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# **Counting the homeless 2006**

## **Western Australia**

**June 2009**

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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

The homeless population in Western Australia was distributed differently from the national homeless population (Table 1). Nationally, 20 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses on census night whereas the comparable figure was 12 per cent in Western Australia. Across Australia, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Western Australia the figure was 11 per cent. There were significantly more people staying temporarily with other households in Western Australia (59 per cent compared with 45 per cent across Australia), and there were more people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (18 per cent compared with 16 per cent nationally).

**TABLE 1: PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION**

	Australia		Western Australia	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	1652	12
SAAP accommodation	19 849	19	1395	11
Friends and relatives	46 856	45	7952	59
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	2392	18
	104 676	100	13 391	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 Western Australia was significantly younger than the age profile of the national population (Table 2). Sixty-two per cent of the homeless in Western Australia were aged 34 or younger compared with the national figure of 58 per cent. One-third (32 per cent) of the homeless in Western Australia were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own). Nine per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another eight per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24, and 13 per cent were adults aged 25 to 34.

Altogether, 38 per cent of the homeless in Western Australia were aged 35 or older, compared with the national figure of 42 per cent.

**TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION**

	Australia			Western Australia		
	N	%		N	%	
Under 12	12 133	12	58	1216	9	62
12–18	21 940	21		4280	32	
19–24	10 504	10		1062	8	
25–34	15 804	15		1762	13	
35–44	13 981	13	42	1504	11	38
45–54	12 206	12		1417	11	
55–64	10 708	10		1394	10	
65 or older	7400	7		756	6	
	104 676	100		13 391	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 the national homeless population, 56 to 44 per cent (Table 3), and in Western Australia men outnumbered women, 54 to 46 per cent. In Western Australia, there were more females in the 12-to-18 age group (53 to 47 per cent), but more males in the 19-to-24 age group (55 to 45 per cent). From age 25 onwards, men 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

**Western Australia**

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	51	47	55	59	62	58	56	65	54
Female	49	53	45	41	38	42	44	35	46
	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 Western Australia, 3.2 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 4 shows that Indigenous people made up 3.9 per cent of people staying with other households, 11.8 per cent of persons in boarding houses, 18.8 per cent of those in improvised dwellings and 40.3 per cent of people in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Western Australia.

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

	Boarding house (N=1652)	Friends or relatives (N=7952)	SAAP (N=1337)	Improvised dwellings (N=2392)	All* (N=13 333)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	88.2	96.1	59.7	81.2	88.8
Indigenous	11.8	3.9	40.3	18.8	11.2
	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 58 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

## 7 PERTH

In Perth, the rate of homelessness was 109 per 10 000 in the Central Metropolitan subdivision, where there were 1368 homeless people (Table 5). Central Metropolitan had nine per cent of Perth's population, but it contained 30 per cent of Perth's boarding house residents, 40 per cent of its SAAP residents, and 35 per cent of persons in the improvised dwellings category. It is common to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of the capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart.

**TABLE 5:** NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, PERTH STATISTICAL SUBDIVISIONS

	Central	East	North	South West	South East	Total
Number	1368	843	1719	1543	1247	6720
Rate	109	34	39	50	38	47

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

The rate of homelessness was 34 per 10 000 in East Metropolitan where there were 843 homeless people (Table 5). The rates were 38 and 39 per 10 000 in the South East and North subdivisions, where there were 1247 and 1719 homeless people respectively. In South West Metropolitan, the rate was 50 per 10 000 (1543 homeless people).

Altogether, there were 5352 homeless people in suburban Perth compared with 1368 in Central Metropolitan (Table 5). The rate of homelessness was lower in the suburbs, but the number of homeless people was substantial. People often become homeless in the suburbs or in regional communities, but they migrate to the inner city. 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.

## 8 REGIONAL AND REMOTE

There are eight statistical divisions covering regional and remote Western Australia. Regional and remote Western Australia has a population of 514 000 people, spread across a large geographical area. Some statistical subdivisions have high rates of homelessness, but relatively few homeless people.

**TABLE 6:** NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, PERTH AND REGIONAL/REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	Perth	Regional/remote	Total
Number of homeless	6720	6671	13 391
Rate per 10 000	47	131	68
Caravan park residents	534	1460	1994
Total	7254	8131	15 385
Rate per 10 000	50	160	79

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

The overall picture is summarised in Table 6. There were 6671 homeless people in regional and remote Western Australia, where the rate was 131 per 10 000. For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks are considered part of the tertiary population. If these residents are included, the rate of homelessness was 50 per 10 000 in Perth and 160 per 10 000 in regional and remote Western Australia (Table 6).

**TABLE 7:** PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, PERTH AND REGIONAL/REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Percentage			
	Perth	Regional/remote	Western Australia
Boarding houses	16	8	12
SAAP accommodation	16	5	11
Friends and relatives	56	63	59
Improvised dwellings	12	24	18
	100	100	100

Number			
	Perth	Regional/remote	Western Australia
Boarding houses	1097	555	1652
SAAP accommodation	1070	325	1395
Friends and relatives	3786	4166	7952
Improvised dwellings	767	1625	2392
	6720	6671	13 391

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

Table 7 shows that there were twice as many people in boarding houses in Perth, compared with regional and remote communities (1097 as opposed to 555) and three times as many people in SAAP (1070 compared with 325). In regional and remote Western Australia, more people were



staying with other households than in Perth (4166 versus 3786) and twice as many people were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough (1625 compared with 767).



## INTRODUCTION

This is one of eight state and territory reports from the national project, *Counting the Homeless 2006* (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008). Chapters 1 and 2 include material from the national report on the definition of homelessness, methodological issues, and a summary of how the homeless enumeration was undertaken. This report introduces new information on the social characteristics of the homeless population in Western Australia and the geographical distribution of homeless people. The report also includes new information on marginal caravan park dwellers and Indigenous homelessness.

The main data source for the analysis was the *ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006*. However, this data was supplemented by information from the *SAAP National Data Collection* and the third *National Census of Homeless School Students*. This data enabled us to make various technical corrections to the raw census figures and to produce the overall population estimates.

This report uses some qualitative data from telephone interviews with service providers and public officials. Local informants were selected purposively, in order to check the reliability of census data in particular communities and to understand more about what is happening on the ground. In most places, three to four people were interviewed. The report also uses qualitative data from questionnaires filled out by census collectors who enumerated the primary population in Western Australia.

Each state and territory report is set out in the same way and contains a discussion of 'undercounting' and 'overcounting'. Counting errors are always an issue when enumerating the homeless population. Chapter 2 explains why some homeless people are not counted on census night ('undercounting') and why others may be counted more than once ('overcounting'). A careful consideration of such errors is important when attempting to establish the number of homeless people in particular communities.

Discrepancies due to undercounting and overcounting of homeless people tend to be masked when data is aggregated at the state or national level, but these discrepancies are more obvious in small-area analyses. Thus, it is possible that people with local knowledge may think that there are more (or less) homeless people in a particular community than the number identified by the census.

The problem of establishing reliable figures in local communities is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time. First, there will always be some people entering and leaving the homeless population. Second, homeless people are more mobile than the general population. It is common for homeless people to move from one form of temporary shelter to another. It is also common for homeless people to move both within and between states. This means that the number of homeless people in a particular community may not be the same as the number on census night. The challenge is to identify patterns in the homeless population that might inform the policy process.

Chapter 1 outlines the cultural definition of homelessness which underpinned the ABS project. Chapter 2 summarises how the national report established the homeless count, as well as discussing overcounting and undercounting. Chapter 3 outlines the social characteristics of the homeless population in Western Australia. Chapter 4 discusses different ways of approaching a geographical analysis, before focusing on the homeless population in Perth. Chapter 5 describes the homeless population in rural and remote Western Australia. Chapter 6 comments on Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness. Chapter 7 discusses policy issues.

## 1 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The ABS uses the cultural definition to enumerate the homeless population. The cultural definition contends that ‘homelessness’ and ‘inadequate housing’ are cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period (Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992). In a society where the vast majority of people live in mud huts, the community standard will be that these dwellings constitute adequate accommodation (Watson 1986, p. 10). Once this principle is recognised, then it is possible to define ‘homelessness’.

First, the cultural definition identifies shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have the right to expect in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of a particular culture. Then, the definition identifies groups that fall below the minimum community standard.

Cultural standards are not usually stated in official documents, but are embedded in the housing practices of a society. These standards identify the conventions and cultural expectations of a community in an objective sense, and are recognised by most people because they accord with what they see around them. As Townsend (1979, p. 51) puts it:

A population comes to expect to live in particular types of homes ... Their environment ... create(s) their needs in an objective as well as a subjective sense.

The vast majority of Australians live in suburban houses or self-contained flats, and 70 per cent of all households either own or are purchasing their home (ABS 2006a, Ch. 8). There is a widespread view that home ownership is the most desirable form of tenure (Kemeny 1983, p. 1; Hayward 1992, p. 1; Badcock and Beer 2000, p. 96). Eighty-eight per cent of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 75 per cent of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2006a, Ch. 8).

The minimum community standard is a small rental flat—with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of security of tenure—because that is the minimum that most people achieve in the private rental market. However, the minimum is significantly below the culturally desired option of an owner-occupied house.

The minimum community standard provides a cultural benchmark for assessing ‘homelessness’ and ‘inadequate housing’ in the contemporary context. However, as Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) point out, there are a number of institutional settings where people do not have the minimal level of accommodation identified by the community standard, but in cultural terms they are not considered part of the homeless population. They include, inter alia, people living in seminaries, elderly people in nursing homes, students in university halls of residence and prisoners.

### 1.1 A MODEL OF HOMELESSNESS BASED ON SHARED COMMUNITY STANDARDS EMBODIED IN CURRENT HOUSING PRACTICES

**Minimum community standard:** equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom

<p><b>Culturally recognised exceptions:</b> where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard, e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence</p>	<p><b>Marginally housed:</b> people in housing situations close to the minimum standard</p> <p><b>Tertiary homelessness:</b> people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure</p> <p><b>Secondary homelessness:</b> people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends and relatives, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses</p> <p><b>Primary homelessness:</b> people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.)</p>
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Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992, p. 291.

While it is true that the concepts of ‘housed’ and ‘homeless’ constitute a continuum of circumstances, there are three situations that fall below the minimum community standard. This leads to the identification of ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘tertiary’ homelessness. The model (shown in Figure 1.1) also includes the concept of the ‘marginally housed’.

Primary homelessness accords with the common assumption that homelessness is the same as ‘rooflessness’. The category includes 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. Primary homelessness is operationalised using the census category ‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’.

Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, it includes

all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The starting point for identifying this group is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. They report 'no usual address' on their census form. Secondary homelessness also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness refers to 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 do not have separate bedrooms and living rooms; 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. They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard.

The terms primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are widely used, particularly when talking about census counts. However, the profile of the homeless population looks different if you classify people on the basis of their housing histories, rather than on the basis of their accommodation on census night. In a study of 4291 homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that 92 per cent of their sample had moved regularly from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Nearly everyone had stayed with friends or relatives, but 85 per cent had also stayed in a boarding house, 60 per cent had been in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 50 per cent had slept rough. People show up in particular places on census night but many homeless people will be somewhere else a few weeks later. Transience is the typical pattern. Primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are useful categories to describe people's housing situations on census night, but there are not three distinct groups of homeless people.

In *Counting the Homeless 2001*, we also identified 'marginal residents of caravan parks'. These people were defined as renting caravans, at their usual address, with no one in the household having full-time work. Like boarding house tenants, these households have one room for eating and sleeping and communal bathroom facilities. The 2001 research found that two-thirds (67 per cent) of boarding house residents were in the capital cities whereas three-quarters (78 per cent) of marginal residents of caravan parks were in regional centres and country towns (Chamberlain and MacKenzie

2003, Ch. 7). In some communities, there are no boarding houses and SAAP workers send people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

There is some disagreement as to whether marginal residents of caravan parks constitute a separate category. Reid, Griffin and Murdoch (2005) have examined this analysis carefully. They conclude that marginal residents of caravan parks are really part of the tertiary population. Giovanetti, Reid, Murdoch and Edwards (2007, p. 275) take a similar position:

Marginal residents of caravan parks were categorised as belonging to the tertiary homelessness category ...

We have two reservations about this approach. First, it is difficult for the wider community to accept that some people living in caravans are part of the tertiary homeless population when most caravan dwellers are on holiday or own their own caravan. The 2006 Census found that 56 per cent of individuals in caravan parks were on holiday. The census was held in winter and this figure would have been much higher in the summer months. Another 25 per cent owned their caravan and many had made a lifestyle choice to live in a caravan, typically following retirement. Only 14 per cent were marginal residents on census night and this figure would be significantly below 10 per cent in the summer months.

Second, it is now common to find that cabins are the main type of accommodation in caravan parks, and cabins often have better facilities than caravans. A cabin usually has a separate kitchen and bathroom and often has one or more bedrooms. The census cannot distinguish between households in caravans and cabins with certainty, but in 2006 we estimated that somewhere between one-quarter and one-half of marginal residents of caravan parks were living in cabins (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008, Ch. 7). This finding undermines the argument that marginal residents of caravan parks should be considered part of the tertiary population. It also means that our 'marginal residents' category is broader than indicated in *Counting the Homeless 2001*.



## 2 OVERCOUNTING AND UNDERCOUNTING

This chapter summarises how the national project enumerated the homeless population using the census and other data sets. It also contains a discussion of how there can be both overcounting and undercounting of homeless people. This is relevant to understanding why there can be anomalies when we examine the number of homeless people in particular communities.

### 2.1 IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS AND SLEEPERS OUT

The operational category for primary homelessness is 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. This category includes:

Sheds, tents, humpies, and other improvised dwellings, occupied on Census Night ... It also includes people sleeping on park benches or in other 'rough accommodation'. (ABS 2006b, p. 182)

First, we explain how the count was carried out. Then we estimate the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (public places, derelict buildings, tents, cars etc). Finally, we point out that rough sleepers are a very mobile population and therefore the numbers identified on census night may not accord with what people 'know' on the ground.

The efficacy of the local count depends on census collectors having good local knowledge. They have to know, for example, whether there are people squatting in empty buildings in their local community, or whether there might be families living in their cars, or whether there could be people camping in the bush.

In 2006, there was a special effort to count the primary population in all states and territories. People without conventional accommodation are particularly difficult to count because they usually hide away at night to escape the cold. The 2006 Census was carried out in winter in the southern states, where night-time temperatures were generally cold. In addition, some homeless people were hostile to the idea of providing information to the government and did not want to fill out official forms. Other homeless people were hidden away in derelict buildings and census collectors were unaware of their presence. Counting the primary population is a major practical challenge.

