



## Morning Session F

### Discussion Paper 6

#### Homelessness - *What is the experience of an Aboriginal homeless person?*

##### DEMAND AND USEAGE

##### **CHALLENGE OUTLINE:**

1. Victorian Aboriginal people comprised more than 10% of clients for homeless services in 2017-18, despite comprising less than 1% of the Victorian population.
2. The Aboriginal proportion of homeless accommodation clients in Victoria was even higher at almost 13% of all Victorian homeless accommodation clients.
3. Victorian Aboriginal people are 11.4 times more likely to be homeless clients than other Victorians. This is higher than the national Aboriginal over-representation rate.
4. The number of Victorian Aboriginal homeless clients has been growing steadily over the past five years from 8327 in 2013-14 to almost 11,000 in 2017-18. The proportion of Aboriginal clients as a share of all homeless clients has also grown from less than 9% in 2013-14 to more than 10% in 2017-18.
5. The total number of clients assessed as being in need of a homeless service in 2017-18 (8509) is a stunning 33.6% increase on the 2013-14 total assessed need of 6369 clients.
6. The Estimated Resident Population at June 2016 identified 57,782 Aboriginal people in Victoria. These data suggest that 15-18% of Victoria's Aboriginal population may experience homelessness or be at risk of homelessness in any given year.
7. The fact that Victoria's per capita investment in social housing (\$82.94) is half the national average (\$166.93) is having a calamitous impact on Victoria's most disadvantaged people – namely Aboriginal Victorians.
8. While 20.9% of Aboriginal Australians who present to homeless services do so mainly because of family violence and 11.4% do so primarily because of a mental health issue, many have multiple needs:
  - a. 4.6% with issues of family violence and mental health and drugs/alcohol
  - b. 8.6% with issues of family violence and mental health
  - c. 2.6% with issues of family violence and drugs/alcohol
9. Aboriginal Australians are more likely than others seeking homeless assistance to:
  - a. Have children under 10 (22% vs 15%)
  - b. Be younger than 25 (54% vs 40%)
  - c. Already be homeless (47% vs 43%)

- d. Need emergency accommodation (51% vs 36%)
- e. Receive accommodation (41% vs 28%)
- f. Leave accommodation sooner (20 days vs 41 days)
- g. Need meals (29% vs 14%)
- h. Need laundry/shower facilities (25% vs 11%)
- i. Need transport (32% vs 19%)

10. Collectively these data present a picture of:

- a. Aboriginal Australians far more likely than other Australians to be homeless
- b. Victorian Aboriginal people more likely than other Aboriginal Australians to be homeless
- c. Aboriginal people seeking homeless assistance to be in greater crisis than the average high need homeless client.



## GAPS FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

### CHALLENGE OUTLINE:

1. Aboriginal homelessness has been going on for 200 years and the cycle continues.
2. The service gaps are underlined by the fact that, nationally, 62% of Aboriginal people seeking homeless assistance have sought assistance before in the previous five years.

3. This suggests the growth in numbers is cumulative as new people in crisis are added to those whose needs were not addressed, compounding the scale of the problem.
4. Nationally only 67% of Aboriginal people seeking emergency accommodation received it.
5. Nationally most Aboriginal people who ended homeless support still (or newly) homeless were in emergency accommodation (15%), couch surfing (14%) or sleeping rough (6%)
6. Fewer than half of all Victorian Aboriginal homeless clients (47.2%) had a case plan in place following homeless assistance in 2017-18. This was one of the lowest rates of any Australian jurisdiction. The Australian average was 62.5% for Aboriginal clients. The most common reason for this failure in Victoria was that the support period was too short. This was the case for more than a third (35.8%) of Victorian Aboriginal clients, but fewer than one in four for the rest of Australian Aboriginal clients (23.2%). Victoria has underperformed the national average in this measure for at least five years.
7. Aboriginal people in Victoria are more likely than other Victorians and Aboriginal people in the rest of Australia to experience more than one episode of homelessness in a year. While nationally, the mainstream population experiences repeat homelessness at a rate of around 5% in a year, the Aboriginal experience nationally is 5.9% and in Victoria the rate for Aboriginal people is in the order of 8%.
8. Only 57% of Aboriginal people seeking homeless support were in independent housing (lower than the national average) following assistance – half of these (28%) were in social housing.

**POSSIBLE RESPONSES:**

1. The available data point to the need for strategic responses to significantly increase supply of:
  - a. affordable private housing for sale to people on median incomes
  - b. affordable and accessible private rental housing for people on low to median incomes and private rental assistance
  - c. income support that meets housing costs in the private rental market
  - d. social housing for people at risk (the contraction relative to population continues)
  - e. crisis and transitional housing (less than 4,000 properties are available for 116,000 homeless service clients annually in Victoria).
2. Far greater effort and investment is required to build:
  - a. the capacity of the mainstream social housing sector to prioritise Aboriginal people
  - b. more sustained case management support for Aboriginal people with multiple and complex needs, including cultural awareness training for services
  - c. assistance to maintain tenure and in particular, life coaching and case management support for people to stabilise social housing
  - d. Tailored, long term support designed for Aboriginal people with a history of chronic homelessness available across housing tenures
  - e. Housing bound to education and training pathways, including Education First Foyers (recognising more than half of Aboriginal homeless clients are under 25), and

- f. Joint initiatives with employment pathways services and better integration of homeless services generally.
- 3. There appears to be an urgent and immediate demand for more Aboriginal specific social housing and Aboriginal transitional housing and this demand will grow in the out years.
- 4. Consideration could be given to priority access to the service system for people and families with previous experience of homelessness.
- 5. There is a need to better understand how the homelessness experience is different for Aboriginal people and how it continues to change (the effects of ICE use is an example of increasing complexity) and to establish ways for the service system to adapt and respond.
- 6. The need for major system improvements are addressed under Discussion Paper 13 (Afternoon Session G).