



Homelessness

Activity One

When a person ends up homeless, there are lots of different reasons for them ending up in this situation. **In small groups come up with a list of at least 10 different reasons people experience homelessness.**

You're 15 and your dad loses his job and decides to move the family to the country to save money, you refuse to move with them.

- What you would do if you became homeless, where would you go immediately?
- What would you do long term?

'Being so young with no home, I had no money, no bed, no clothes, wasn't able to bathe or eat and drink.'

- Formerly homeless young person at 13, now aged 16 years

★ What is homelessness?

A person is homeless if he or she does not have access to safe and secure housing. The following are examples of this:

- damages, or is likely to damage, their health; or
- threatens their safety; or
- marginalises them through failing to provide access to adequate personal amenities; or the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
- places them in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and

affordability of that housing; or

- has no security of tenure-that is, they have no legal right to continued occupation of their home.

A person is also considered homeless if he or she is living in accommodation provided by a SAAP agency or some other form of emergency accommodation.



Stats

- In 2006, 105 000 people were homeless in Australia (this is a lot of people, imagine the Sydney Football Stadium full, then double it)

Most homeless people were sheltered somewhere on Census night, with:

- 45% staying temporarily with friends or relatives,
 - 21% staying in boarding houses, and
 - 19% staying in supported accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges).
 - The majority of homeless people were single (55%), while 20% were couples without accompanying children and
 - 26% were in homeless families with children
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006

Being homeless...



"I was left out in the cold not having any warm clothes/shoes to wear."

- Young person who became homeless aged 17 years

"Nowhere to go to sleep. No privacy. Not able to carry any belongings that are valued because you don't know where you will put [them]."

- Young homeless man aged 25 years.

"The feeling of hopelessness, like you're not worth anything, you feel like giving up, like it's not worth it."

- Homeless girl, aged 17 years.

★ Why people become homeless...

People who become homeless are not usually in need of just a house. There are often a range of problems they may need assistance with including substance abuse, family breakdown, mental health problems, and employment assistance. The most common reasons for people becoming homeless in N.S.W are listed below

- Domestic and family violence (17.7%)
- Usual accommodation unavailable (11.3%)

- Drug, Alcohol, Substance Abuse (13.9%)
- Financial difficulty (8.8%)
- Relationship/family breakdown (8.8%)

(Homelessness NSW online)

“Because they are tough kids doesn’t mean we should put them in the too hard basket and believe that nothing can ever change.”

- *Captain Paul Moulds Director of the Oasis Youth Refuge (Salvation Army)*



★ What can I do to help?

How to get involved

• **Winter/Christmas Appeal:** These are Vinnies 2 big appeals during the year. You can make a financial donation - Monetary donations are the best way we can directly help those in need! You can make a gift-in-kind - Donations of blankets, clothing, and so on, are always most welcome, especially in the warmer months. Or you can organise your own community fundraising event to raise money for the Appeal.

• **Night Patrol:** Volunteers aged 16yr and over can go out in the Vinnies Van and serve tea, coffee and sandwiches to those in need/

• **Advocacy:** Talking to your family, friends, classmates, and community members can help raise awareness about homelessness and break stereotypes. Advocacy can also take

the form of letter writing, you can write to your local MP to ask them what they are doing about homelessness, and letting them know you want to see change.

- Link up with a local refuge and collect toiletry supplies for them or make some artwork for them to decorate and make the home warmer

Activity Two

In pairs discuss the following stereotypes, and come up with a response if someone was to say the following things to you.

1. “Its their choice to be homeless”
2. “No point in giving them money, they will just spend it on drugs”
3. “Their families should take responsibilities”
4. “Nothing can change for these kids”
5. “Its drugs and alcohol that are the real problem, we just need to control that”

Facts

- Homeless people are like you and me, they too have feelings, dreams and aspirations.
- Homelessness can happen to anyone unexpectedly
- Homelessness isn’t just being without a home It also involves social isolation
- In the past, a majority of services have failed to look at the person. A hand out rather than a hand up.
- We can do something to help

For more information go to:

St Vincent de Paul Society: www.vinnies.org.au
Homelessness NSW: www.homelessnessnsw.org.au
City of Sydney: <http://cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Community/HomelessnessServices/Default.asp>
Homeless Community Online:
<http://www.homeless.org.au/>