There were a number of components to the ABS strategy. Field staff were encouraged to work closely with local service providers who might know if people were squatting in derelict buildings or sleeping rough in their community. In all states, local services provided intelligence on where people might be found sleeping rough. In some cases, census forms were handed out at these agencies. It was also widely reported that mobile food vans were a good place to hand out census forms. This strategy was used in capital cities and in some regional centres, but implementation varied across the states.

The ABS also had short census forms that could be filled out by ABS staff where personal forms were judged inappropriate. The short forms were less intimidating than the longer personal forms.

In addition, there was a procedure for filling out a substitute form when a homeless person was observed by a census collector but was not able to be interviewed. Observation is an accepted method for counting people sleeping rough. Collectors were asked to record sex, estimated age and location.

The category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' also included overseas visitors and Australian residents who were on camping holidays. International visitors can be identified because they report a usual address overseas, and Australian holidaymakers can be identified because they report a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'. Once both groups were removed, this left 16 375 individuals nationally in 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out', including 2392 people in this category in Western Australia.

Next, we estimate the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (public places, derelict buildings, tents, cars etc). In public discussions about homelessness, it is sometimes assumed that there are 16 375 rough sleepers. However, the category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' includes a wide range of situations from someone sleeping in a park, to someone sheltering in a derelict building, to someone living in a shed of some kind. Sheds can vary from broken-down buildings to assembled colour-bond farm sheds and garages.

There were 16 375 people in the 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' category, made up of 9414 households. It is not possible to quantify with certainty the number of people in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of rough sleepers, but if we make two assumptions we can make some estimates.

First, we examined the responses of people in the ‘improvised homes’ category to the census question about dwelling tenure. We found that that 10 per cent were in rented dwellings and 39 per cent of households were in dwellings that were owned or being purchased. After talking with building inspectors and town planners across the country, we made the judgment that the ‘owner, purchaser, renter’ reply indicated that these households were usually living in improvised dwellings such as sheds, garages and shacks. In the case of owners and purchasers, this was their own property. It is also probable that people living in cars would have reported ‘owning’ their dwellings and this is more likely to be the case in the cities.

Second, 51 per cent of households did not answer the question about dwelling tenure and we took this to indicate that they were sleeping rough, squatting in derelict buildings, or living in other forms of temporary shelter. This assumption was in accord with other information from service providers and council staff in local areas. If both assumptions are reasonable, then we can estimate the numbers in improvised dwellings and sleeping rough, but we cannot quantify this exactly.

In the capital cities, about 75 per cent of households in the primary homelessness category were sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings and in Perth it was about 68 per cent. However, in regional Australia about 60 per cent of these households were living in sheds, garages and shacks and in regional Western Australia it was about 56 per cent. Most of these dwellings were on land that was ‘owned or being purchased’, but about 20 per cent of the dwellings were rented. Both owners and renters were living in rural poverty.

Building inspectors and town planners across the country reported that most people living in sheds were not building houses. In many cases, the householder had laid a concrete slab and then erected a metal shed, assembled from a prefabricated kit. We were told that people in improvised dwellings had often moved into communities where it was possible to purchase cheap blocks of land and they had probably dreamed of building houses on their blocks. However, these were also communities where unemployment was high and the newcomers remained unemployed or marginally attached to the labour force. These families may have dreamed of building a house, but the dream had not been realised and they were living in rural poverty.

In the capital cities, people in the category ‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’ are usually transient and without conventional shelter. In regional and remote Australia, about 40 per cent of households in this category were transient but 60 per cent were living in improvised dwellings

which they owned, rented or were purchasing. These dwellings were below the community standard, but these households were not ‘rough sleepers’ and they were not transient.

In the cities, people sleeping rough, squatting in derelict buildings or using vehicles for shelter are likely to move from place to place. Twenty people may show up in a particular subdivision on census night, but a week later they may be somewhere else. When we carry out a local analysis there is a risk that it will not accord with what people ‘know’ on the ground, because the population may have changed since the time of the census. However, in inland Australia, people in improvised dwellings are more stable.

## 2.2 SAAP SERVICES

The starting point for counting people in accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was the census category ‘hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges’. However, we knew that many of these dwellings were misclassified at previous censuses (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, pp. 23–24). Youth refuges and women’s refuges often look like suburban houses and sometimes census collectors did not realise they were SAAP accommodation. These dwellings were mistakenly classified as ‘private dwellings’. The ABS convention is to replace census figures with information from the SAAP National Data Collection if the SAAP figures are higher.

In 2006, the ABS had two strategies to count people accommodated in refuges, hostels and other forms of emergency accommodation. The ‘list strategy’ required the Census Management Unit (CMU) in each state/territory to consult with the relevant government department to see if the department could supply a list of all their SAAP properties. The ABS guaranteed the confidentiality of these lists. The lists were passed on to specified ABS officers to assist with confidential data processing. The lists enabled ABS staff to identify SAAP properties that had been classified as private dwellings.

All states provided lists but they were of uneven quality. Some states provided a comprehensive list of their supported accommodation. Other states provided a list but excluded women’s refuges (for security reasons), while other states provided only partial lists of their SAAP properties.

The second component of the ABS approach was the ‘green sticker’ strategy which was first used in 2001. This involved the distribution of information to service providers offering them an alternative way to return their census forms. Service providers were advised that they could request a mail-back envelope from the census collector to ensure confidentiality.

Service providers were asked to return the census forms directly to the Data Processing Centre and to attach a green sticker which facilitated the identification of SAAP accommodation.

Overall, the census strategy worked better than in 2001, but in all states (except Victoria) the census count was lower than the SAAP count. The Victorian Department provided the ABS with a full list of its SAAP addresses as well as a full list of its Transitional Housing Management (THM) properties. We followed the established convention and replaced the census data with National SAAP Data for all states and territories except Victoria. There were 19 849 people in SAAP across Australia and 1395 in Western Australia.

### 2.3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Homeless people staying temporarily with friends or relatives were identified at the question: 'What is the person's usual address?' There was an instruction on the census form that people with no usual address should write 'none' in the suburb/locality box. In 2006, the number of people staying temporarily with other households was 32 200.

The census underestimates the number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 who are staying temporarily with friends or relatives, because people filling out the census forms often record that these teenagers have a usual address elsewhere (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008a, Ch. 3). We corrected for undercounting in this age group using information from the third National Census of Homeless School Students.

The count of homeless school students was carried out in the same week that the ABS undertook the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Welfare staff in secondary schools identified 7035 homeless students using the cultural definition of homelessness. This figure was used in conjunction with SAAP data on the proportion of school students accommodated in SAAP to estimate the overall homeless population aged 12 to 18. The final correction for undercounting was 14 656. The number of homeless people staying temporarily with friends and relatives was 46 856, including 7952 people in Western Australia.

There was no information on how the missing 14 656 young people were distributed geographically within each state and territory. An assumption was made that they were distributed in the same way as other persons staying temporarily with friends and relatives. This assumption cannot be corroborated independently, and it could mean that homeless people in this category were overestimated in some geographical areas and underestimated in others.

The method of estimating the number of persons staying temporarily with other households also depends on how people interpret the census question that asks for each person's usual address. For example, an Indigenous household may be unwilling to record that a relative escaping domestic violence has 'no usual address'. We have a method for estimating the undercount for those aged 12 to 18, but there is no method for estimating the undercount in other age groups or for Indigenous people.

Finally, it is important to remember that the number of people staying temporarily with friends and relatives also goes up and down, because most people stay temporarily with other households on a short-term basis.

## 2.4 BOARDING HOUSES

The final category is people living in boarding houses. This was the most complicated part of the count and it is explained fully in Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008c). Here the main points are summarised in three steps: a discussion of the 'basic rules', the '2001 conventions' and the '2006 conventions'.

### *Basic rules*

The 2006 Census used 20 categories for coding non-private dwellings. The categories included 'hotel, motel, bed and breakfast' and 'boarding house, private hotel'. This distinction draws attention to the fact that there are major differences between conventional hotels that many travellers use and boarding houses (often called 'private hotels').

The 2006 Census identified 16 273 people in 'boarding houses and private hotels'. However, three groups had to be excluded: owners and staff members who were sleeping over on census night; guests who reported a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'; and backpackers who reported a usual address overseas.

In addition, there are four ABS conventions to correct for the fact that census collectors sometimes misclassify 'boarding houses', 'hotels' and 'staff quarters'. After applying the 'basic rules', the number in boarding houses was 14 490 in 2006 compared with 17 972 in 2001.

### *2001 conventions*

There was an important change in ABS procedures in 2001 which impacted on the boarding house count. Following the 1996 census, ABS staff telephoned those dwellings where there was insufficient information to identify dwelling type. Where additional information could be obtained a more accurate classification was entered. In 2001, these follow-up telephone

calls were discontinued and the number of dwellings in the 'other' category increased from 536 to 2784. The number of persons in those dwellings jumped from 12 938 to 54 636 and it remained at 54 000 in 2006.

The '2001 conventions' involve the application of five rules to identify boarding houses in the 'other' category (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch. 3). When these rules were applied in 2006, they produced a correction of 3763.

### *2006 conventions*

Boarding houses have been closing down in the inner suburbs of the capital cities, but new boarding houses have been opening up in some outer suburbs. These dwellings often look like suburban houses and rarely have a sign outside. Census collectors could have misclassified these boarding houses as 'private dwellings'.

In 2006, an investigation was undertaken to see whether it was possible to identify boarding houses in the 'private dwellings' category. The final stage of the investigation focused on 9000 private dwellings that had five or more unrelated adults. A small boarding house or a share household could have five or more unrelated tenants. Five criteria were devised to exclude working households, student households, housing for disabled people and dwellings that were too small to be boarding houses. After the rules were applied, there were 705 dwellings remaining with 3343 residents. These were boarding houses that had been misclassified as private dwellings.

In 2006, the total number of persons in boarding houses was 21 596 ( $14\,490 + 3763 + 3343 = 21\,596$ ), compared with 22 877 in 2001. The number of boarding house residents in Western Australia was 1652 in 2006, compared with 1755 in 2001.

The ABS conventions for identifying boarding houses are complicated and it is possible that some dwellings could have been misclassified at all three stages of the analysis. Undercounting could have occurred in some communities and overcounting in others because of misclassification. This can lead to anomalies when we examine the number of people in boarding houses in particular subdivisions.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The census provides the best data that we have on the homeless population at a point in time, but as we have seen there can be 'undercounting' and 'overcounting' of homeless people on census night. Undercounting is most likely in the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out', and overcounting is more likely in the boarding house category because of misclassification.



The problem of establishing reliable census figures for policy purposes is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time. New people become homeless and some homeless people return to secure accommodation, so the number of homeless people goes up and down.

It is also common for homeless people to move between different forms of temporary accommodation within the same city, and to move both within and between states. The census data was collected in August 2006, and it is unrealistic to expect the same number of homeless people in particular areas at the current time. The challenge is to identify patterns in the population data that might inform the policy process.



### 3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter describes the social characteristics of the homeless population in Western Australia. First, we compare the rate of homelessness and the number of homeless people in each state and territory. Then we investigate where homeless people were staying on census night. After that we describe the age and gender characteristics of the population. Finally, we comment on the number of Indigenous people.

#### 3.1 HOW MANY?

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important. First, there is the number of homeless people in each state and territory on census night. Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10 000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing states and territories of different sizes.

Table 3.1 shows that the rates of homelessness in each state and territory did not change much between 2001 and 2006. In New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, there were 42 homeless people per 10 000 in 2006, similar to the rates recorded in those states in 2001. South Australia and Tasmania each had a rate of 53 per 10 000 in 2006, again similar to their rates in 2001. The rates of homelessness in the other states were higher. In Western Australia and Queensland, there were between 64 and 70 per 10 000 at both censuses. In the Northern Territory there were 248 homeless people per 10 000 in 2006.

#### 3.1 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	42	42	69	68	53	53	248	42	53
2001	42	44	70	64	52	52	288	40	53

*Source:* Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

Table 3.2 shows the number of homeless people in each state and territory in 2001 and 2006. In Western Australia, it was 11 697 in 2001 and 13 391 in 2006. We know that the number of homeless people goes up and down, but in Western Australia a typical point-in-time figure is probably

about 13 390, up from about 11 700 in 2001.

### 3.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	27 374	20 511	26 782	13 391	7962	2507	4785	1364	104 676
2001	26 676	20 305	24 569	11 697	7586	2415	5423	1229	99 900

*Source:* Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

### 3.2 ACCOMMODATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

The homeless population in Western Australia was distributed differently from the national homeless population (Table 1). Nationally, 20 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses on census night whereas the comparable figure was 12 per cent in Western Australia. Across Australia, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Western Australia the figure was 11 per cent. There were significantly more people staying temporarily with other households in Western Australia (59 per cent compared with 45 per cent across Australia), and there were more people in 'improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out' (18 per cent compared with 16 per cent nationally).

### 3.3 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia		Western Australia	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	1652	12
SAAP accommodation	19 849	19	1395	11
Friends and relatives	46 856	45	7952	59
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	2392	18
	104 676	100	13 391	100

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

In Western Australia, the proportions of people in various types of accommodation were fairly similar in 2001 and 2006 (Table 3.4). In 2006, the largest group (59 per cent) was those staying with friends or relatives on census night, up from 58 per cent in 2001. The proportion in boarding houses declined from 15 to 12 per cent and the numbers in SAAP increased from eight to 11 per cent. The proportion in improvised dwellings declined from 19 to 18 per cent.

### 3.4 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 2001 AND 2006

	2001		2006	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	1755	15	1652	12
SAAP accommodation	945	8	1395	11
Friends and relatives	6755	58	7952	59
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	2242	19	2392	18
	11 697	100	13 391	100

*Source:* Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

The census takes a ‘snapshot’ of where homeless people are staying on census night, but it is important to remember that homeless people often move from one form of temporary accommodation to another. There is a high degree of permeability between the four operational categories used to count the homeless population on census night. There would have been some people living in boarding houses on a long-term basis (tertiary homelessness) and some people living permanently in improvised dwellings (primary homelessness). However, most homeless people would have been moving between different forms of temporary accommodation, including friends and relatives, SAAP accommodation, boarding houses and improvised dwellings. Transience is the typical pattern.

### 3.3 AGE DISTRIBUTION

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that the homeless population was disproportionately made up of middle-aged and older men (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973, 1994). For example, Jordan (1994, p. 21) reported that there were few teenagers in the population and that 80 per cent of the men in his sample were aged 35 or older. De Hoog (1972) gives a similar impression in his ethnographic account of life on Sydney’s skid row at the end of the 1960s.

