Australian Homelessness Conference 2024

Gathering Momentum

Plenary 2: Closing the gap – priorities and reforms for housing and homelessness

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Neil Willmett, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland

Paul Coe, Birribee Housing

Daniel Morrison Bird and Delwin Little, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation

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Housing people together.

First Nations Homelessness in Australia

Neil Willmett

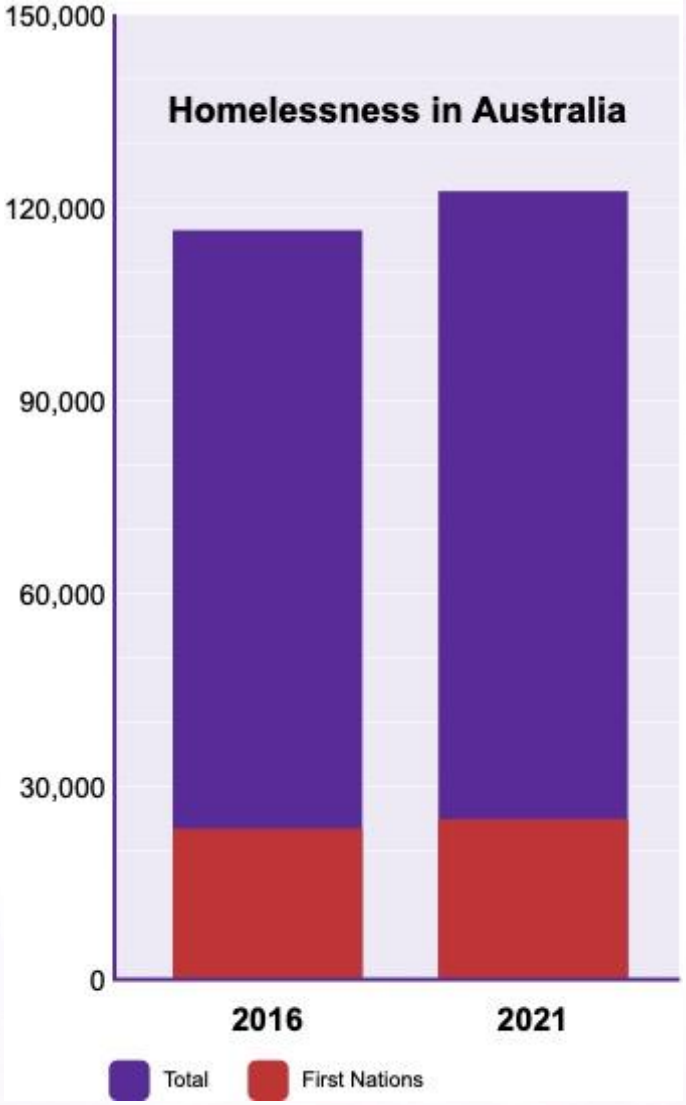
CEO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland

First Nations homelessness (National context)

According to the 2021 ABS Census count, 122,494 people were experiencing homelessness across Australia—a rise from 116,427 people in 2016.

Of this count, approximately 20% (24,930) were First Nations people - a rise from 23,437 in 2016**.**



Types of First Nations homelessness

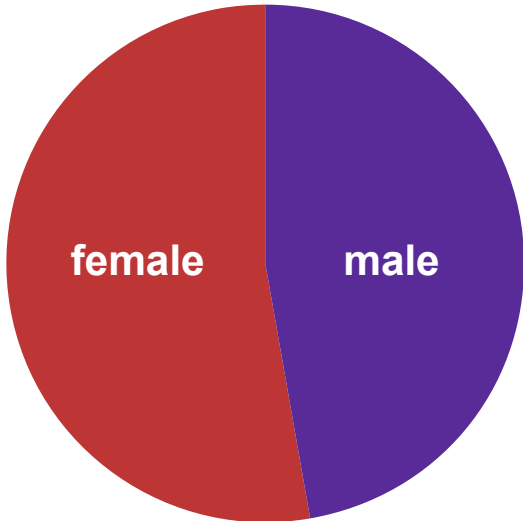
Of the 24,930 First Nations people in Australia experiencing homelessness in 2021:

- **14,951** were people living in **'severely' crowded dwellings (#1)**
- **4,721** were people in **supported accommodation** for the homeless **(#2)**
- **2,320** were people living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (**rough sleepers**) **(#3)**
- **1,832** were people **staying temporarily with other households**
- **552** were people **living in boarding houses**
- **514** were people in **other temporary lodging**

