

**MYTH
1**

Homeless people sleep on the street

FACT

On ABS Census night in 2021, more than **122,000** people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness in Australia [1]. Of those 122,000 people, **6% or 7,600 people** were sleeping rough on the streets.

The **Northern Rivers region has MORE people sleeping on the street than Greater Sydney** does. However there are more people living in overcrowded accommodation, sleeping in cars, sleeping on couches or living in supported accommodation than there are sleeping rough. This is sometimes referred to as hidden homelessness, because it is not easily seen.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS Website, accessed 9 July 2024.

Homelessness won't happen to me

FACT

Of course, every person's story, circumstance and journey is different, but many people are just a step or two away from homelessness. It could be the loss of your job, or a cancer diagnosis, the death of a loved one, the breakdown of a relationship – things that could and do happen to anyone – that can spiral into homelessness. No one is immune.

**MYTH
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**MYTH
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They're all alcoholics or drug addicts

FACT

Research conducted with more than 4,000 people who were homeless in Melbourne revealed that 43% had substance abuse problems. Of those people, one third had substance abuse problems prior to becoming homeless and two thirds developed those problems after becoming homeless. (Johnson & Chamberlain 2008)[1].

[1] Johnson, G., & Chamberlain, C. (2008). Homelessness and substance abuse: Which comes first? Australian Social Work, 61(4), 342–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03124070802428191>

**MYTH
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There's heaps of support available

FACT

Unfortunately, that is not true. In 2022-23, **273,600** people were assisted by homelessness services - but **108,000** people who sought help during that time were turned away due to a lack of staff, resources or accommodation.

Homelessness NSW CEO, Samantha Rowe says –
“Right now, **one out of every two people** seeking help for homelessness in NSW do not receive it because underfunded services are full.”

All they need is a job

FACT

Actually, there are many people who are fully employed and still experiencing homelessness. Cost of living pressures, rising interest rates, and inflated real estate and rental prices has left many Australians vulnerable to losing their housing. Unfortunately, the instability and stress associated with being homeless commonly leads people to lose their employment.

**MYTH
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**MYTH
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They are homeless because they want to be

FACT

Nobody chooses to be homeless. Homelessness is often the result of many inter-connected factors. Some of the most common causes of homelessness are domestic and family violence, mental ill health, and sudden, unexpected life changes such as job loss, illness, the death of a loved one or the breakdown of a relationship.

MYTH 7

I can't do anything about it

FACT

The problem can seem enormous and overwhelming, but there is actually quite a lot that you – **YES YOU!** – can do about homelessness in your community.

Break down misconceptions – talk to your family and friends and have challenging conversations about what homelessness looks like. If you hear any of these myths being spoken, you can now set the story straight. People facing homelessness are people first, just like you and I.

Just say hello – many people who are homeless just want to be acknowledged and be seen. It costs nothing to say hello and this kindness gives dignity in return. Every act of kindness counts.

Pay it forward – there are heaps of places where you can order a 'Pay It Forward' coffee, snack or meal for a person or family in need. Ask at your favourite café or restaurant.

Rent your investment property – The popularity of short term holiday rentals has led to a massive shortfall of places to rent to live all over Australia. Providing long term rentals not only helps your tenants, but is an investment in the whole community.

Get crafty, donate or volunteer – It's cold outside. If you are a knitter, knit beanies or scarves. Donate items like blankets, clothes, new underwear, socks or toiletries, or money towards warm meals, safe beds, or counselling services. Or find your local soup kitchen or op shop and volunteer.

Help prevent homelessness from happening – If you can see that someone is struggling, link them to support.

SUPPORT SERVICES

If yours or somebody else's life is in danger, contact emergency services on 000 immediately.

Link2Home – 1800 152 152 - Lifeline – 13 11 14

MensLine Australia – 1300 78 99 78 - Relationships Australia – 1300 364 277

1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 - Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Connecting Home - 1800 719 625

Advocate for change! – Sign the Everybody's Home petition here: <https://everybodyshome.com.au/>
Get in the ears of your local MP and tell them you want to see an end to homelessness in Australia.