁱ The [ABS](#) notes a “greater use of administrative data” in enumerating temporary lodgings than in previous censuses. This involved state and territory governments provided address lists of temporary accommodation (such as hotel and motels) where people stayed under brokerage or vouchers and improved the enumeration of people in other temporary lodgings and was particularly important given a number of state and territory governments provided additional brokerage funding to assist people to access emergency accommodation in hotels/motels during the COVID-19 pandemic.