Table 3.5 shows that the age profile of the population is now very different. Next we examine the national figures, then we look at the figures for Western Australia.

In 2006, 58 per cent of the homeless across Australia were in the younger age groups and only 42 per cent were aged 35 or older. Twelve per cent of the homeless were children under 12. These young people were with parents on census night. Another 21 per cent of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own) and 10 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24. The age profile of the population is now much

younger than 40 to 50 years ago.

### 3.5 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia			Western Australia		
	N	%		N	%	
Under 12	12 133	12	58	1216	9	62
12–18	21 940	21		4280	32	
19–24	10 504	10		1062	8	
25–34	15 804	15		1762	13	
35–44	13 981	13	42	1504	11	38
45–54	12 206	12		1417	11	
55–64	10 708	10		1394	10	
65 or older	7400	7		756	6	
	104 676	100		13 391	100	

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

The age profile of the homeless population in Western Australia was significantly younger than the age profile of the national population (Table 3.5). Sixty-two per cent of the homeless in Western Australia were aged 34 or younger compared with the national figure of 58 per cent. One-third (32 per cent) of the homeless in Western Australia were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own). Nine per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another eight per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24, and 13 per cent were adults aged 25 to 34.

Altogether, 38 per cent of the homeless in Western Australia were aged 35 or older, compared with the national figure of 42 per cent.

### 3.4 MALES AND FEMALES

In 2006, men outnumbered women in the national homeless population, 56 to 44 per cent (Table 3), and in Western Australia men outnumbered women, 54 to 46 per cent. In Western Australia, there were more females in the 12-to-18 age group (53 to 47 per cent), but more males in the 19-to-24 age group (55 to 45 per cent). From age 25 onwards, men outnumbered women, about 60 to 40 per cent.

### 3.6 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

#### Western Australia

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	51	47	55	59	62	58	56	65	54
Female	49	53	45	41	38	42	44	35	46
	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.

Table 3.7 shows the proportion of males and females in different sectors of the homeless population on census night. Nationally, 72 per cent of boarding house residents were male and in Western Australia the figure was 74 per cent. Amongst people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough in Western Australia, men outnumbered women, 58 to 42 per cent. There were slightly more men than women staying with other households (51 to 49 per cent), but there were more women than men in SAAP (54 to 46 per cent).

### 3.7 PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

#### Australia

	Boarding house (N=21 596)	Friends or relatives (N=46 856)	SAAP (N=19 849)	Improvised dwellings (N=16 375)	All (N=104 676)
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	72	52	47	60	56
Female	28	48	53	40	44
	100	100	100	100	100

#### Western Australia

	Boarding house (N=1652)	Friends or relatives (N=7952)	SAAP (N=1395)	Improvised dwellings (N=2 392)	All (N=13 391)
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	74	51	46	58	54
Female	26	49	54	42	46
	100	100	100	100	100

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

### 3.5 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Western Australia, 3.2 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 3.8 shows that Indigenous people made up 3.9 per cent of people staying with other households, 11.8 per cent of persons in boarding houses, 18.8 per cent of those in improvised dwellings and 40.3 per cent of people in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Western Australia.

### 3.8 PERCENTAGE OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	Boarding house (N=1652)	Friends or relatives (N=7952)	SAAP (N=1337)	Improvised dwellings (N=2392)	All* (N=13 333)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	88.2	96.1	59.7	81.2	88.8
Indigenous	11.8	3.9	40.3	18.8	11.2
	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 58 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

There is a risk that Indigenous people staying temporarily with other households were undercounted. The census asked for each person's usual address, and people with no usual address were asked to write this in. Indigenous people interpret this question within a different cultural frame of reference.

Often, Indigenous people do not think of 'home' as a particular dwelling, because they are attached to their traditional land. Indigenous people also have extended kinship networks and they move between dwellings belonging to extended family members. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they usually move in with households that are related to them. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on census night, because 'home' is understood in a different way. This creates undercounting in this category.

### 3.6 SUMMARY

The number of homeless people fluctuates because people move in and out of homelessness. In Western Australia, we estimate that a typical point-in-time figure is about 13 790, up from about 11 700 in 2001.

The homeless population in Western Australia was distributed differently from the national homeless population. Nationally, 45 per cent of the homeless were staying with other households, but in Western Australia it was 59 per cent. Western Australia had fewer people in boarding houses (12 per cent compared with 20 per cent nationally), but more people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (18 per cent compared with 16 per cent). Across Australia, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP, but in Western Australia it was 11 per cent.

Nationally, 56 per cent of homeless people were male and 44 per cent were female. In Western Australia men outnumbered women, 54 to 46 per cent. The homeless population in Western Australia was younger than the homeless population in other states, with 62 per cent of the homeless aged 35 or younger, compared with 58 per cent nationally. In Western Australia, Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sectors of the population, but particularly in SAAP and amongst people using improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.





## 4 PERTH

This chapter discusses different ways of approaching a geographical analysis. Then it focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Perth.

### 4.1 NUMBERS AND RATES

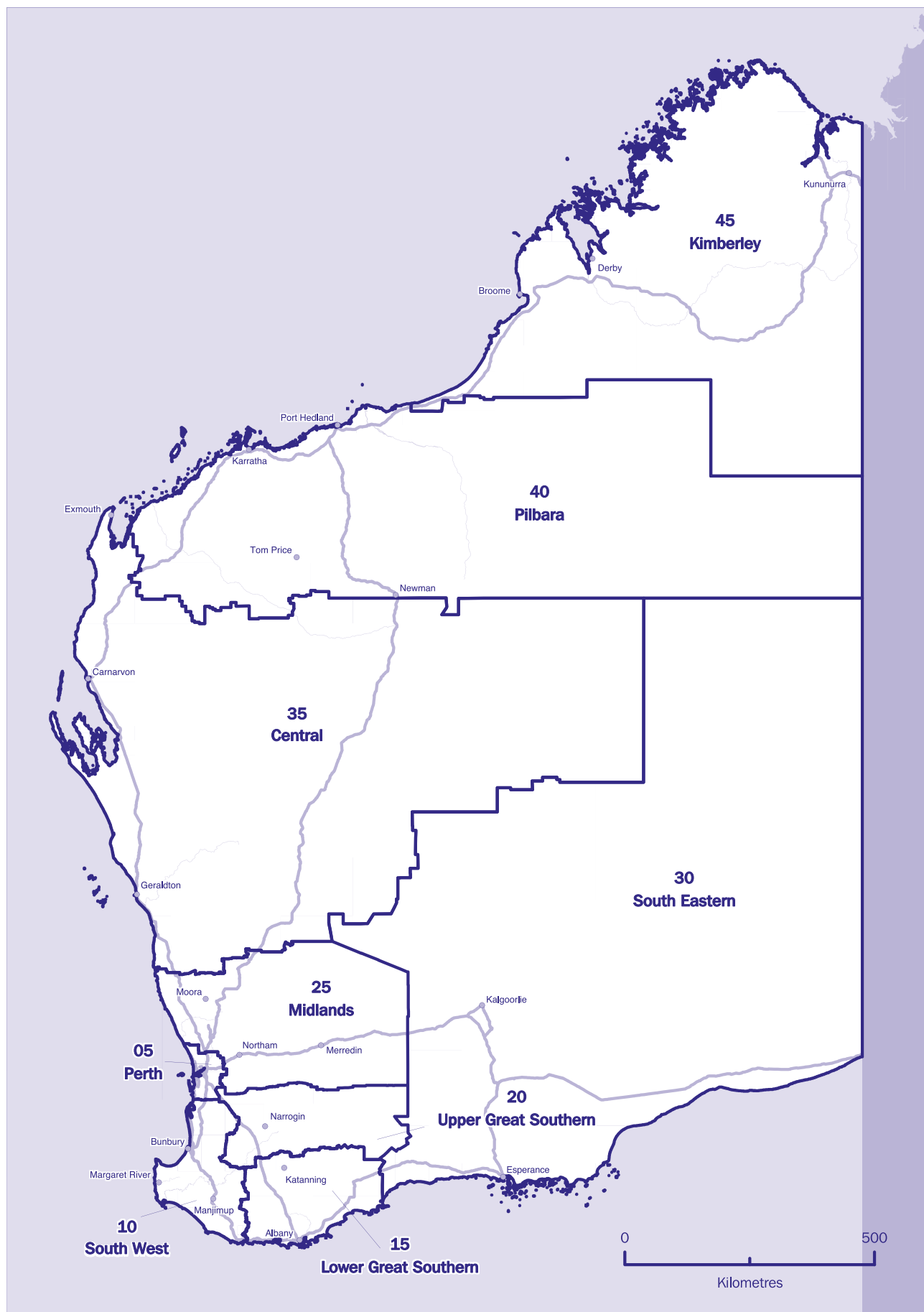
There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important. First, there is the number of homeless people in particular communities on census night. This is the 'raw' count and policy makers always need to be aware of these figures.

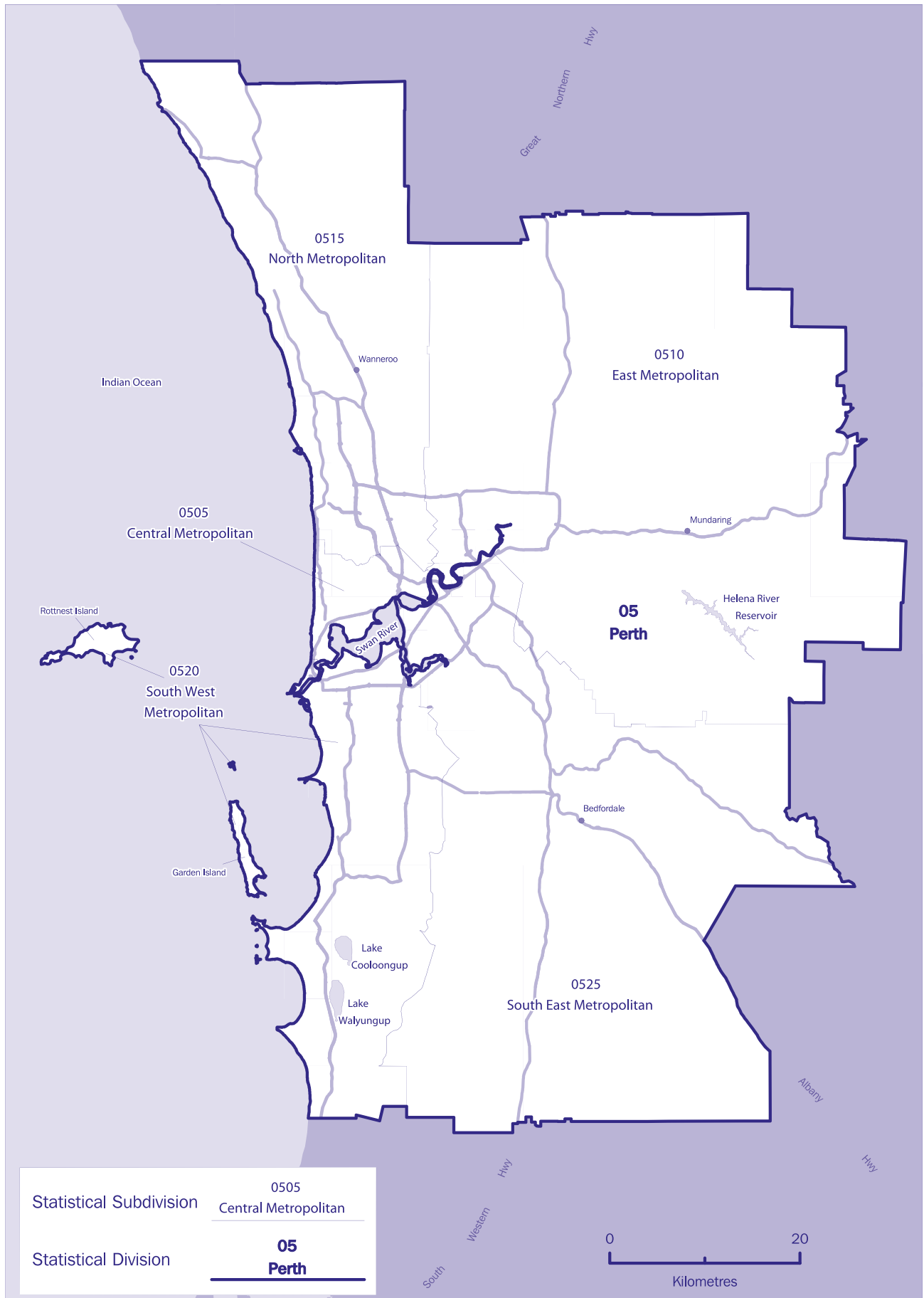
Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10 000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing communities of different sizes. For example, the number of homeless people will always be greater in Perth than in a regional city because of the difference in population size, but the rate of homelessness may be the same in both communities.

