

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.

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).

Tasmania is divided into four statistical divisions (excluding off-shore and migratory). They are Greater Hobart, Southern, Northern and Mersey-Lyell (Map 1).

Statistical subdivisions are defined as ‘socially and economically homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable links between the inhabitants’ (ABS 2006c, p. 14). Most capital cities are divided into different statistical subdivisions, but Hobart only contains one statistical subdivision. In Tasmania, there are two statistical subdivisions which correspond to major regional population centres: Greater Launceston and Burnie-Devonport.

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 the economic units within the region’ and there may be the ‘unifying influence’ (ABS 2006c, p. 14) of one or more country towns. In

Tasmania, these rural subdivisions have small populations and sometimes they have high rates of homelessness, but few homeless people.

4.3 DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

The Greater Hobart statistical division has a population of 200 500. It includes the statistical local areas of Brighton, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Glenorchy, Hobart Inner and Hobart Remainder.

The Southern statistical division covers a large area surrounding Hobart, including southern and central Tasmania and parts of the east coast. It has a population of 34 900.

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

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

4.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, TASMANIAN STATISTICAL DIVISIONS

	Greater Hobart	Southern	Northern	Mersey-Lyell
Number	1060	308	611	523
Rate	53	88	46	49

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

Table 4.1 shows that the rate of homelessness was 53 per 10 000 in Greater Hobart, 88 per 10 000 in Southern, 46 per 10 000 in Northern and 49 per 10 000 in Mersey-Lyell. There were 1060 homeless people in Greater Hobart which has a much larger population than Southern, where there were 308 homeless people spread over a large area. There were 611 homeless people in Northern and 523 in Mersey-Lyell.

4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, GREATER HOBART

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

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

There was variation within the statistical divisions. Table 4.2 shows that there were 474 homeless people in Hobart (Inner and Remainder) ('inner Hobart') where the rate of homelessness was 99 per 10 000. In the remainder of Greater Hobart ('outer Hobart'), there were 586 homeless people but the rate was 38 per 10 000. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. Homeless people often gravitate to the inner city, where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

4.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, GREATER HOBART

Percentage		
	Hobart (Inner and Remainder)	Remainder of Greater Hobart
Boarding house	18	2
SAAP	51	20
Friends and relatives	26	61
Improvised dwellings	5	17
	100	100

Number		
	Hobart (Inner and Remainder)	Remainder of Greater Hobart
Boarding house	86	10
SAAP	242	117
Friends and relatives	123	357
Improvised dwellings	23	102
	474	586

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

The homeless population was distributed differently in inner and outer Hobart. In inner Hobart, 51 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation and 26 per cent were staying temporarily with friends and relatives (Table 4.3), whereas in outer Hobart 61 per cent were staying temporarily with other households and only 20 per cent were in SAAP. This may indicate that there are more people with a longer-term problem in the inner city, and more people in the early stages of homelessness in the suburbs. It also reflects how services are distributed across the city.

Most people in boarding houses were in inner Hobart and most people in improvised dwellings were in the outer suburbs. There 23 people in the 'improvised dwellings' category who were sleeping rough in inner Hobart, but three-quarters of those in outer Hobart were in improvised dwellings

that were owned, being purchased or rented. Many were on low incomes and they were probably living in sheds, garages or cabins.

Four-fifths of the homeless population in the Northern statistical division was in Greater Launceston, where the rate of homelessness was 49 per 10 000 and there were 490 homeless people (Table 4.4). The rates were lower in Central North (32 per 10 000) and North Eastern (40 per 10 000) where there were 65 and 56 homeless people respectively.

4.4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION

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

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

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

4.4 ACCOMMODATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

Table 4.5 shows that in Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston, about 45 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends and relatives on census night, and in Burnie the figure was 60 per cent. The fact that many homeless people stay temporarily with other households tends to make them invisible to the general population who assume that homeless people usually sleep rough. Local informants in Burnie and Devonport told us that ‘lots of people were couch surfing’ and that emergency accommodation was usually full. One informant said, ‘The SAAP situation is terrible at the moment. We have been putting people in backpackers’ hostels, caravan parks, or turning them away’.

The proportion of homeless people in SAAP accommodation ranged from 28 per cent in Burnie-Devonport to 34 per cent in Hobart (Table 4.5). There were only seven people in SAAP accommodation outside of the major cities in Tasmania.