First Nations people experiencing homelessness

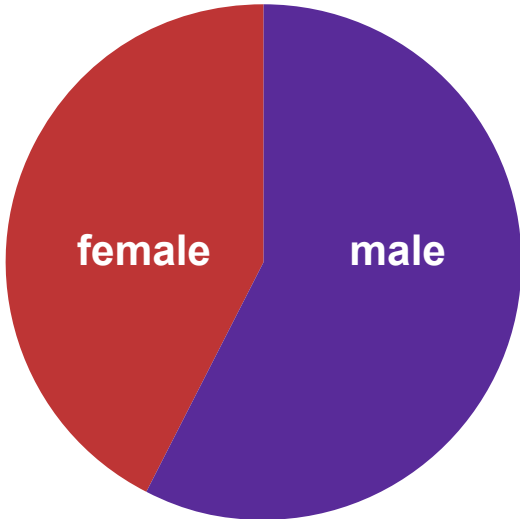
Overcrowding:

7,088 male
7,863 female
(14,951)



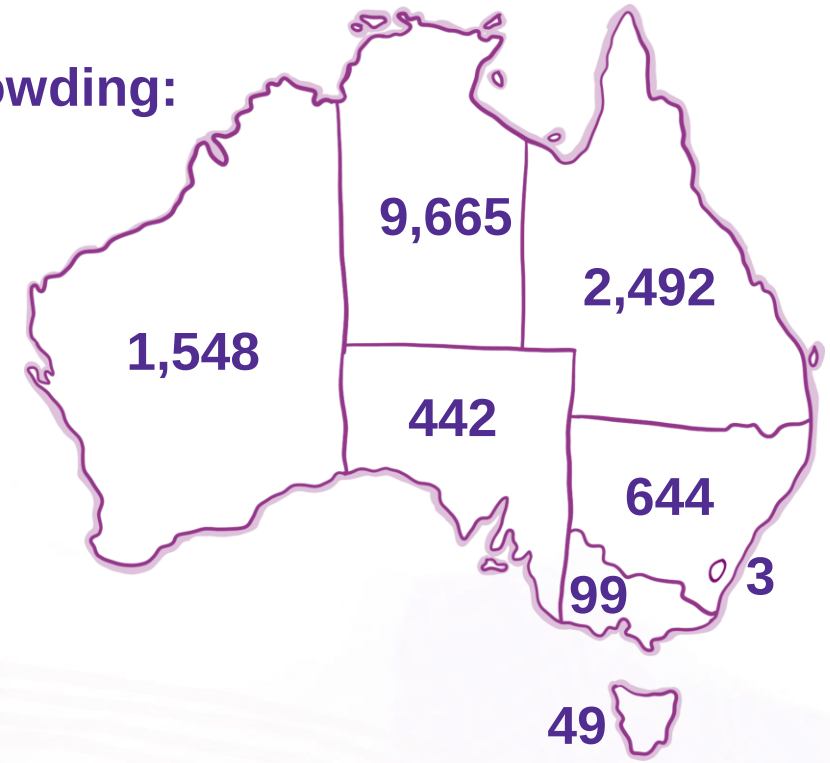
Rough sleeping / unsheltered:

1,335 male
985 female
(2,320)

