

7 NORTHERN VICTORIA

7.1 OVERVIEW

There are four statistical divisions in Northern Victoria (Map 1): Loddon, Goulburn, Ovens-Murray and Mallee.

Loddon has a population of 169 000 and includes three subdivisions. Bendigo is the major regional centre with a population of 82 000. North Loddon includes Maryborough and Castlemaine. South Loddon covers the Macedon Ranges.

Goulburn (population 195 000) has four subdivisions. Shepparton (population 44 600) is the major urban centre. North Goulburn covers Echuca and Kyabram, and South Goulburn includes Benalla. South West Goulburn is rural.

Ovens-Murray has a population of 92 500 and covers the North-East corner of the state. Wodonga (population 46 500) is the major regional centre. West Ovens-Murray includes Wangaratta and East Ovens-Murray covers the Victorian Alps.

The Mallee has 88 600 people. Mildura (population 46 000) is the main regional centre. East Mallee includes Swan Hill, and West Mallee is rural.

7.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Western Victoria	Eastern Victoria	Northern Victoria	Total
Number	14 568	1980	962	3001	20 511
Rate	41	36	40	55	42

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

There were 3001 homeless people in Northern Victoria where the rate of homelessness was 55 per 10 000 (Table 7.1), significantly higher than the rate of homelessness in Melbourne (41 per 10 000), Eastern Victoria (40 per 10 000) and Western Victoria (36 per 10 000).

Table 7.2 shows that there were 1176 homeless people in the four urban subdivisions—Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura and Wodonga—where the rate of homelessness was 54 per 10 000. There were 1825 homeless people in the nine rural subdivisions, where the rate was 56 per 10 000.

7.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

	Four urban subdivisions	Nine rural subdivisions	Total
Number	1176	1825	3001
Rate	54	56	55

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

7.2 URBAN

There were some important differences between urban communities. The rate was 38 per 10 000 in Bendigo where there were 315 homeless people (Table 7.3). In Shepparton there were 255 homeless people and the rate was 57 per 10 000. The rate was higher in Mildura and Wodonga. In Mildura, there were 300 homeless people and the rate was 65 per 10 000. In Wodonga, there were 306 homeless people and the rate was 66 per 10 000.

7.3 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, BENDIGO, SHEPPARTON, WODONGA AND MILDURA

	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Number	315	255	306	300	1176
Rate	38	57	66	65	54

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

In Bendigo, Shepparton and Wodonga, between 37 and 42 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and between 37 and 46 per cent were staying with other households (Table 7.4). Local informants reported 'lots of couch surfing' in these communities. In Mildura, 33 per cent were staying with other households, but there were more people in boarding houses (16 per cent) and more people in the primary population (20 per cent).

Service providers in these cities knew of people sleeping rough. A service provider in Wodonga talked about young people 'sleeping under bridges' and a couple 'sleeping in their car'. A service provider in another city knew of people 'sleeping in tents' and someone else referred to 'people under bridges, in cars and tents'.

However, the census data also indicated that some people in the primary population were living in improvised dwellings that were owned or being purchased. These were probably prefabricated sheds that can be assembled on a concrete slab. Some people had probably intended to build houses, but most people were living in poverty.

7.4 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, BENDIGO, SHEPPARTON, WODONGA AND MILDURA

Percentage					
	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Boarding house	15	7	4	16	11
SAAP/THM	37	41	42	31	38
Friends/relatives	46	42	37	33	39
Improvised dwellings	2	10	17	20	12
	100	100	100	100	100

Number					
	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Boarding house	47	18	11	50	126
SAAP/THM	117	104	130	93	444
Friends/relatives	146	107	113	98	464
Improvised dwellings	5	26	52	59	142
	315	255	306	300	1176

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

7.3 RURAL

The number of homeless people varied considerably between the nine rural subdivisions (Table 7.5). The rate was lowest (31 per 10 000) in South Loddon where there were 120 homeless people. The rate was highest (107 per 10 000) in East Ovens-Murray where there were 171 homeless people.

