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**Australian Institute of
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*Better information and statistics
for better health and wellbeing*

Counting the homeless 2006

Tasmania

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Publications

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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 and 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, people staying temporarily with other households accounted for 45 per cent of the homeless on census night, and in Tasmania they accounted for 50 per cent of the homeless (Table 1). Nationally, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Tasmania the figure was 25 per cent. Twenty per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses nationally, but in Tasmania it was 10 per cent. Fifteen per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough in Tasmania, similar to the national figure of 16 per cent. However, the census was carried out in August when people sleeping rough hide away to escape the cold, so there could have been undercounting in this category.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia		Tasmania	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	252	10
SAAP accommodation	19 849	19	622	25
Friends and relatives	46 856	45	1248	50
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	385	15
	104 676	100	2507	100

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

4 AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age profile of the homeless population in Tasmania was significantly younger than the age profile of the national population (Table 2). Sixty-nine per cent of the homeless in Tasmania were aged 34 or younger and 31 per cent were aged 35 or older. One-third (31 per cent) of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own), 50 per cent higher than the national figure of 21 per cent. Fourteen per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another nine per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24. Altogether, 54 per cent of the

homeless in Tasmania were aged 24 or younger, significantly higher than the national figure of 43 per cent.

TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia			Tasmania		
	N	%		N	%	
Under 12	12 133	12	58	342	14	69
12–18	21 940	21		770	31	
19–24	10 504	10		226	9	
25–34	15 804	15		374	15	
35–44	13 981	13	42	295	12	31
45–54	12 206	12		235	9	
55–64	10 708	10		159	6	
65 or older	7 400	7		106	4	
	104 676	100		2507	100	

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

5 MALES AND FEMALES

Men outnumbered women in the national homeless population, 56 to 44 per cent in 2006 (Table 3), but in Tasmania men outnumbered women, 51 to 49 per cent. In Tasmania, there were more females in the under-12, 12-to-18 and 19-to-24 age cohorts. However, males made up between 55 and 60 per cent of the population in the age cohorts above 24.

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

Tasmania									
	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	49	43	48	55	60	59	57	55	51
Female	51	57	52	45	40	41	43	45	49
	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 Tasmania, 3.7 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 4 shows that Indigenous people made up 4.4 per cent of people in boarding houses in Tasmania, 6.2 per cent of people staying with other households, 6.5 per cent of people in the improvised dwellings category, and 15.5 per cent of people in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Tasmania.

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

	Boarding house (N=252)	Friends or relatives (N=1243)	SAAP (N=608)	Improvised dwellings (N=385)	All* (N=2488)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	95.6	93.8	84.5	93.5	91.7
Indigenous	4.4	6.2	15.5	6.5	8.3
	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 19 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

7 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Tasmania is divided into four statistical divisions: Greater Hobart, Southern, Northern and Mersey-Lyell.

Greater Hobart has a population of 200 500. It includes the statistical local areas of Brighton, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Glenorchy, Hobart Inner and Hobart Remainder. In Greater Hobart, the rate of homelessness was 53 per 10 000 and there were 1060 homeless people.

Table 5 shows that there were 474 homeless people in Hobart (Inner and Remainder) where the rate of homelessness was 99 per 10 000. In the remainder of Greater Hobart, there were 586 homeless people but the rate was 38 per 10 000. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities, where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, GREATER HOBART

	Hobart (Inner and Remainder)	Remainder of Greater Hobart
Number	474	586
Rate	99	38

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

The Northern statistical division covers the central north of Tasmania and the north-east coast. It has a population of 134 000. The major urban area is Greater Launceston with a population of 99 700.

Table 6 shows that four-fifths of the homeless population in the Northern statistical division were in Greater Launceston, where the rate of homelessness was 49 per 10 000 and there were 490 homeless people. The rates were lower in Central North (32 per 10 000) and North Eastern (40 per 10 000) where there were 65 and 56 homeless people respectively.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION

	Northern			Mersey-Lyell		
	Greater Launceston	Central North	North Eastern	Burnie-Devonport	North Western Rural	Lyell
Number	490	65	56	390	120	13
Rate	49	32	40	50	51	26

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

Mersey-Lyell covers much of north-west Tasmania and the west coast. It has a population of 106 000, including 77 400 in the Burnie-Devonport growth corridor.

Table 6 shows that nearly three-quarters of the homeless (390 people) were in Burnie-Devonport, where the rate was 50 per 10 000. The rate was similar in North Western Rural (51 per 10 000), where there were 120 homeless people. The rate was 26 per 10 000 in Lyell, where there were 13 homeless people in a population of 5000.