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*Better information and statistics
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Counting the homeless 2006

Queensland

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PREFACE

Counting the Homeless began as a research project with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, producing one report on the national homeless population in 1996. It has since developed into a cooperatively produced national data collection, involving the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and RMIT and Swinburne Universities. A national report was published by the ABS in September 2008, and for the first time the state and territory reports are published by the AIHW.

Funding for *Counting the Homeless 2006* was provided by the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council and the Housing Ministerial Advisory Committee and coordinated by the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). We are grateful to senior officers in FaHCSIA and the various state and territory departments which have facilitated this large and complex project at all stages.

The ABS has been a key partner from the outset and provided excellent in-kind support under its Australian Census Analytic Program. We thank our colleagues in the ABS for their continuing commitment to the project and for their generous advice and assistance, as well as their dedicated work in response to our many data requests.

Important supplementary information for the analysis comes from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection at the AIHW. The AIHW team responded quickly to our inquiries. We have greatly appreciated their interest and support.

Hundreds of people in schools, local council services and homeless agencies have assisted us during the school census, especially during the extensive national local area fieldwork. Their local knowledge has been an invaluable input to this report.

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP), Homelessness Australia, the National Youth Coalition for Housing (NYCH) and the Women's Services Network (WESNET) have been strong supporters of the project from the beginning and we have greatly appreciated their encouragement. Finally, we thank our editor, Estelle Tang, who provided invaluable editorial assistance.

Chris Chamberlain

David MacKenzie

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses the cultural definition of homelessness to enumerate the homeless population on census night (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). This definition distinguishes between people in primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.

Primary homelessness describes the situation of all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, living in improvised dwellings (such as sheds, garages or cabins), and using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

Secondary homelessness describes the situation of people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) are considered part of this category. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own, and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness describes the situation of people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. Residents of private boarding houses are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992): they do not have a separate bedroom and living room; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.

2 OVERCOUNTING AND UNDERCOUNTING

Chapter 2 summarises how the national homeless count enumerated the homeless population using census and other data sets. It contains a discussion of how there can be both overcounting and undercounting of homeless people. Undercounting is most likely in the census category

‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’, and overcounting is more likely in boarding houses because of misclassification.

The problem of establishing reliable figures is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time. There will always be people who are entering and leaving homelessness, as well as people moving between different locations. The challenge is to identify patterns in the population data that might inform the policy process.

3 ACCOMMODATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

Across Australia, 20 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses on census night; in Queensland, it was also 20 per cent (Table 1). The percentage of people staying temporarily with other households in Queensland was larger than the national figure (49 per cent compared with 45 per cent), and there were more people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (19 per cent compared with 16 per cent). Nationally, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Queensland it was 12 per cent.

TABLE 1: PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia		Queensland	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	5438	20
SAAP accommodation	19 849	19	3233	12
Friends and relatives	46 856	45	12 946	49
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	5165	19
	104 676	100	26 782	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

4 AGE DISTRIBUTION

In Queensland, the age profile of the homeless population was older than the national profile. Forty-nine per cent of the homeless in Queensland were aged 35 or older, significantly above the national figure of 42 per cent (Table 2). More than one-third (36 per cent) of the homeless in Queensland were aged 45 or older, up from 28 per cent in 2001 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004a, p. 27).

Nonetheless, a majority (51 per cent) of homeless people in Queensland were in the younger age groups. Sixteen per cent of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own). Eleven per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another 10 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24, and 14 per cent were adults aged 25 to 34.

TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia		Queensland			
	N	%	N	%		
Under 12	12 133	12	2914	11	58	51
12–18	21 940	21	4469	16		
19–24	10 504	10	2624	10		
25–34	15 804	15	3820	14		
35–44	13 981	13	3471	13	42	49
45–54	12 206	12	3464	13		
55–64	10 708	10	3667	14		
65 or older	7 400	7	2353	9		
	104 676	100	26 782	100		

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

5 MALES AND FEMALES

In 2006, men outnumbered women in Australia's homeless population, 56 to 44 per cent (Table 3), and in Queensland men outnumbered women, 58 to 42 per cent. In this state, there were roughly equal numbers of males and females in the two youngest age cohorts, but from age 25 onwards men typically outnumbered women, about 60 to 40 per cent.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES BY AGE GROUP

Australia									
	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	46	53	57	63	64	61	64	56
Female	48	54	47	43	37	36	39	36	44
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Queensland									
	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	49	56	58	64	62	59	68	58
Female	48	51	44	42	36	38	41	32	42
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Queensland, 3.5 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 4 shows that Indigenous people made up 3.7 per cent of people staying with other households, 8.4 per cent of persons in boarding houses, 10.2 per cent of those in the improvised dwellings category and 21.9 per cent of people in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Queensland.

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, QUEENSLAND*

	Boarding house (N=5438)	Friends or relatives (N=12 946)	SAAP (N=3128)	Improvised dwellings (N=5165)	All** (N=26 677)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	91.6	96.3	78.1	89.8	91.9
Indigenous	8.4	3.7	21.9	10.2	8.1
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status except in 105 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

7 BRISBANE

There were 2070 homeless people in Inner Brisbane and the rate of homelessness was 246 per 10 000 of the population (Table 5). Inner Brisbane had nine per cent of Brisbane City's population but 38 per cent of its homeless people. Homeless people often gravitate to the inner city, where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

TABLE 5: HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, BRISBANE CITY

	Inner Brisbane	Northwest Inner	Southeast Inner	Northwest Outer	Southeast Outer	Total
Number	2070	774	616	1047	888	5395
Rate	246	44	41	33	39	56

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In Southeast Inner and Northwest Inner Brisbane, there were 616 and 774 homeless people respectively, and the rates of homelessness were 41 and 44 per 10 000.

In Southeast Outer and Northwest Outer Brisbane there were 888 and 1047 homeless people and the rates of homelessness were lower than in the other subdivisions (39 and 33 per 10 000).

Altogether, there were 3325 homeless people in suburban Brisbane. The provision of services in suburban areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, OUTER URBAN AREAS, BRISBANE

	Beaudesert Shire Pt A	Caboolture Shire	Ipswich City	Logan City	Pine Rivers Shire	Redcliffe City	Redland Shire	Total
Number	125	663	540	537	312	182	242	2601
Rate	30	50	39	31	22	36	19	32

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 6 shows that there were 2601 homeless people in the seven subdivisions covering outer suburban Brisbane. These include traditional 'working class' areas such as Ipswich and Logan, the rural subdivision of Beaudesert, as well as the growth corridors of Caboolture and Pine Rivers.

There were 663 homeless people in Caboolture, 540 homeless people in Ipswich, 537 in Logan, and 312 in Pine Rivers (Table 6). The rate of homelessness was highest in Caboolture (50 per 10 000) and lowest in Redland (19 per 10 000). In four subdivisions (Beaudesert, Ipswich, Logan and Redcliffe) the rate was between 30 and 39 per 10 000.

8 GOLD COAST AND SUNSHINE COAST

There were 2289 homeless people on the Gold Coast and the rate of homelessness was 47 per 10 000 (Table 7). Ninety per cent of the homeless were in Gold Coast East and Gold Coast West. There were 1328 homeless people in Gold Coast East where the rate of homelessness was 77 per 10 000 and 726 homeless people in Gold Coast West where the rate was 30 per 10 000.

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, GOLD COAST

	Gold Coast North	Gold Coast East	Gold Coast West	Gold Coast SD Bal	Total
Number	178	1328	726	57	2289
Rate	35	77	30	41	47

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

There were 1658 homeless people in Sunshine Coast (Table 8), where the rate of homelessness was 60 per 10 000. The rate was 50 per 10 000 in the urban subdivision of Sunshine Coast, where there were 1040 homeless people, but it was 93 per 10 000 in Sunshine Coast SD Balance, where there were 618 homeless people.

