

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 9 August 2016

Vinnies wants to ensure that homelessness counts this Census Night

On any given night more than 105, 000 people in Australia are homeless. In recent years the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has also seen a rise in the number of people living in inappropriate housing. Following directly on the heels of National Homelessness Week's **#homelessnesscounts** campaign, the 2016 Census will provide vital information about Australians who are without place to call home.

“The last Census found that 60 per cent of Australians sleeping rough were outside the major cities, that 40 per cent of couch surfers were in country towns and that 55 per cent of people sleeping in severely overcrowded dwellings were also in rural locations,” said Jack de Groot, new CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

Between the 2006 and 2011 Censi there was an eight per cent increase in homelessness. Older women renting in the private market has also been increasing – from 91,549 in the 2006 Census to 135,174 in 2011 – and the market is becoming even more unaffordable. The Society anticipates another significant increase in the number of older women facing homelessness.

Gathering numbers on Census Night of those who are homeless is a difficult task for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) but it is a crucial one, especially because only five per cent are sleeping rough, with the overwhelming majority being ‘invisible’. The 2016 Census will be the largest to date, counting close to 24 million people including those who are:

- living in a hostel or refuge
- without a usual address – staying temporarily with friends, family or in temporary accommodation (e.g. hotel, motel or shelter)
- living in a boarding or rooming house
- ‘sleeping rough’.

The ABS will be making a particular effort to count rough sleepers and people in specialist homelessness services. During the Census, a staff member from the Society’s Matthew Talbot Hostel will act as a nominated Census field officer to assist the ABS in collecting this data.

“Once the data is available, we will use it to tailor and improve the services we can provide to the community, as well as employing it to effectively lobbying governments about the need for funding and resources,” said Acting President St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, Tony Corkeron.

“We are calling on the Turnbull Government to commit to a long-term strategy to tackle homelessness in Australia, to ensure support for the tens of thousands without secure housing,” said Mr Corkeron.

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For more information on our housing services in NSW: <http://bit.ly/2aMR5y7HomelessnessNSW>

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