4.5 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

Percentage

	Greater Hobart	Greater Launceston	Burnie-Devonport
Boarding house	9	20	7
SAAP	34	30	28
Friends and relatives	45	47	60
Improvised dwellings	12	3	5
	100	100	100

Number

	Greater Hobart	Greater Launceston	Burnie-Devonport
Boarding house	96	96	28
SAAP	359	149	107
Friends and relatives	480	232	234
Improvised dwellings	125	13	21
	1060	490	390

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

There were small numbers of people in boarding houses, with proportions ranging from seven per cent of the homeless in Burnie (28 people), to 20 per cent of the homeless in Launceston (96 people). It is often difficult to identify boarding houses because they can look like private dwellings, sometimes with outbuildings used as extra rooms. However, local service providers usually know where they are.

Finally, 12 per cent (125 people) of the homeless in Hobart were identified in the 'improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough' category. The numbers were lower in Burnie-Devonport and Launceston where five per cent and three per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, accounting for 21 and 13 people respectively. Local informants in Burnie and Devonport knew of people 'sleeping in cars', 'under bridges' or in 'improvised dwellings out in the bush'. It is possible that there was some undercounting in Burnie-Devonport.

4.6 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, RURAL TASMANIA

Percentage						
	Southern	Central North	North Eastern	North Western Rural	Lyell	Total
Boarding house	1	17	18	4	23	6
SAAP	0	0	0	3	23	1
Friends/relatives	45	57	61	66	54	53
Improvised dwellings	54	26	21	27	0	40
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number						
	Southern	Central North	North Eastern	North Western Rural	Lyell	Total
Boarding house	3	11	10	5	3	32
SAAP	0	0	0	4	3	7
Friends/relatives	140	37	34	79	7	297
Improvised dwellings	165	17	12	32	0	226
	308	65	56	120	13	562

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

There were 562 homeless people distributed across rural Tasmania (Table 4.6). In most communities, between 50 and 65 per cent were staying with other households. In these small communities, there is usually no SAAP accommodation and most people who lose their accommodation stay with friends or relatives. There were a handful of people in boarding houses.

In Central North, North Eastern and North Western Rural, between 21 and 27 per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (Table 4.6). In Southern, 54 per cent of the homeless were in the improvised dwellings category, accounting for 165 people. We think that most of these people were living in improvised dwellings on land that was owned, being purchased or rented. Most households in the primary population reported low incomes and in about half of the households no one was employed.

The local council in Southern knew of 10 sheds where people were living 'out in the bush' and the council was investigating another 10 properties that had come to their attention. Council officials said the municipality 'covered a large area' and it was 'quite possible that could be other people living in sheds or improvised dwellings'. We think that most households were living in rural poverty.

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 local caravan parks 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.

The 2006 Census found that 70 per cent of boarding house residents were in the capital cities and 30 per cent were in regional centres and country towns (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008, Ch. 7). In contrast, 71 per cent of marginal caravan park dwellers were in regional centres and country towns and 29 per cent were in capital cities. There is a sense in which caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses outside of the capital cities. SAAP workers sometimes refer people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available or if there are no boarding houses. Caravan parks may also house some people who are unable to re-enter the private rental market, on a longer-term basis.

4.7 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

	Hobart	Launceston	Burnie- Devonport	Rural Tasmania	Total*
Number of homeless	1060	490	390	562	2507
Rate per 10 000	53	49	50	57	52
Caravan park residents	26	28	84	24	162
Total	1086	518	474	586	2669
Rate per 10 000	54	52	61	60	56

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

* No geographical information on 5 people.

The issue of whether to include marginal residents of caravan parks as part of the homeless population is particularly important for policy makers in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, because 93 per cent of marginal residents of caravan parks were in those states.

Table 4.7 shows there were 162 marginal residents of caravan parks in Tasmania, and half (84) were in Burnie-Devonport. Informants on the North Coast knew of caravan parks being used as emergency accommodation, particularly in the off season. However, the number of caravan parks was said to have declined and some caravan parks refused to take homeless people.

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 56 per 10 000 in Tasmania, compared with 52 per 10 000 using the ABS definition. The broader definition makes a significant difference in Burnie-Devonport where the rate increases from 50 to 61 per 10 000.