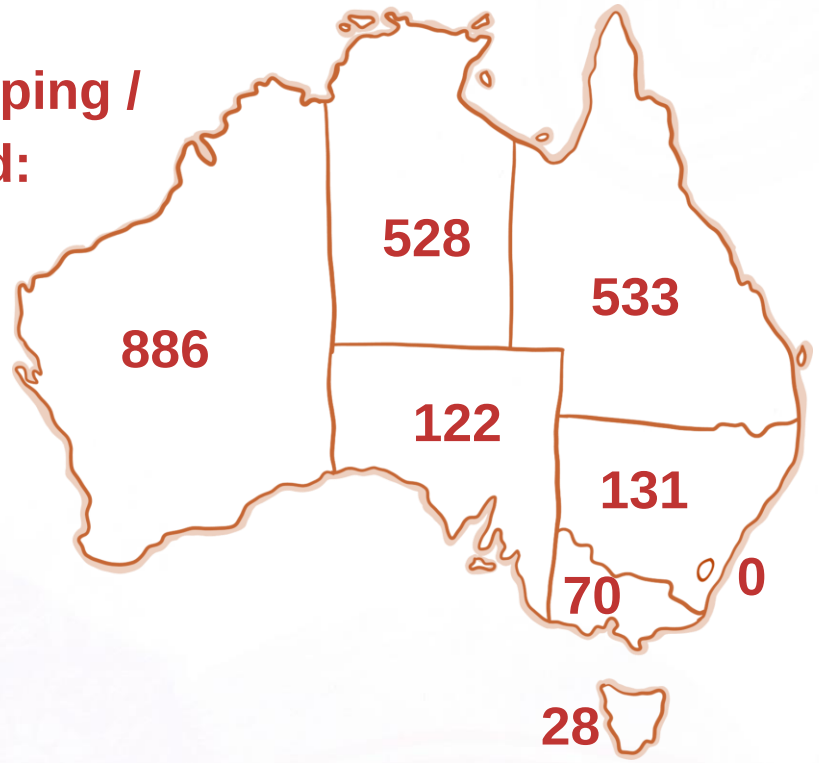


Where are First Nations people experiencing homelessness in Australia?

Overcrowding:



Rough sleeping / unsheltered:



Take home messages

24,930 First Nations people in Australia experienced homelessness in 2021

- First Nations homelessness numbers continue to rise between each Census
- Progress is lacking
- **More men** than women are **rough sleepers**
- **More women** than men are **in overcrowded dwellings**
- **These First Nations cohorts and First Nations genders need different policy approaches**

Take home messages

Around 74,700 Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients in 2022–23 were First Nations clients

- **Half (49%)** of First Nations SHS clients were **under the age of 25 (over 36,000)**
- **70%** of First Nations clients were **returning clients** (higher that non-Indigenous clients 61%)
- **First Nations housing organisations receive little SHS funding** to provide First Nations led supportive housing solutions
- **These First Nations age cohorts, returning First Nations clients and engaging First Nations organisations need different policy approaches**

Thank You

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BIRRIBEE HOUSING

Australian Homelessness Conference 2024

Closing the Gap - Priorities and reforms for housing and homelessness

Paul Coe

www.birribee.org.au

”

Legacy of Govt Policies

”Homelessness is a direct result of the loss of Aboriginal land. Through the loss of any form of secure tenure, Aboriginal people have been denied the right to live in the locations of their choice or under terms within their control.”

“Housing was a central mechanism by which assimilation was to be achieved”

- Scattering of Aboriginal housing intended to break down Aboriginal enclaves and identity has been a government approach since the late 1960s
- Resettlement schemes to reward those who were willing to take up work opportunities focused on conformity to non-Aboriginal expectations

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Housing Need

Housing is a key determinant of health, education and safety. Poor housing and poor housing circumstances negatively affect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. Without safe, affordable and culturally appropriate housing, efforts to improve health, employment and education for Aboriginal peoples will be futile.

Housing is equally a key determinant of economic development for Aboriginal peoples individually and collectively.

In 1973 the ALP stated its housing policy was for “All Aboriginal families to be properly housed within a period of ten years. In compensation for the loss of traditional lands, funds to be made available to assist Aboriginal who wish to purchase their own homes.”

Closing The Gap - Housing Target

Formed in 2007 with focus on health & education indicators.

2018 journey to develop new indicators in collaboration with CAPO

2020 new National Agreement on Closing The Gap

- 4 priority reforms
- 17 national socio-economic targets
  - 9A - By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88% (2016 78.9% -> 2021 81.4%)
  - 9B - By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:
    - within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard
    - in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town.

Homelessness as downstream outcome

Homelessness is too often an outcome of other life events that are CTG targets:

- Target 10 - Adult incarceration rates -> Increasing
- Target 11 - Young person incarceration rates -> Static
- Target 12 - OOHC rates -> Increasing
- Target 13 - Women & children experiencing DFV -> Insufficient data

NSW Experience

3% of the population with variances for regional fluctuations in NSW. Yet are over-represented in all statistics that are indicative of requiring a supported housing solution:

- Averaging 30% of rough sleeper street counts
- 40% of out-of-home care population
- 2.3 times more likely to suffer rental stress
- 7 times more likely to live in over-crowded situations

In 2017 there was a:

- Social housing gap of 11,000 dwellings, rising to 30,000 by 2031
- Affordable housing gap of 13,500, rising to 40,000 by 2031

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