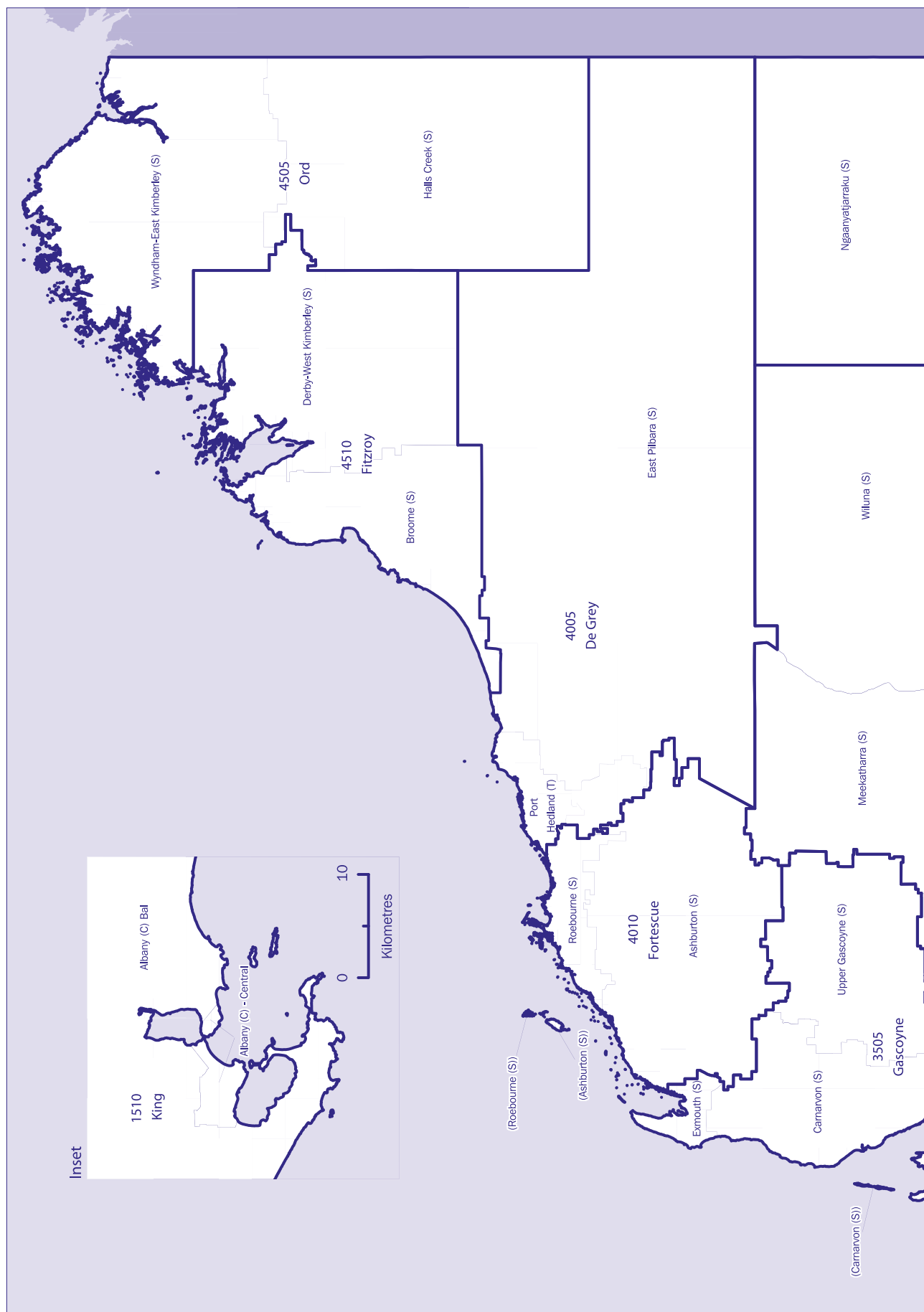
However, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for two reasons. First, the rate of homelessness in a particular area does not tell us how many people in that community became homeless. For example, the rate of homelessness in Kalgoorlie quantifies the number of homeless people in relation to the Kalgoorlie population, but it does not tell us whether those people came from Kalgoorlie, other parts of Western Australia or from interstate. Homeless people move around and the numbers in particular areas partly reflect the services that are available.

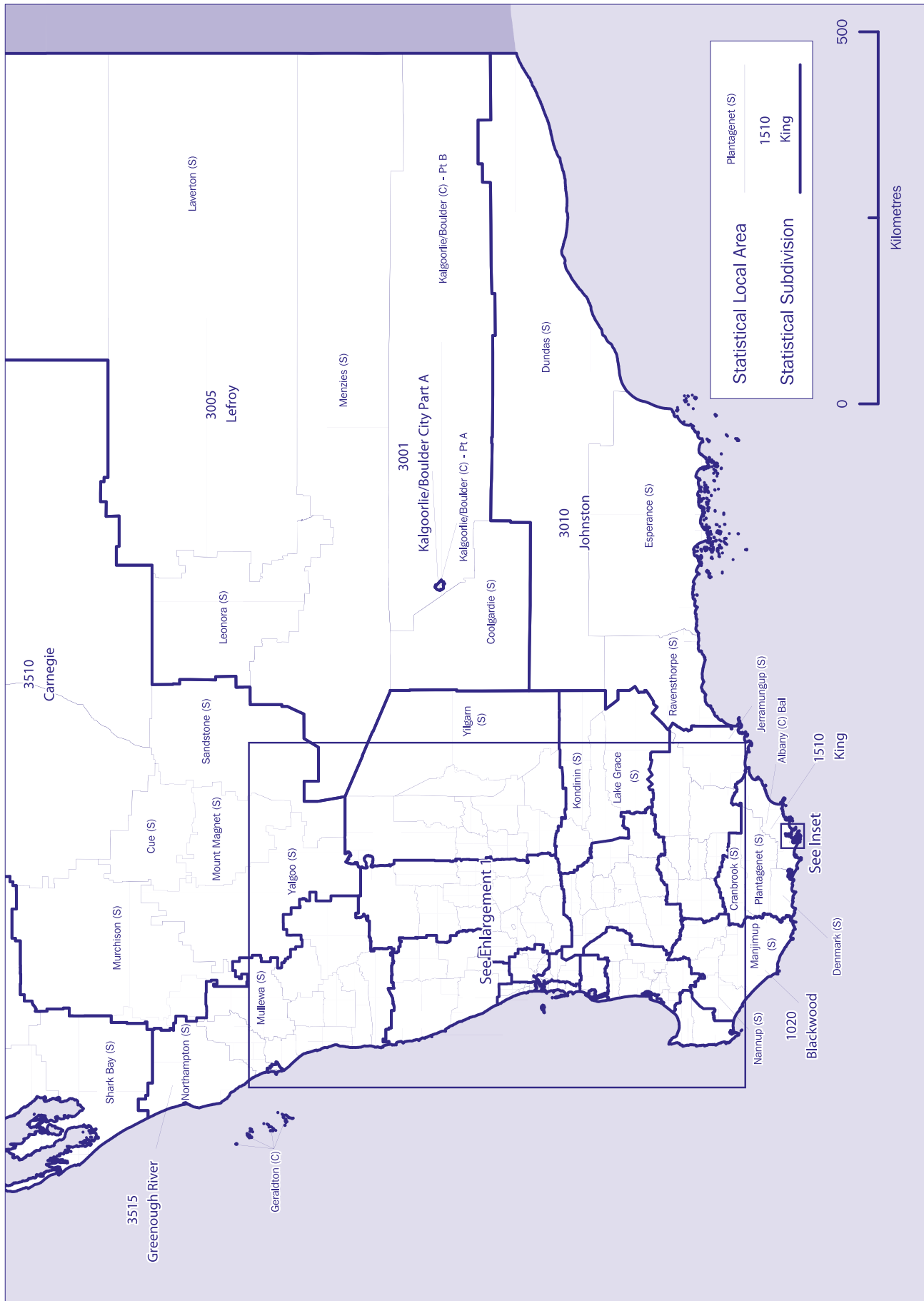
Second, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for geographical areas with small populations. Suppose that policy makers have the resources to fund one new SAAP service and they are evaluating the competing claims of two communities. In a small town of 2000 people the rate of homelessness was 100 per 10 000, whereas in a regional city of 30 000 it was 30 per 10 000. Should the resources go to the rural community or to the regional city?

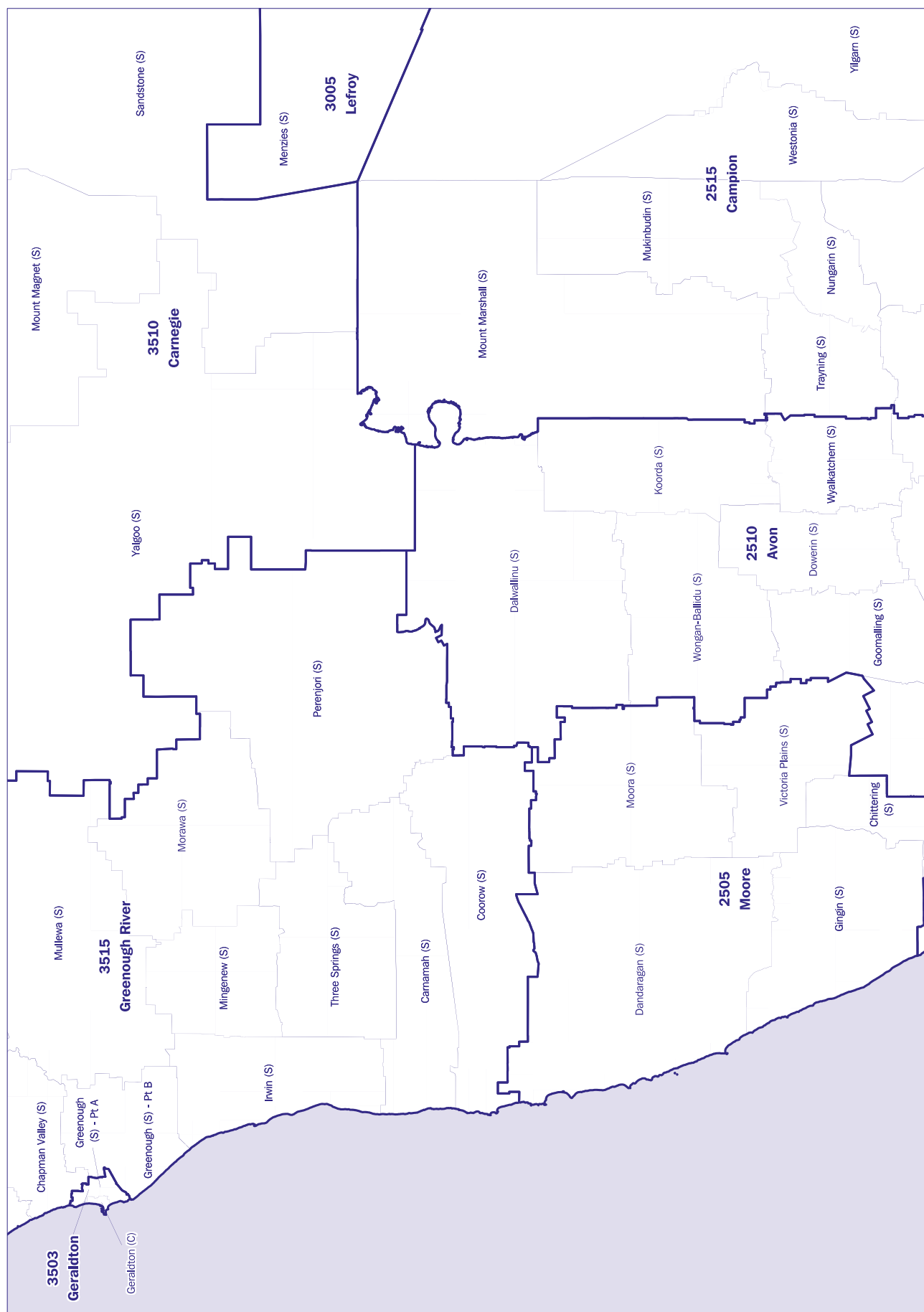
In the rural community, there would have been 20 homeless people ( $20 \times 10\,000/2000 = 100$  per 10 000), whereas in the regional city there would have been 90 homeless people ( $90 \times 10\,000/30\,000 = 30$  per 10 000). When policy makers allocate resources, they have to consider both the number of homeless people in a community and the rate of homelessness, as well as local intelligence about what is happening 'on the ground', in order to match services with expressed need.

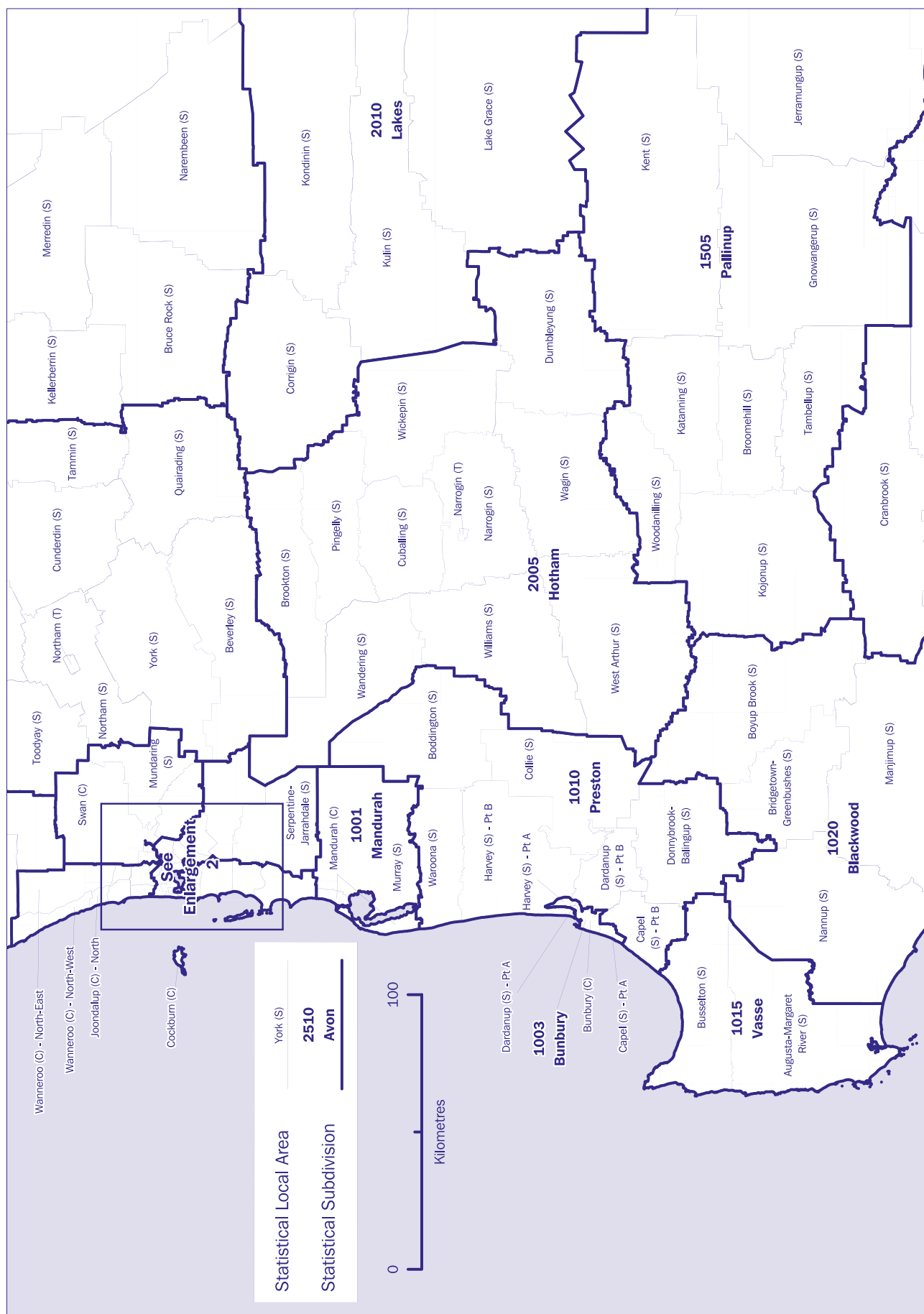
**MAP 1: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Divisions**