7.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

	Loddon		Goulburn			Ovens-Murray		Mallee		Total
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Number	289	120	386	159	227	173	171	55	245	1825
Rate	60	31	51	53	51	58	107	52	77	56

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

In four subdivisions, there were more than 225 homeless people (Table 7.5), and in another four subdivisions there were between 120 and 175. The subdivisions with 225 or more homeless people were North Loddon (289), North Goulburn (386), South West Goulburn (227) and East Mallee (245).

7.6 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

Percentage

	Loddon		Goulburn			Ovens-Murray		Mallee		Total
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Boarding house	2	10	16	12	12	10	20	0	21	13
SAAP/THM	7	35	12	2	26	31	9	0	22	16
Friends/relatives	29	42	39	55	27	36	49	75	38	39
Improvised dwellings	62	13	33	31	35	23	22	25	19	32
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Loddon		Goulburn			Ovens-Murray		Mallee		Total
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Boarding house	7	12	64	19	27	18	34	0	52	233
SAAP/THM	19	42	46	3	58	53	15	0	53	289
Friends/relatives	85	51	149	87	62	62	84	41	93	714
Improvised dwellings	178	15	127	50	80	40	38	14	47	589
	289	120	386	159	227	173	171	55	245	1825

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

Table 7.6 shows the proportion in different sectors of the population in all rural subdivisions. There is variation across the subdivisions but four points stand out.

First, 39 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives, and in five out of the nine subdivisions the figure was between 35 and 50 per cent.

Second, 32 per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, compared with 12 per cent in urban areas (Table 7.4). Many of the people in this category either owned or were purchasing their dwellings. They were probably living in improvised dwellings such as self-assembled garages and large metal sheds out in the bush. Some had probably intended to build conventional houses, but most were on low incomes and this dream had not been realised. Others were living in 'bush camps along the Murray'. One census collector saw 'a caravan in the bush ... rotting away ... no power or water'. Another reported 'people in tents near the river'.

Third, the proportion in SAAP/THM accommodation varied across the subdivisions, but overall it was 16 per cent, compared with 38 per cent in the urban subdivisions.

Finally, there were few people in boarding houses. In seven out of the nine subdivisions the number was below 35.

7.4 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

In 2001, there were 3404 marginal residents of caravan parks in Victoria, but this number declined to 2789 in 2006. In Northern Victoria, a number of local informants told us that it was now more difficult to get clients into caravan parks. One person said, 'The caravan parks are moving upmarket for the tourists'. Another said, 'They are full of itinerant workers in the summer' and a third said, 'They won't take our clients'.

Despite this, there were still 871 marginal residents in Northern Victoria in 2006, down from 1167 in 2001. In 2006, there were three subdivisions in Northern Victoria which had 90 or more marginal residents of caravan parks. They were North Goulburn (179), Mildura (139) and Shepparton (96).

Marginal residents of caravan parks outnumbered boarding house residents 871 to 359 in Northern Victoria. This is another area where caravan parks are used as an alternative to boarding houses. One local service provider said, 'We try to get people into overnight vans'. Another talked about clients 'living in a caravan park', and a third said, 'We put quite a few people in caravan parks using HEF' (housing establishment fund money).

7.7 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Western Victoria	Eastern Victoria	Northern Victoria	Total
Homeless	14 568	1980	962	3001	20 511
Rate per 10 000	41	36	40	55	42
Caravan	1247	331	340	871	2789
Total	15 815	2311	1302	3872	23 300
Rate per 10 000	44	42	54	71	47

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

Table 7.7 compares the number of homeless people and the number of marginal residents of caravan parks. There were 1247 marginal residents of caravan parks in Melbourne and 871 in Northern Victoria. If marginal caravan park residents are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness in Melbourne increases from 41 to 44 per 10 000, but in Northern Victoria, the rate of homelessness increases from 55 to 71 per 10 000.

