



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Australians missing out on homelessness support as services buckle under strain: report**

*18 November 2024*

A landmark study finds the number of people at risk of homelessness has surged 63 per cent to three million, overwhelming the capacity of homelessness services who have had to close their doors to people desperately seeking help.

A new Impact Economics report, [\*Call Unanswered\*](#), surveyed 23 specialist homelessness services over two weeks in September 2024, revealing the drastic measures taken to manage overwhelming demand, with 83% of services unable to answer phone calls at times, 74% couldn't respond to urgent emails; and nearly 40% of services forced to close their doors during operating hours.

“Demand for homelessness services has erupted and the system is so under-resourced that people who are homeless can’t get in front of a worker who can help them,” said Kate Colvin, CEO of Homelessness Australia. “With more than three million Australians now at risk of homelessness, services are forced to close their doors, leave calls unanswered, and turn away families with children on one in five days. People who could have afforded private rentals just a few years ago are now resorting to couch surfing, sleeping in cars or pitching a tent.”

The research found families with children with no accommodation were turned away on one in five days surveyed, while individuals without dependents were turned away on one in two days.

The surge in demand is resulting in less access to services, as workers provide support to those already through the door. The survey found that during a typical two-week period:

- Services couldn't answer phones for 325 hours (1 in every 13 operating hours)
- Front doors were closed for 200.5 hours (1 in every 22 operating hours)
- 666 urgent emails went unanswered



New modelling conducted for *Call Unanswered* provides some explanation for the challenge. It estimates that between 2016 and 2022, the number of Australians at risk of homelessness increased by 63%, representing between 2.7 and 3.2 million people. A key driver was the 17.9 per cent increase in people experiencing rental stress since the 2021 Census.

**State-by-State growth in population at risk of homelessness (2016-2022)**

State/Territory	2022 Population at Risk	Increase Since 2016	% Change Population at Risk	Increase in rent stress
Victoria	987,405	395,994	67%	23.1%
Queensland	715,067	318,656	80%	16.1%
NSW	696,442	271,241	64%	14.2%
Western Australia	272,633	118,804	77%	23.1%
South Australia	245,829	59,346	32%	16.1%
Tasmania	90,458	18,158	25%	11.3%
ACT	16,688	-8,733	-34%	31.3%
Northern Territory	15,841	1,000	7%	26.0%

"Homelessness services simply don't have the staff to stretch to everyone needing help, and have to go on 'by-pass', and triage support to people each day. This means opportunities to help people avoid homelessness are missed; and people go longer without support or miss out entirely, making the path out of homelessness longer, more brutal and less likely to succeed."

The report is the centrepiece of a new campaign, *No one turned away*, which calls for funding for homelessness services to be increased, including increased investment in prevention, and expansion of Housing First programs, so staff can respond to everyone seeking help.

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