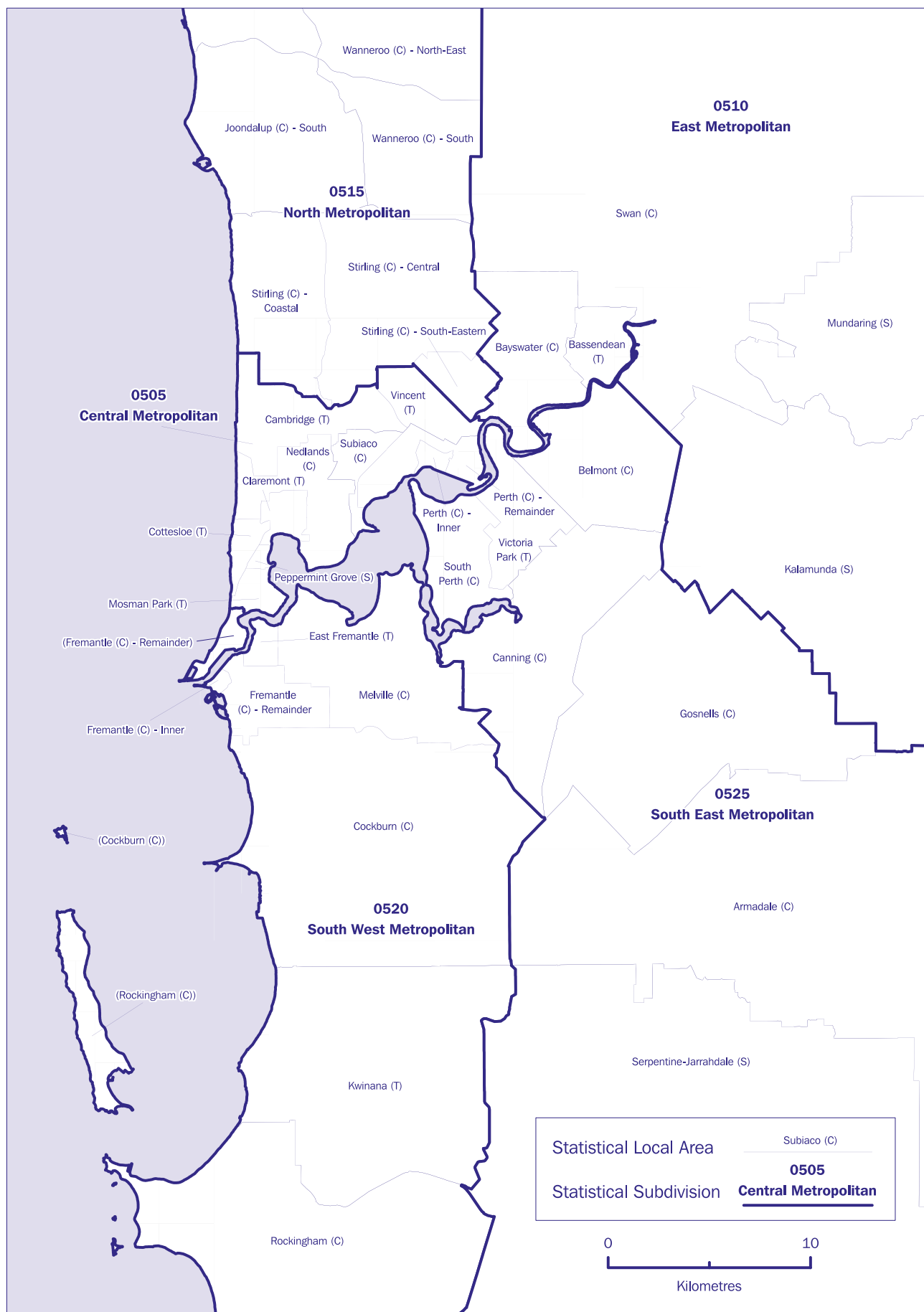
**MAP 2: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Perth Statistical Division**

**MAP 3: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas**

**MAP 3: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas**

**MAP 4: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 1**

**MAP 4: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 1**

**MAP 5: WESTERN AUSTRALIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 2**



## 4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

There are a number of ways of approaching a geographical analysis. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) for the collection and dissemination of geographically organised statistics (ABS 2006c). The ASGC provides seven interrelated classification structures which are designed for different practical purposes. This report uses the 'Main Structure' which covers the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. The Main Structure comprises five hierarchical levels: census districts, statistical local areas, statistical subdivisions, statistical divisions, and states and territories. This analysis uses statistical divisions and statistical subdivisions as the main geographical categories, because patterns can be identified more easily if larger geographical categories are used.

In each state and territory, the capital city is treated as a statistical division which includes the greater metropolitan area and any anticipated growth corridors for at least the next 20 years. The statistical division 'represents the city in a wider sense' (ABS 2006c, p. 15). Statistical divisions outside of the capital cities are 'relatively homogeneous region(s) characterised by identifiable ... links between the inhabitants and between the economic units within the region, under the unifying influence of one or more major towns or cities' (ABS 2006c, p. 15).

Western Australia is divided into nine statistical divisions (excluding off-shore and migratory). They are Perth, South West, Lower Great Southern, Upper Great Southern, Midlands, South Eastern, Central, Pilbara and Kimberley. The nine statistical divisions are divided into 28 subdivisions.

Statistical subdivisions are defined as 'socially and economically homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable links between the inhabitants' (ABS 2006c, p. 14). Perth is divided into five statistical subdivisions. There are also statistical subdivisions which correspond to major regional population centres. There are 44 of these across the country, including four in Western Australia. They are Mandurah, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie/Boulder and Geraldton.

In other cases, statistical subdivisions cover non-urban areas. These are defined as rural areas which do not include cities with populations of 25 000 or above. These non-urban areas are said to have 'identifiable links between economic units within the region' and there may be the 'unifying influence' (ABS 2006c, p. 14) of one or more country towns. These rural/remote subdivisions have small populations, and sometimes they have high rates of homelessness but few homeless people.

### 4.3 OVERVIEW: WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Three-quarters (74 per cent) of the population of Western Australia lives in Perth and this is where we find the largest concentration of homeless people. Table 4.1 shows that the census identified 6720 homeless people in Perth and the rate of homelessness was 47 per 10 000. This was identical to the rate of homelessness in Adelaide, but higher than the rate in Sydney (39 per 10 000) and Melbourne (41 per 10 000).

#### 4.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, PERTH AND REGIONAL AND REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	Perth	Regional and remote	Western Australia
Number	6720	6671	13 391
Rate	47	131	68

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

There were 6671 homeless people in regional and remote Western Australia where the rate was 131 per 10 000 (Table 4.1). This chapter focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Perth. Chapter 5 discusses regional and remote Western Australia.

### 4.4 PERTH

The statistical division of Perth is comprised of five subdivisions (Map 2). Central Metropolitan has a population of 125 000 and includes central Perth. East Metropolitan has a population of 247 000 and includes Bayswater, Kalamunda and Swan. North Metropolitan (population 437 000) covers Perth's expanding Northern suburbs including Joondalup and Wanneroo. South West Metropolitan has a population of 307 000 and stretches from Fremantle to Rockingham. South East Metropolitan (population 329 000) includes Gosnells and Armadale.

#### 4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, PERTH STATISTICAL SUBDIVISIONS

	Central	East	North	South West	South East	Total
Number	1368	843	1719	1543	1247	6720
Rate	109	34	39	50	38	47

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

Table 4.2 shows that the rate of homelessness was 109 per 10 000 in Central Metropolitan where there were 1368 homeless people. Central Metropolitan had nine per cent of Perth's population, but it contained 30 per cent of Perth's boarding house residents, 40 per cent of its SAAP residents, and 35 per cent of persons in the improvised dwellings category. It is common to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of the capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart. Homeless people coming from other states often gravitate to the inner city where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

The rate of homelessness was 34 per 10 000 in East Metropolitan where there were 843 homeless people (Table 4.2). The rate was 38 and 39 per 10 000 in the South East and North subdivisions, where there were 1247 and 1719 homeless people respectively.<sup>1</sup> In South West Metropolitan, the rate was 50 per 10 000 (1543 homeless people).

In Central Metropolitan, 24 per cent of the homeless were staying with other households. In contrast, between 67 and 69 per cent were in this category in East Metropolitan, North Metropolitan and South East Metropolitan (Table 4.3). Half (56 per cent) were with other households in South West Metropolitan.

Altogether, there were 5352 homeless people in suburban Perth compared with 1368 in Central Metropolitan (Table 4.2). The rate of homelessness was lower in the suburbs, but the number of homeless people was substantial. People often become homeless in the suburbs but they migrate to the inner city. 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.

<sup>1</sup> In North Metropolitan Perth, 228 out of the 262 people recorded in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough were in one census collector's district. This was a classification error made by a census collector. Based on discussions with local informants in North Metropolitan, we estimate the primary population was between 50 and 70.

### 4.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, PERTH

#### Percentage

	Central	East	North	South West	South East	Total
Boarding house	24	12	2	27	16	16
SAAP	32	13	14	11	10	16
Friends/relatives	24	67	69	56	68	56
Improvised dwellings	20	8	15	6	6	12
	100	100	100	100	100	100

#### Number

	Central	East	North	South West	South East	Total
Boarding house	334	105	40	422	196	1097
SAAP	430	109	235	172	124	1070
Friends/relatives	334	562	1182	861	847	3786
Improvised dwellings	270	67	262	88	80	767
	1368	843	1719	1543	1247	6720

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

In Central Metropolitan Perth, there were 270 people in the ‘improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out’ category (Table 4.3). One census collector counted ‘three people sleeping in a makeshift dwelling under a bridge’. Another saw ‘four young people who were chroming’ and another counted people ‘sleeping in a park’. Four census collectors reported squats in the inner suburbs and central city.

Overall, there were 6720 homeless people in Perth on census night, up from 5637 in 2001. The rate of homelessness was 109 per 10 000 in Central Perth, compared with between 34 and 50 per 10 000 in suburban areas. In the inner city, homeless people were distributed fairly evenly across the different sectors, whereas in suburban Perth they were more likely to be staying with other households.

### 4.5 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

The national report pointed out that boarding houses are more common in capital cities and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes refer homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available. Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting caravans or cabins, living at their usual address, and with no one in the dwelling having full-time employment.

#### 4.4 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE IN BOARDING HOUSES AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	Boarding house (N=1652)	Caravan (N=1994)
	%	%
Perth	66	27
Remainder of WA	34	73
	100	100

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

Seventy per cent of boarding house residents across the country were in the capital cities, and in Western Australia 66 per cent of boarding house residents were in Perth (Table 4.4). Nationally, 71 per cent of marginal caravan park residents were outside of the capital cities, and in Western Australia this figure was 73 per cent (Table 4.4). There were 1460 marginal residents of caravan parks in rural and remote Western Australia, whereas there were 534 in Perth.

#### 4.5 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, PERTH

	Central	East	North	South West	South East	Total
Homeless	1368	843	1719	1543	1247	6720
Rate per 10 000	109	34	39	50	38	47
Caravan	0	80	129	170	155	534
Total	1368	923	1848	1713	1402	7254
Rate per 10 000	109	37	42	56	43	50

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

Table 4.5 shows that there were 170 marginal residents of caravan parks in South West Metropolitan Perth, 155 in South East Metropolitan and 129 in North Metropolitan. The issue of whether marginal caravan park dwellers are included in the homeless population is a difficult one. For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks might be thought of as part of the tertiary population. If these residents are included, then the rate of homelessness was 50 per 10 000 in Perth, compared with 47 per 10 000 using the ABS definition of homelessness.



## 5 REGIONAL AND REMOTE

There are eight statistical divisions covering regional and remote Western Australia (Map 1). Regional and remote Western Australia has a population of 514 000 people and 40 per cent are in the South West statistical division. Another four divisions (Lower Great Southern, Midlands, South Eastern and Central) have populations between 50 000 and 57 500, and three divisions (Kimberley, Pilbara and Upper Great Southern) have populations between 17 700 and 41 000. These areas can have high rates of homelessness but relatively few homeless people.

### 5.1 SOUTH WEST

The South West has a population of 207 000. Its subdivisions include the regional centres of Mandurah (population 68 000) and Bunbury (population 55 000), as well as Preston, Vasse and Blackwood, which are rural. The rate of homelessness was 57 per 10 000 in the South West (Table 5.1), somewhat higher than Perth (47 per 10 000). There were 342 homeless people in Mandurah, 276 in Bunbury, about 227 in Preston and Vasse, and 112 in Blackwood (Table 5.1).

#### 5.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SOUTH WEST STATISTICAL SUBDIVISIONS

	Mandurah	Bunbury	Preston	Vasse	Blackwood	Total
Number	342	276	227	226	112	1183
Rate	50	50	69	63	71	57

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

There were nearly 1200 homeless people in the South West, but they were spread thinly across five subdivisions. A majority (59 per cent) were staying with friends and relatives and one-quarter (25 per cent) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (Table 5.2). Local service providers reported that a small number of people sleep rough. However, two-thirds of the households in 'improvised dwellings' were living in sheds on blocks of land that were either owned or being purchased. These people had bought cheap blocks of land with the dream of building a house, but they

had never had sufficient resources to build. A small number were into 'alternative lifestyles', but most were 'poor people who can't afford to build'. In the South West statistical division, there were only a handful of people in boarding houses or SAAP accommodation.

## 5.2 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, SOUTH WEST STATISTICAL SUBDIVISIONS

### Percentage

	Mandurah	Bunbury	Preston	Vasse	Blackwood	Total
Boarding house	5	11	6	8	10	8
SAAP	11	21	0	0	0	8
Friends/relatives	61	60	47	69	53	59
Improvised dwellings	23	8	47	23	37	25
	100	100	100	100	100	100

### Number

	Mandurah	Bunbury	Preston	Vasse	Blackwood	Total
Boarding house	17	30	13	19	11	90
SAAP	38	59	0	0	0	97
Friends/relatives	209	165	108	155	59	696
Improvised dwellings	78	22	106	52	42	300
	342	276	227	226	112	1183

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

There were 90 people in boarding houses in South West (Table 5.2), but 431 marginal residents of caravan parks, including 195 in Mandurah and 103 in Vasse (Table 5.3). South West is one of a number of areas across the country where caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness in the South West increases from 57 per 10 000 to 78 per 10 000 (Table 5.3).