TABLE 8: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SUNSHINE COAST

	Sunshine Coast	Sunshine Coast SD Balance	Total
Number	1040	618	1658
Rate	50	93	60

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

9 REGIONAL AND REMOTE

Chapter 6 examines three statistical divisions in western Queensland: South West, Central West and North West. Then it examines the West Moreton and Darling Downs statistical divisions which cover much of regional South East Queensland.

There were 211 homeless people in South West and 187 in Central West, although the rates of homelessness were 85 and 172 per 10 000 respectively (Table 9). In North West, there were 643 homeless people and the rate was 208 per 10 000. The main concentration was in Mount Isa where there were 356 homeless people.

TABLE 9: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SOUTH WEST, CENTRAL WEST AND NORTH WEST

	South West	Central West	North West
Number	211	187	643
Rate	85	172	208

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

West Moreton has two statistical subdivisions: Upper West Moreton (population 18 600) and Lower West Moreton (population 50 000). Darling Downs has two subdivisions: Toowoomba (population 114 500) and Darling Downs SD Balance (population 99 300).

The rate of homelessness was 101 per 10 000 in Upper West Moreton and there were 187 homeless people (Table 10). The rate was lower in Darling Downs (63 per 10 000), but there were 623 homeless people. The rate was 48 per 10 000 in Lower West Moreton (242 homeless people) and 46 per 10 000 in Toowoomba (530 homeless people).

TABLE 10: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, WEST MORETON AND DARLING DOWNS

	Upper West Moreton	Lower West Moreton	Total	Toowoomba	Darling Downs SD Bal	Total
Number	187	242	429	530	623	1153
Rate	101	48	63	46	63	54

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

10 COASTAL QUEENSLAND

Chapter 7 investigates the distribution of the homeless population in the five statistical divisions which stretch from the Sunshine Coast to the tip of Cape York ('coastal Queensland'). Table 11 shows that coastal Queensland had 12 216 homeless people and that the rate of homelessness was 120 per 10 000. In Wide Bay-Burnett, Fitzroy and Northern the rate was about 100 per 10 000. The rate increased to 134 per 10 000 in the Far North and to 167 in the Mackay statistical division.

TABLE 11: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, COASTAL QUEENSLAND

	Wide Bay-Burnett	Fitzroy	Mackay	Northern	Far North	Total
Number	2716	1941	2506	1949	3104	12 216
Rate	107	103	167	99	134	120

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

There was also an 'urban' and a 'rural/remote' pattern. There were 5073 homeless people in the major cities, where the rate of homelessness was 91 per 10 000 (Table 12), double the rate in the Brisbane statistical division. There were 7143 homeless people in the rural/remote subdivisions

where the rate was 154 per 10 000 (Table 13), more than three times the rate in the Brisbane statistical division.

TABLE 12: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, COASTAL CITIES

	Bundaberg	Hervey Bay	Rockhampton	Gladstone	Mackay	Townsville	Cairns	Total
Number	443	426	476	316	692	1329	1391	5073
Rate	74	88	69	74	95	93	113	91

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The rate of homelessness in each coastal city was always lower than the rate in the corresponding rural/remote subdivision, but there were also significant differences between the cities (Table 12). The rate of homelessness was 69 per 10 000 in Rockhampton and it was 74 per 10 000 in Bundaberg and Gladstone. The rate increased to about 90 per 10 000 in Hervey Bay, Townsville and Mackay, and to 113 per 10 000 in Cairns. There were 1391 homeless people in Cairns, 1329 in Townsville and 692 in Mackay, with smaller numbers in the other regional centres.

TABLE 13: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, RURAL AND REMOTE SUBDIVISIONS

	Wide Bay-Burnett SD Bal.	Fitzroy SD Balance	Mackay SD Balance	Northern SD Balance	Far North SD Balance	Total
Number	1847	1149	1814	620	1713	7143
Rate	126	150	235	116	158	154

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In Northern SD Balance, the rate of homelessness was 116 per 10 000 and in Wide Bay-Burnett SD Balance the rate was 126 (Table 13). The rate increased to 150 per 10 000 in Fitzroy SD Balance and to 158 in Far North SD Balance. The rate was highest in Mackay SD Balance where it was 235 per 10 000.