### 5.3 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, SOUTH WEST STATISTICAL SUBDIVISIONS

	Mandurah	Bunbury	Preston	Vasse	Blackwood	Total
Number of homeless	342	276	227	226	112	1183
Rate per 10 000	50	50	69	63	71	57
Caravan park residents	195	63	64	103	6	431
Total	537	339	291	329	118	1614
Rate per 10 000	79	62	88	92	74	78

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

### 5.2 LOWER GREAT SOUTHERN, UPPER GREAT SOUTHERN AND MIDLANDS

Lower Great Southern, Upper Great Southern and Midlands are predominantly rural communities in the South West. Lower Great Southern has a population of 52 600 and Midlands has a population of 50 400. Upper Great Southern has 17 700 people.

Table 5.4 shows that in Upper Great Southern, the rate of homelessness was 45 per 10 000 and there were 80 homeless people. In Lower Great Southern the rate was 65 per 10 000 (340 homeless people), and in Midlands it was 86 per 10 000 (434 homeless people).

### 5.4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, LOWER GREAT SOUTHERN, UPPER GREAT SOUTHERN AND MIDLANDS

	Lower Great Southern			Upper Great Southern			Midlands			
	Pallinup	King	Total	Hotham	Lakes	Total	Moore	Avon	Campion	Total
Number	77	263	340	56	24	80	183	212	39	434
Rate	70	63	65	42	54	45	130	80	40	86

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

Lower Great Southern and Upper Great Southern each have two subdivisions and Midlands has three. Table 5.4 shows that four subdivisions (Pallinup, Hotham, Lakes and Campion) had between 24 and 77 homeless people. The numbers were higher in Moore, Avon and King where there were between 183 and 263 homeless people. The main city is Albany which had 111 homeless.

Table 5.5 shows that 52 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives and 29 per cent were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. In Upper Great Southern, most (81 per cent) people were staying with other households, whereas in Midlands 41 per cent were in 'improvised

dwellings or sleeping rough'. About three-quarters of those in 'improvised dwellings or sleeping rough' were living in sheds on blocks of land that were either owned or being purchased. Local planning officials said that some of these people were building houses ('blockies'), but others could not afford to build and were living permanently in sheds. These communities had few people in boarding houses and few people in SAAP accommodation.

In some rural communities, there are significant numbers of marginal caravan park residents. This was not the case in Upper Great Southern and Midlands where there were eight and 48 respectively.

There were 92 marginal caravan dwellers in Lower Great Southern. Most (89) were in King, including 57 in the rural hinterland around Albany.

### 5.5 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, LOWER GREAT SOUTHERN, UPPER GREAT SOUTHERN AND MIDLANDS

Percentage				
	Lower Great Southern	Upper Great Southern	Midlands	Total
Boarding house	14	11	10	12
SAAP	11	0	5	7
Friends/relatives	55	81	44	52
Improvised dwellings	20	8	41	29
	100	100	100	100

Number				
	Lower Great Southern	Upper Great Southern	Midlands	Total
Boarding house	48	9	42	99
SAAP	38	0	23	61
Friends/relatives	185	65	192	442
Improvised dwellings	69	6	177	252
	340	80	434	854

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

### 5.3 SOUTH EASTERN

The statistical division of South Eastern covers a huge area of remote Western Australia (Map 1). It has a population of 51 900 and is divided into three subdivisions. Kalgoorlie/Boulder is the major urban area with a population of 28 200. The Lefroy subdivision is largely desert, with a population of 7700. It includes the small mining towns of Leonora and Coolgardie. The Johnston subdivision is also largely desert, with a population

of 16 000. It includes Esperance and Norseman.

#### 5.6 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, SOUTH EASTERN

	Kalgoorlie/ Boulder	Lefroy	Johnston	Total
Number	215	107	154	476
Rate	76	140	96	92

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

The rate of homelessness was 76 per 10 000 in Kalgoorlie/Boulder, 96 per 10 000 in Johnston and 215 in Lefroy (Table 5.6). There were 215 homeless people in Kalgoorlie/Boulder, 107 in Lefroy and 154 in Johnston.

#### 5.7 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, SOUTH EASTERN

##### Percentage

	Kalgoorlie/Boulder	Lefroy	Johnston	Total
Boarding house	25	22	10	20
SAAP	16	0	0	7
Friends/relatives	49	49	84	60
Improvised dwellings	10	29	6	13
	100	100	100	100

##### Number

	Kalgoorlie/Boulder	Lefroy	Johnston	Total
Boarding house	54	24	15	93
SAAP	34	0	0	34
Friends/relatives	105	52	130	287
Improvised dwellings	22	31	9	62
	215	107	154	476

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

Half (49 per cent) of the homeless in Kalgoorlie/Boulder and Lefroy were staying with other households, as were 84 per cent of the homeless in Johnston (Table 5.7). In Kalgoorlie/Boulder, one-quarter (25 per cent) of the homeless were in boarding houses and local informants reported that there were 'lots of rooming houses'. Some rooming houses have 'dongas' (shipping containers) out the back which provide additional accommodation.

Service providers also said that ‘sleeping out was common’. One said, ‘You see people in doorways ... or near the sobering up shelter’. Another referred to ‘camps on the outskirts of town where Indigenous people sleep rough’. The census enumerated 22 people sleeping rough in Kalgoorlie/Boulder, but this was probably an undercount.

In some rural communities, there are significant numbers of marginal caravan park dwellers. This was not the case in Johnston and Lefroy where there were 60 and 19 respectively. However, there were 178 marginal residents of caravan parks in Kalgoorlie, roughly three times the number of people in boarding houses. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness increases from 76 to 139 per 10 000.

## 5.4 CENTRAL

Central statistical division covers huge areas of remote Western Australia (Map 1). Central has a population of 57 400 and is divided into four subdivisions. Geraldton is the major urban area with a population of 31 500. Greenough River (population 13 900) covers a huge hinterland area around Geraldton. Gascoyne and Carnegie are remote communities with populations of 8900 and 3000 respectively. These are areas where there can be high rates of homelessness but relatively few homeless people.

### 5.8 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, CENTRAL

	Geraldton	Gascoyne	Carnegie	Greenough River	Total
Number	325	577	113	261	1276
Rate	103	649	368	188	222

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

The rate of homelessness was 222 per 10 000 in Central and there were 1276 homeless people (Table 5.8). There were 577 homeless people in Gascoyne, 325 in Geraldton, 261 in Greenough River and 113 in Carnegie.

## 5.9 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, CENTRAL

### Percentage

	Geraldton	Gascoyne	Carnegie	Greenough River	Total
Boarding house	13	5	20	1	7
SAAP	7	0	7	0	3
Friends/relatives	54	79	32	60	65
Improvised dwellings	26	16	41	39	25
	100	100	100	100	100

### Number

	Geraldton	Gascoyne	Carnegie	Greenough River	Total
Boarding house	41	28	23	3	95
SAAP	24	0	8	0	32
Friends/relatives	175	458	36	156	825
Improvised dwellings	85	91	46	102	324
	325	577	113	261	1276

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

Overall, two-thirds (65 per cent) of the homeless were staying temporarily with other households and one-quarter (25 per cent) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (Table 5.9). There were few people in boarding houses (seven per cent) and few people (three per cent) in SAAP accommodation.

About two-thirds of the households in 'improvised dwellings and sleeping rough' were living in sheds or garages on land that was either owned or being purchased. In Greenough River, all the people in this category were in improvised dwellings of some kind, including some families with children. Local officials reported that some were owner-builders, but others were living in sheds on a long-term basis.

In Geraldton, local officials reported a mix of owner-builders and people living permanently in sheds or garages. The latter had probably hoped to build houses but had never had sufficient resources to realise this dream. There were some rough sleepers in Geraldton.

In Carnegie, about two-thirds of the people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough were Indigenous. They were not 'owners/purchasers' but were in 'derelict homesteads outside of town'.

### 5.10 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, CENTRAL

	Geraldton	Gascoyne	Carnegie	Greenough River	Total
Homeless	325	577	113	261	1276
Rate per 10 000	103	649	368	188	222
Caravan	37	110	18	34	199
Total	362	687	131	295	1475
Rate per 10 000	115	773	427	212	257

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

There were 199 marginal residents of caravan parks in Central (Table 5.10), down from 447 in 2001. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the homeless population, then the rate of homelessness was 257 per 10,000 (Table 5.10), compared with 222 using the ABS definition.

## 5.5 PILBARA

The Pilbara has a population of 41 000 and it covers a huge area of North Western Australia (Map 1). The rate of homelessness was 262 per 10 000 in the subdivision of De Grey where there were 484 homeless people (Table 5.11). In 2001, there were 275 homeless people in De Grey and the rate was 156 per 10 000.

### 5.11 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, PILBARA

	De Grey	Fortescue	Total
Number	484	528	1012
Rate	262	235	247

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

The rate was 235 per 10 000 in Fortescue, up from 180 per 10 000 in 2001. There were 528 homeless people in Fortescue, compared with 362 in 2001. In both De Grey and Fortescue, 89 per cent of the homeless were non-Indigenous.

The distribution of the homeless population in Pilbara is shown in Table 5.12. Overall, 66 per cent of the homeless were staying temporarily with other households and 21 per cent were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. There were a small number of people in boarding houses (nine per cent) and a small number in SAAP (four per cent). The distribution of the homeless population in Pilbara on census night was similar to the

distribution in the Central statistical division (Table 5.9).

### 5.12 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, PILBARA

<b>Percentage</b>			
	De Grey	Fortescue	Total
Boarding house	10	8	9
SAAP	2	5	4
Friends/relatives	56	77	66
Improvised dwellings	32	10	21
	100	100	100

<b>Number</b>			
	De Grey	Fortescue	Total
Boarding house	50	41	91
SAAP	9	29	38
Friends/relatives	269	404	673
Improvised dwellings	156	54	210
	484	528	1012

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

Local service providers said that there were 'lots of people staying temporarily with other households'. One-third of the primary population reported 'owning or purchasing' their dwelling, but local officials said 'we don't get blockies (owner-builders) here'.

A council official in Karratha (Fortescue) reported that 'workers in the iron-ore industry sometimes sleep in their cars, possibly showering at friends' places'. Local officials in Port Headland (De Grey) knew of sheds and garages being used as temporary accommodation, as well as 'dongas' (shipping containers) being used to house workers. Service providers reported Indigenous people sleeping rough, 'often on the outskirts of town'.

In the Pilbara, there were 91 people in boarding houses but 202 marginal residents of caravan parks. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the homeless population, then the rate of homelessness increases from 247 to 296 per 10 000.

## 5.6 KIMBERLEY

Kimberley covers the remote North of Western Australia. It has a population of 29 300 and includes the subdivisions of Ord and Fitzroy. Ord comprises the shires of Wyndham-East Kimberley (population 6600) and Halls Creek

(population 3100). Fitzroy includes the shires of Broome (population 13 100) and Derby-West Kimberley (population 6500).

Table 5.13 shows that there were 1870 homeless people in the Kimberley and that the rate of homelessness was 638 per 10 000. The rate was 447 per 10 000 in Derby-West Kimberley, 558 per 10 000 in Broome, 603 per 10 000 in Halls Creek and 1002 in Wyndham-East Kimberley. The number of homeless people was highest in Broome (729 people) and Wyndham-East Kimberley (661 people).

**5.13** NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, KIMBERLEY

	<b>Ord</b>		<b>Fitzroy</b>		<b>Total</b>
	Halls Creek	Wyndham-East Kimberley	Broome	Derby-West Kimberley	
Number	189	661	729	291	1870
Rate	603	1002	558	447	638

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

In Broome, there is a huge increase in the population during the peak tourist period from March to October. This attracts itinerant workers who come seeking work in the tourist industry. Some locals referred to them as ‘gypsies’ or ‘hippies’. These itinerant workers usually stay in Broome for some time, before moving on.

In Broome, there is a shortage of cheap private rental accommodation, and 80 per cent of the homeless were staying temporarily with other households (Table 5.14). Another 13 per cent were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. In the primary population, most households were not ‘owners or purchasers’ but rough sleepers (60 per cent) or renters (10 per cent). There were 28 people in SAAP accommodation (four per cent of the homeless) and 20 people in boarding houses (three per cent). However, there were 186 marginal residents of caravan parks in Broome.



### 5.14 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, KIMBERLEY

#### Percentage

	Halls Creek	Wyndham-East Kimberley	Broome	Derby-West Kimberley	Total
Boarding house	2	4	3	13	5
SAAP	5	2	4	3	3
Friends/relatives	31	63	80	62	66
Improvised dwellings	62	31	13	22	26
	100	100	100	100	100

#### Number

	Halls Creek	Wyndham-East Kimberley	Broome	Derby-West Kimberley	Total
Boarding house	4	24	20	39	87
SAAP	10	17	28	8	63
Friends/relatives	59	416	587	181	1243
Improvised dwellings	116	204	94	63	477
	189	661	729	291	1870

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

In Ord, there were 189 homeless people in the Halls Creek subdivision and 661 in the Wyndham-East Kimberley subdivision (Table 5.13). In Halls Creek, 70 per cent of the homeless were Indigenous. One-third (31 per cent) of the homeless were staying with other households and two-thirds (62 per cent) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. Of the people in the 'improvised dwellings' category, most were Indigenous people sleeping rough.

In Wyndham-East Kimberley, 86 per cent of the homeless were non-Indigenous. Many of the homeless in this area were itinerant workers, en route to either Darwin or Broome. Kununurra has a flourishing agricultural industry. There is casual work during the picking season, and itinerant workers can stay for some time. In Wyndham-East Kimberley, 63 per cent of the homeless were staying with other households and 31 per cent were in the primary population (Table 5.14). Many were rough sleepers.

### 5.15 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, KIMBERLEY

	Halls Creek	Wyndham-East Kimberley	Broome	Derby-West Kimberley	Total
Homeless	189	661	729	291	1870
Rate per 10 000	603	1002	558	447	638
Caravan	8	13	189	13	223
Total	197	674	918	304	2093
Rate per 10 000	628	1021	703	467	714

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

In 2001, there were 555 marginal residents of caravan parks in the Kimberley but this had declined to 223 in 2006 (Table 5.15). Eighty-five per cent of marginal residents were in Broome where they outnumbered people in boarding houses, nine to one (189 to 20). The rate of homelessness in Broome increases from 558 to 703 per 10 000 if marginal residents are included in the population.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

The overall picture is summarised in Tables 5.16 and 5.17. There were 6720 homeless people in Perth where the rate of homelessness was 47 per 10 000 (Table 5.16). However, there were 6671 homeless people in regional and remote Western Australia where the rate was 131 per 10 000.

In Perth, there were twice as many people in boarding houses compared with regional and remote communities (1097 as opposed to 555) (Table 5.17) and three times as many people in SAAP (1070 compared with 325). In regional and remote Western Australia, more people were staying with other households than in Perth (4166 versus 3786) and twice as many people were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (1625 compared with 767).

### 5.16 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, PERTH AND REGIONAL/REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

	Perth	Regional/remote	Total
Number of homeless	6720	6671	13 391
Rate per 10 000	47	131	68
Caravan park residents	534	1460	1994
Total	7254	8131	15 385
Rate per 10 000	50	160	79

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

In Perth about two-thirds (68 per cent) of the households in improvised dwellings were rough sleepers and another 11 per cent were renting sheds or garages. Only 21 per cent were in sheds on land that was owned or being purchased. Outside of Perth 44 per cent were rough sleepers, 10 per cent were renting, and 46 per cent were on land that was owned or being purchased.

### 5.17 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, PERTH AND REGIONAL/REMOTE WESTERN AUSTRALIA

#### Percentage

	Perth	Regional/remote	Western Australia
Boarding houses	16	8	12
SAAP accommodation	16	5	11
Friends and relatives	56	63	59
Improvised dwellings	12	24	18
	100	100	100

#### Number

	Perth	Regional/remote	Western Australia
Boarding houses	1097	555	1652
SAAP accommodation	1070	325	1395
Friends and relatives	3786	4166	7952
Improvised dwellings	767	1625	2392
	6720	6671	13 391

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

There were more owner-purchasers in communities closer to Perth. In some areas, a minority were building houses ('blockies'), but others were living in sheds or garages on a long-term basis and their dreams of home ownership had not been realised. In communities further from Perth, particularly the Far North, there were more rough sleepers and fewer

households owning or purchasing land.

For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks might be considered part of the tertiary population. If this is the case, the rate of homelessness was 50 per 10 000 in Perth and 160 per 10 000 in regional and remote Western Australia (Table 5.16).

## 6 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Western Australia, 94 per cent of people answered the census question: 'Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander origin?' and 3.2 per cent identified as Indigenous. However, there was no information on the Indigenous status of the homeless young people staying temporarily with friends or relatives, who were not counted in the census. We use census data on homeless people staying with other households (the 'usual address' question) to estimate how many Indigenous young people were missed by the census.

There is a risk of underestimation, because many Indigenous people make sense of the 'usual address' question within a different cultural frame of reference. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they often move in with members of their extended family. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on census night, because 'home' is understood in a different way. There is under-reporting in this category.

### 6.1 NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATES PER 10 000

	2001			2006		
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total*	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total**
Number	10 607	1054	11 697	11 837	1496	13 391
Rate	60	170	64	63	233	68

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

\* Figures were adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in 36 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

\*\* Figures were adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in 58 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

The research found 1496 homeless Indigenous people in Western Australia on census night 2006 (Table 6.1). The rate of homelessness for Indigenous people was 233 per 10 000 of the population compared with a rate of 170 in 2001. The rate of homelessness for non-Indigenous people was 63 per 10 000 in 2006, compared with 60 per 10 000 in 2001. Indigenous people were overrepresented in the homeless population in all states and territories in 2006, but the rate of Indigenous homelessness has increased

in Western Australia since 2001.

In Perth, there were 772 homeless Indigenous people in 2006 (Table 6.2), up from 443 in 2001 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, p. 56). There were 359 Indigenous people in SAAP, 157 in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, 145 with other households and 111 in Boarding houses (Appendix 2). In Central Metropolitan, there were 203 Indigenous people in SAAP and 83 sleeping rough.

## 6.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE, 2006

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	N	%	N	%
Perth	5894	50	772	52
Kimberley	1520	13	350	23
Pilbara	902	8	110	7
Central	1185	10	91	6
South Eastern	408	3	68	5
Other (4 divisions)	1928	16	105	7
	11 837	100	1496	100

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

In the Kimberley, there were 350 homeless Indigenous people (Table 6.2) and just over half (54 per cent) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. There were no other geographical concentrations of Indigenous people. The Pilbara had 110 homeless Indigenous people spread evenly across two subdivisions and Central had 91 spread across four subdivisions. South Eastern had 68, including 29 in improvised dwellings.

There were also 87 marginal residents of caravan parks who were Indigenous (Appendix 2), but most subdivisions had less than 15 Indigenous people.

## 7 DISCUSSION

The Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness has proposed two ambitious goals: 'to halve homelessness by 2020' and to provide 'supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it', along with interim targets for 2013. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments will work together to achieve the targets specified in the White Paper. This chapter makes some comments on the White Paper's targets, on the basis of the 2006 statistical data on homelessness.

The White Paper highlights three strategies to achieve its goals. The first strategy is 'turning off the tap', which relates to the provision of services focusing on early intervention and prevention (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 3). The second strategy is 'improving and expanding services to end homelessness', which focuses on providing services that assist people into 'stable long-term housing, employment and training' or other forms of community participation (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 4). The third strategy is 'breaking the cycle', whereby homeless people can 'move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not reoccur' (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 5).

The White Paper was accompanied by a significant financial commitment of \$1.2 billion over five years, with \$800 million allocated for prevention and early intervention services, and a further \$400 million to increase the supply of 'affordable and supported housing for people who would otherwise be homeless'. Since the White Paper, the government has announced a further \$6.6 billion to be spent on the construction of 20 000 homes for public housing, the largest expansion of public housing for many years.

The aim of the government is to reduce the number of homeless people from 105 000 in 2006 to 50 000 by 2020. The White Paper is not a detailed plan, but it does provide a policy framework for the national response to homelessness and foreshadows significant funded initiatives to achieve targeted social goals. However, the international economic environment is now far more problematic than it was prior to 2008, and the global economic recession may create additional pressures that exacerbate homelessness.

### 7.1 HOMELESS STATISTICS

There are three main sources of statistical data that inform policy. The first is the ABS Census of Population and Housing undertaken every five years. The 2001 Census reported 99 900 homeless people and the 2006 Census reported 104 676. At both censuses the rate of homelessness was 53 persons per 10 000 of the population. On census night 2006, 16 375 people were counted in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough (primary homelessness), 46 856 people were staying temporarily with other households (secondary homelessness), 19 849 were in SAAP (secondary homelessness), and 21 596 were in boarding houses (tertiary homelessness).

The profile of the homeless population looks different if people are classified on the basis of their housing histories, rather than their accommodation on census night. In a study of 4291 homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that 92 per cent of their sample had moved regularly from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Nearly everyone had stayed with friends or relatives, but 85 per cent had also stayed in boarding houses, 60 per cent had been in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 50 per cent had slept rough. Homeless people show up in particular places on census night, but many of them will be somewhere else a few weeks later.

The second source of data is the National SAAP Data Collection which gathers information on all persons assisted by the SAAP program. The National SAAP Data Collection provides important information on the needs and social characteristics of people who use these services. Between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006, 106 500 homeless adults and 54 700 accompanying children were assisted, making a total of 161 200 persons in SAAP (AIHW 2007, p. xi). It would be possible to estimate the annual homeless population if we knew what proportion of homeless people use SAAP services, but we do not have this statistic.

The third source of statistical data is research surveys of different subgroups within the homeless population. These samples are usually drawn from service users. However, findings from this kind of research can be used to make inferences about the homeless population. In 2001, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) contacted all SAAP services in census week and were provided with 812 case studies. The research found that 48 per cent of SAAP clients had been homeless for one year or longer (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, p. 42). In a study of 630 SAAP clients, Eardley, Thompson, Cass and Dadich (2008, Ch. 5) found that 65 per cent had been homeless on two or more occasions and one-quarter had received help from SAAP for between one and five years; and in a study of 4291



people, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007, p. 25) found that 64 per cent had been homeless for one year or longer. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of the homeless population have long-term housing problems. Making good use of the available statistical data necessarily means making reasoned inferences from the different data sources.

## 7.2 REDUCING HOMELESSNESS: OVERVIEW

Homelessness is a process including stages of becoming homeless, being homeless and at some point recovering from homelessness. In Australia, thinking about homelessness as a process is well-established and metaphors such as the 'homeless career' (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998) and 'homeless pathways' are widely used to refer to these transitions (Clapham 2003; Johnson, Gronda and Coutts 2008). The homeless population consists of diverse groups: single men and women, families with children, and young people on their own. For some people, homelessness is a short-lived experience, while for others homelessness lasts more than one year, and some people experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

People become homeless for diverse reasons. Teenagers typically experience homelessness following a breakdown in their family situation. Some families become homeless as debt mounts and they are evicted from their housing. For other people, it is a breakdown in their conjugal relationship, often involving domestic violence, that results in one partner (usually a woman with children) losing their accommodation. Mental health issues or drug and alcohol abuse may be directly implicated in some people becoming homeless, but other people develop these issues in the homeless population (Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald 2007).

It is known that some groups are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, such as young people who have been through the care and protection system (Johnson and Chamberlain 2008a). Also, it is known that Indigenous people are more vulnerable to becoming homeless than non-Indigenous Australians.

Reducing the size of the homeless population will require a significant investment in early intervention and applying appropriate intervention models for different subgroups in the population. There will also be a need for improved services to support people who are homeless and follow-up support to ensure that formerly homeless people can maintain their accommodation. Finally, a major investment in affordable housing, including public and community housing, will be needed over the next decade.

### 7.3 ROUGH SLEEPERS

The White Paper prioritises reducing the number of people sleeping rough and ‘offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it’ (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, p. 17). This is a commendable priority, but three points need to be borne in mind.

First, providing people with emergency accommodation can be justified on both moral and practical grounds, but moving rough sleepers into supported accommodation will not reduce the overall number of homeless people.

Second, it is important to recognise that most people do not sleep rough on a permanent basis. Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that only two per cent of their sample was consistently without shelter, but 49 per cent of the sample had slept rough occasionally.

Third, the census identified 16 375 people in the ‘improvised dwellings’ category. However, this category includes a wide range of situations from sleeping in a park and sheltering in a derelict building, to living in a shed or garage of some kind. There is no simple way of disaggregating the category, but in 2006 we conducted further research. We examined census data, then we held many discussions with building inspectors, town planners and service providers across the country. This provided the basis for estimating the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (for example, in public places, derelict buildings, cars and tents).

In Chapter 2, we estimated that in the capital cities about 75 per cent of households in the ‘primary homeless’ category were sleeping rough. However, in regional Australia the situation was different. About 60 per cent of households in this category were living in sheds, garages or shacks, most of which were owned or being purchased. Their living arrangements were below the community standard used to define homelessness, and in the main they were low-income households, but they were not transient and some were employed in local communities.

People sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings were more likely to be on their own, whereas people in improvised dwellings were more likely to be in families or group households. Overall, we estimate about 9900 persons in improvised dwellings across the country and about 6500 rough sleepers, although the latter group was undercounted.

### 7.4 YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth homelessness has been a major policy focus since the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s 1989 report, *Our Homeless*

*Children*, and in 2008 there was a National Youth Commission report, *Australia's Homeless Youth*. Youth refers to young people aged 12 to 24. However, a distinction is often drawn between teenagers aged 12 to 18 and young adults aged 19 to 24.

There have been important initiatives to assist homeless teenagers and their families. The establishment of the Reconnect program in 1999 was a major early intervention initiative by the Australian Government to reduce youth homelessness. Reconnect was implemented in phases and was not fully operational until 2003. Twenty-nine services were funded in December 1999 (DFaCS 2003, p. 22). By 2003, there were 98 Reconnect services across the country. The most recent evaluation of Reconnect (DFaCS 2003, p. 8) found that the program had achieved positive outcomes for young people and their families.

In addition, several states implemented new programs such as the Youth Support Coordinators Program in Queensland and the Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program in Victoria. Some SAAP youth agencies also undertake early intervention with recently homeless young people. Since the late 1990s, several state and territory governments have expended additional funds to increase the number of welfare staff in schools and to improve assistance to young people and families in crisis.

## 7.1 CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	2001	2006	% change
Families with children	22 944	26 790	+16.8
Youth aged 12 to 18 (alone)	22 600	17 891	-20.8
Adults (singles and couples)	54 356	59 995	+10.4
	99 900	104 676	+4.8

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

Table 7.1 shows that the number of homeless youth aged 12 to 18 decreased from 22 600 in 2001 to 17 891 in 2006, a decrease of 20.8 per cent. This is compelling evidence that these early intervention initiatives have been effective. There are currently 98 Reconnect services across the country, but it has been estimated that 50 per cent of communities do not have a Reconnect program (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, p. 41–43). At any point in time, there are 15 000 students across the country at risk of becoming homeless (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, p. 42). Youth homelessness could be further reduced by expanding Reconnect to have national coverage.

In a study of 1642 homeless adults and young adults, Johnson and

Chamberlain (2008a) found that 42 per cent of their sample had been in the state care and protection system. Young people who have been in state care are at greater risk of becoming homeless than most teenagers, and they are at much greater risk of making the transition from youth to adult homelessness. Targeted intervention and a reformed care and protection system are important components of an effective early intervention strategy for youth. In addition, such initiatives will have a flow-on effect by reducing the number of homeless teenagers moving into the adult homeless population.

## 7.5 FAMILIES

Another group for whom early intervention is a crucial issue is families. The number of persons in family households on census night increased from 22 944 in 2001 to 26 790 in 2006, an increase of 16.8 per cent (Table 7.1). Families make up 28 per cent of SAAP users (AIHW 2007, p. 37). In 2005–06, the number of children accompanying parents in SAAP was 54 700 (AIHW 2007, p. 15).

Most commonly, families become homeless because of a housing crisis or domestic violence. Adults in families experiencing a housing crisis are typically unemployed or outside of the labour force. These families are usually poor and often have accumulated debts. In most cases, the family is facing eviction because of rent arrears.

Early intervention with families experiencing a housing crisis involves providing families with assistance before they lose their accommodation, including family counselling to resolve relationship difficulties, financial advice, some funds to settle debts, and assistance with applications for public housing. There is a small national program providing this kind of response. In 2001, a pilot program of eight services known as the Family Homelessness Prevention Project (FHPP) was launched with a single service in each jurisdiction. From 1 July 2004, the program continued under a new name as the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program.

An evaluation of the HOME program found that if families at risk of homelessness were reached with assistance before losing their accommodation, 86 per cent of those families remained in adequate housing or improved their housing situation during the period of support (MacKenzie, Desmond and Steen 2007). The evaluation highlighted two key success factors: the availability of brokerage funds and a capacity to work through issues on a needs basis. The effects of this assistance were found to be sustainable for a majority of families in the 12 months after support.

The HOME Advice program was a small-scale initiative and had only a small impact on the overall population of at-risk families. Family homelessness could be reduced by expanding the HOME project to have national coverage. Preliminary estimates indicate the need for between 100 and 250 services.

Some families become homeless as a result of family breakdown involving domestic violence. There has been a considerable investment in changing community attitudes towards domestic violence (Carrington and Phillips 2006), but it is not clear to what extent early intervention strategies have been implemented to assist women experiencing domestic violence. One impediment to implementing early intervention is that many women do not request assistance until they have left the family home.

One form of early intervention is family counselling to help couples work through their relationship issues, and another form of intervention is to remove the perpetrator of violence from the family home. Otherwise, 'early intervention' for victims of domestic violence means assisting them to move quickly to alternative, secure accommodation. The number of people using these services may not decrease, but if their time spent in homelessness services is minimised, then the number of families in the point-in-time census count will decrease over time. The current lack of affordable housing affects homeless families escaping domestic violence, by prolonging their homelessness and increasing the number of homeless people on census night.

## 7.6 ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN

There were 59 995 homeless adults without children on census night, up from 54 356 in 2001, an increase of 10.4 per cent (Table 7.1). Two-thirds of these adults were men and one-third were women. Adults without children are the largest group of service users and many have been homeless for extended periods of time or have moved in and out of homelessness. In general, early intervention strategies are not the issue for single adults with a history of homelessness, although over time early intervention for teenagers will stem the flow into the adult homeless population. The lack of affordable and appropriate housing is a major issue for this group.

Some 21 000 people live in boarding houses, and these properties are often in poor condition with issues of health and safety for the residents. Greater regulation to improve the living conditions in boarding houses and legislation to improve security of tenure would be stop-gap measures, but most people in boarding houses want affordable self-contained accommodation.

About one-quarter of the adults without children were aged 55 or older (15 000 people). An appropriate aged-care response could provide more adequate long-term accommodation for people who currently reside in boarding houses or take up places in the homelessness service system.

A significant proportion of the people with a long-term housing problem have substance abuse issues and/or mental health issues, which complicates their exit from homelessness (Johnson and Chamberlain 2008b). Most of the adults who were homeless on census night needed assistance to find appropriate, affordable housing, and long-term support to maintain that accommodation.

The main policy imperatives for this group are the creation of sufficient affordable housing stock, continuing support for individuals with complex housing needs, and sufficient levels of support to assist people who have experienced long-term homelessness to live in the community.

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

The White Paper proposes a long-term effort to halve homelessness by 2020. Achieving the right mix of interventions is one challenge. About 50 per cent of the homeless population could be assisted directly by the early intervention measures discussed above. The other component of a balanced response is the need for a steep increase in the stock of affordable housing, combined with policies that guarantee access for the most disadvantaged, and sufficient long-term, case-managed support to prevent homelessness reoccurring. At this point, it is unclear whether sufficient resources have been deployed to fund the programs that are needed.

A second challenge is to recognise that it will take several years before an assessment can be made about the effectiveness of the White Paper's initiatives. It takes time to put new services in place and for those services to have their full impact. It will also take time to increase the supply of affordable housing, and other low-income people will be competing for the new housing stock.

The White Paper sets out interim targets for 2013, including an overall reduction in homelessness of 21 000 people (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, p. 18). In 2013, homeless figures from the 2011 census will become available, but it is unlikely that the impact from the new initiatives will be apparent in 2011. The findings from the 2016 census will be of more relevance for assessing whether the White Paper's targets have been achieved.

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**Appendix 1:** Number of homeless people in Western Australia by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
<b>Perth</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>3786</b>	<b>1097</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>6720</b>	<b>1 445 075</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>7254</b>	<b>50</b>
Central Metropolitan	270	334	334	430	1368	124 951	109	0	1368	109
East Metropolitan	67	562	105	109	843	247 172	34	80	923	37
North Metropolitan	262	1182	40	235	1719	437 481	39	129	1848	42
South West Metropolitan	88	861	422	172	1543	306 511	50	170	1713	56
South East Metropolitan	80	847	196	124	1247	328 960	38	155	1402	43
<b>South West</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>207 343</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>78</b>
Mandurah	78	209	17	38	342	67 783	50	195	537	79
Bunbury	22	165	30	59	276	54 967	50	63	339	62
Preston	106	108	13	0	227	33 010	69	64	291	88
Vasse	52	155	19	0	226	35 705	63	103	329	92
Blackwood	42	59	11	0	112	15 878	71	6	118	74
<b>Lower Great Southern</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>52 591</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>82</b>
Pallinup	11	23	36	7	77	10 959	70	3	80	73
King	58	162	12	31	263	41 632	63	89	352	85
<b>Upper Great Southern</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>17 714</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>50</b>
Hotham	3	47	6	0	56	13 265	42	8	64	48
Lakes	3	18	3	0	24	4449	54	0	24	54
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>50 413</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>96</b>
Moore	95	75	13	0	183	14 037	130	10	193	137
Avon	71	97	21	23	212	26 635	80	33	245	92
Campion	11	20	8	0	39	9741	40	5	44	45
<b>South Eastern</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>51 895</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>141</b>
Kalgoorlie/Boulder City	22	105	54	34	215	28 242	76	178	393	139
Lefroy	31	52	24	0	107	7670	140	19	126	164
Johnston	9	130	15	0	154	15 983	96	60	214	134

**Appendix 1 (continued):** Number of homeless people in Western Australia by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
<b>Central</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1276</b>	<b>57 430</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>1475</b>	<b>257</b>
Geraldton	85	175	41	24	325	31 550	103	37	362	115
Gascoyne	91	458	28	0	577	8890	649	110	687	773
Carnegie	46	36	23	8	113	3071	368	18	131	427
Greenough River	102	156	3	0	261	13 919	188	34	295	212
<b>Pilbara</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>41 001</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>1214</b>	<b>296</b>
De Grey	156	269	50	9	484	18 500	262	81	565	305
Fortescue	54	404	41	29	528	22 501	235	121	649	288
<b>Kimberley</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>1243</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>29 297</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>2093</b>	<b>714</b>
Ord	320	475	28	27	850	9734	873	21	871	895
Fitzroy	157	768	59	36	1020	19 563	521	202	1222	625
Missing data	0	0	0	0	0	6325		0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2392</b>	<b>7952</b>	<b>1652</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>13 391</b>	<b>1 959 084</b>	<b>68.4</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>15 385</b>	<b>78.5</b>

**SLAs**

	Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Bunbury	5	119	32	58	214	29 700	72	18	232	78
Busselton	17	102	11	0	130	25 356	51	53	183	72
Albany Central	0	68	12	31	111	15 976	69	10	121	76
Albany Balance	26	54	0	0	80	15 597	51	57	137	88
Geraldton	0	128	35	24	187	18 916	99	14	201	106
Port Headland	148	199	11	9	367	11 959	307	67	434	363
Halls Creek	116	59	4	10	189	3135	603	8	197	628
Broome	94	587	20	28	729	13 060	558	189	918	703

**Appendix 2:** Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivisions, 2006\*

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
<b>Perth</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>3641</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>5894</b>	<b>1 422 405</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>6414</b>	<b>45</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>22 670</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>347</b>
Central Metropolitan	Non-Indig	187	326	319	220	1052	124 323	85	0	1052	85
	Indig	83	8	15	203	309	628	4920	0	309	4920
East Metropolitan	Non-Indig	46	525	51	82	704	241 668	29	80	784	32
	Indig	21	37	54	18	130	5504	236	0	130	236
North Metropolitan	Non-Indig	248	1134	40	158	1580	432 585	37	119	1699	39
	Indig	14	48	0	69	131	4896	268	10	141	288
South West Metro.	Non-Indig	59	839	386	123	1407	301 937	47	166	1573	52
	Indig	29	22	36	24	111	4574	243	4	115	251
South East Metro.	Non-Indig	70	817	190	74	1151	321 892	36	155	1306	41
	Indig	10	30	6	45	91	7068	129	0	91	129
<b>South West</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1142</b>	<b>203 389</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>1562</b>	<b>77</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3954</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Lower Gt Southern</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>50 769</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>78</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1822</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Upper Gt Southern</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>16 839</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>48 089</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>93</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2324</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>155</b>

\* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in 58 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

**Appendix 2 (continued):** Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivisions, 2006

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends/rels	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
<b>South Eastern</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>46 449</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>141</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>5446</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>145</b>
	Non-Indig	3	81	47	26	157	25 930	61	171	328	126
	Indig	19	24	7	8	58	2312	251	7	65	281
	Non-Indig	21	52	24	0	97	5338	182	19	116	217
	Indig	10	0	0	0	10	2332	43	0	10	43
Johnston	Non-Indig	9	130	15	0	154	15 181	101	56	210	138
	Indig	0	0	0	0	0	802	0	4	4	50
<b>Central</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>51 081</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>1378</b>	<b>270</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>6349</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>153</b>
Geraldton	Non-Indig	85	158	37	10	290	28 948	100	37	327	113
	Indig	0	17	4	14	35	2602	135	0	35	135
Gascoyne	Non-Indig	88	452	28	0	568	7400	768	110	678	916
	Indig	3	6	0	0	9	1490	60	0	9	60
Carnegie	Non-Indig	15	31	23	0	69	1829	377	18	87	476
	Indig	31	5	0	8	44	1242	354	0	44	354
Greenough River	Non-Indig	99	156	3	0	258	12904	200	28	286	222
	Indig	3	0	0	0	3	1015	30	6	9	89
<b>Pilbara</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>34 115</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>293</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>6886</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>180</b>
De Grey	Non-Indig	128	251	50	1	430	14 367	299	67	497	346
	Indig	28	18	0	8	54	4133	131	14	68	165
Fortescue	Non-Indig	49	396	23	4	472	19 748	239	30	502	254
	Indig	5	8	18	25	56	2753	203	0	56	203

**Appendix 2 (continued):** Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivisions, 2006

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends/rels	Group 3 Board. Hse	Group 4 SAAP	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
<b>Kimberley</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>1194</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1520</b>	<b>15 320</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>1724</b>	<b>1125</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>13 977</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>264</b>
Ord	Non-Indig	148	465	14	0	627	4364	1437	16	643	1473
	Indig	172	10	14	27	223	5370	415	5	228	425
Fitzroy	Non-Indig	140	729	23	1	893	10 956	815	188	1081	987
	Indig	17	39	36	35	127	8607	148	14	141	164
<b>Total</b>	<b>Non-Indig</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>7640</b>	<b>1457</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>11 837</b>	<b>1 888 456</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1820</b>	<b>13 657</b>	<b>72</b>
	<b>Indig</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>1496</b>	<b>64 303</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1579</b>	<b>246</b>
Missing data		0	0	0	58	58	6325		91	149	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2392</b>	<b>7952</b>	<b>1652</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>13 391</b>	<b>1 959 084</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>15 385</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Selected SLAs</b>											
Halls Creek	Non-Indig	3	52	4	0	59	489	1207	8	67	1370
	Indig	113	7	0	9	129	2646	488	0	129	488
Wyndham East-Kimb.	Non-Indig	145	413	10	0	568	3875	1466	8	576	1486
	Indig	59	3	14	18	94	2724	345	5	99	363
Broome	Non-Indig	89	559	14	1	663	8912	744	172	835	937
	Indig	5	28	6	26	65	4148	157	14	79	190
Derby West-Kimb.	Non-Indig	51	170	9	0	230	2044	1125	16	246	1204
	Indig	12	11	30	9	62	4459	139	0	62	139

**Appendix 3:** Percentage of homeless people by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
<b>Perth</b>	<b>6720</b>	<b>50.2</b>	Central	1276	9.5
Central Metropolitan	1368	10.2	Geraldton	325	2.4
East Metropolitan	843	6.3	Gascoyne	577	4.3
North Metropolitan	1719	12.9	Carnegie	113	0.8
South West Metropolitan	1543	11.5	Greenough River	261	2.0
South East Metropolitan	1247	9.3	<b>Pilbara</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>7.6</b>
<b>South West</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>8.8</b>	De Grey	484	3.6
Mandurah	342	2.5	Fortescue	528	4.0
Bunbury	276	2.1	<b>Kimberley</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>14.0</b>
Preston	227	1.7	Ord	850	6.4
Vasse	226	1.7	Fitzroy	1020	7.6
Blackwood	112	0.8	Missing data	0	0
<b>Lower Great Southern</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>13 391</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Pallinup	77	0.6			
King	263	1.9	<b>Selected SLAs</b>		
<b>Upper Great Southern</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0.6</b>	Bunbury	214	1.6
Hotham	56	0.4	Busseton	130	1.0
Lakes	24	0.2	Albany Central	111	0.8
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>3.2</b>	Albany Balance	80	0.6
Moore	183	1.3	Geraldton	187	1.4
Avon	212	1.6	Port Headland	367	2.7
Campion	39	0.3	Halls Creek	189	1.4
<b>South Eastern</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>3.6</b>	Broome	729	5.4
Kalgoorlie/Boulder City	215	1.6			
Lefroy	107	0.8			
Johnston	154	1.2			

**Appendix 4:** Percentage of homeless people and marginal residents of caravan parks by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
<b>Perth</b>	<b>7254</b>	<b>47.1</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>1475</b>	<b>9.6</b>
Central Metropolitan	1368	8.9	Geraldton	362	2.4
East Metropolitan	923	6.0	Gascoyne	687	4.5
North Metropolitan	1848	12.0	Carnegie	131	0.8
South West Metropolitan	1713	11.1	Greenough River	295	1.9
South East Metropolitan	1402	9.1	<b>Pilbara</b>	<b>1214</b>	<b>7.9</b>
<b>South West</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>10.5</b>	De Grey	565	3.7
Mandurah	537	3.5	Fortescue	649	4.2
Bunbury	339	2.2	<b>Kimberley</b>	<b>2093</b>	<b>13.6</b>
Preston	291	1.9	Ord	871	5.7
Vasse	329	2.1	Fitzroy	1222	7.9
Blackwood	118	0.8	Missing data	0	0
<b>Lower Great Southern</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15 385</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Pallinup	80	0.5			
King	352	2.3	<b>Selected SLAs</b>		
<b>Upper Great Southern</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0.6</b>	Bunbury	232	1.5
Hotham	64	0.4	Busselton	183	1.2
Lakes	24	0.2	Albany Central	121	0.8
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Albany Bal	137	0.9
Moore	193	1.2	Geraldton	201	1.3
Avon	245	1.6	Port Headland	434	2.8
Campion	44	0.3	Halls Creek	197	1.3
<b>South Eastern</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>4.8</b>	Broome	918	6.0
Kalgoorlie/Boulder City	393	2.6			
Lefroy	126	0.8			
Johnston	214	1.4			