



Australian Homelessness Monitor

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Presentation to: Victoria homelessness services briefing event, 14 May 2018

Quotation of stats embargoed until 15 May

Presentation overview

1. Background (HP)
2. Social, economic and housing market context (HP)
3. Policy developments – recent changes with positive and negative implications for homelessness (CP)
4. Indigenous homelessness in Northern Australia (CP)
5. The changing incidence of homelessness in Australia (HP)
6. Conclusions (CP)



1. Background

Project aims

- Main aims of the project to:
 - Provide an independent analysis of the changing scale and nature of homelessness across Aus and at state/territory/capital city scale
 - Investigate incidence of the many social, economic, and policy factors that potentially impact on the issue
 - Identify policies and practices with a bearing on the incidence of homelessness
- Main focus: 2011-2016 period

Project origins

- Research commissioning inspired by UK homelessness monitor series – lead author: Prof Suzanne Fitzpatrick
- Funded by Crisis UK and JRF since 2011
- Review of ongoing change in homelessness scale and profile, analysing relevant economic and policy developments and tracking impacts
- Including separate reports for other UK jurisdictions, recent HM England 2018 report, the 15th in the series
- Independent, authoritative standing:
 - Widely cited in media
 - Referenced by numerous advocacy groups, trade bodies
 - Quoted in UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, NI assembly



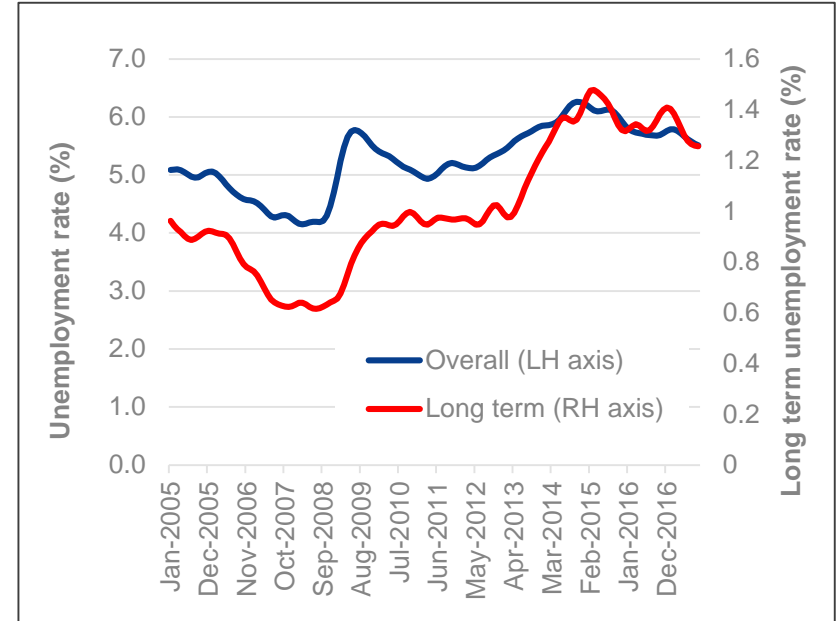
Research methodology

- Primary research
 - In depth interviews – policymakers, service provider representatives, advocacy groups
 - Online survey of service provider orgs – 70 orgs across Australia (40% response rate)
- Secondary data analysis
 - Census homelessness data
 - AIHW homelessness service user statistics
 - Data on social, economic, housing market change from ABS and numerous other sources
- Broad brush approach; triangulation of:
 - Views on homelessness change according to informed stakeholders and front line staff
 - Data from independent statistical sources

2. Social, economic and housing market context

Unemployment rates

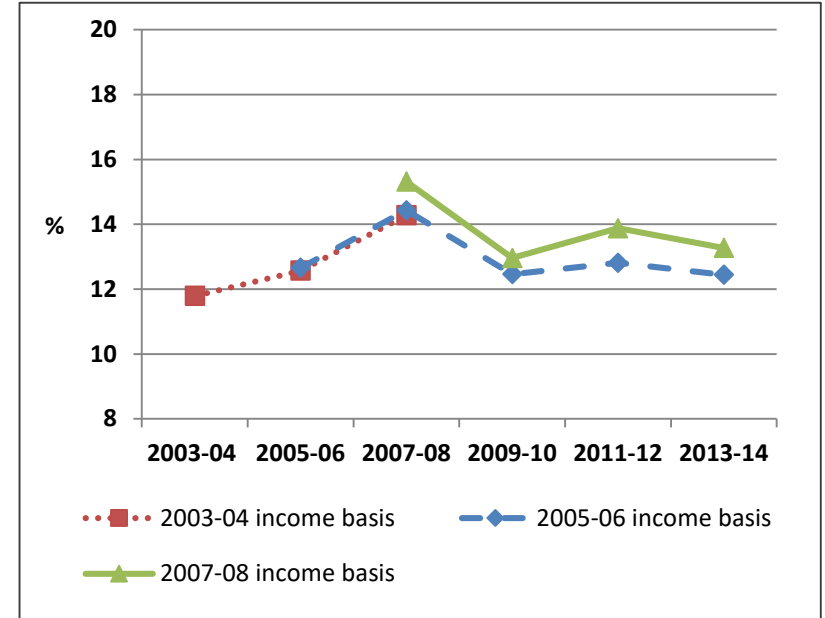
- Overall unemployment remaining within 4-6% band for most of past decade
- Rising incidence of LT unemployment (>12 months) possibly significant



Source: ABS

Overall poverty rates

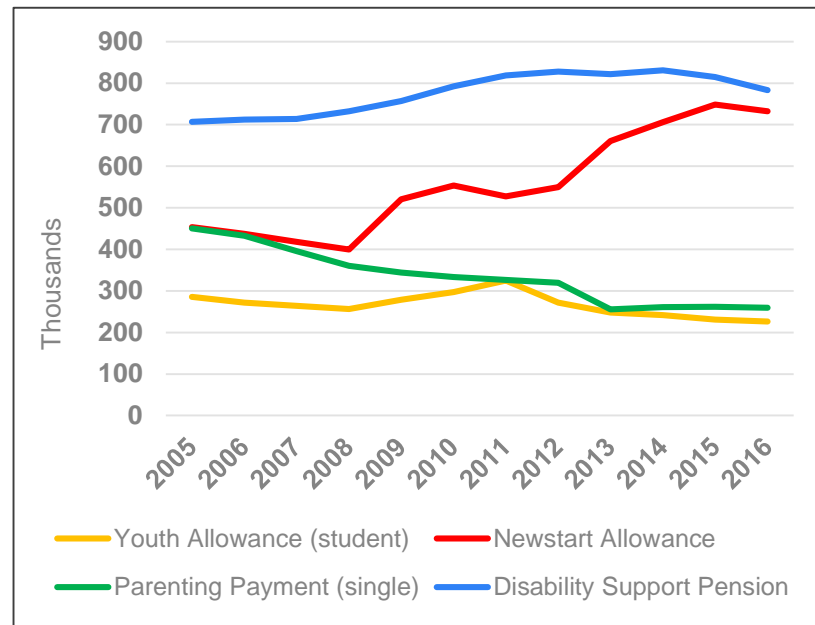
- No sign of any general rise in poverty (household incomes <50% of national median after housing costs)



Source: UNSW Social Policy Research Centre – original data from ABS

Welfare benefit recipient numbers

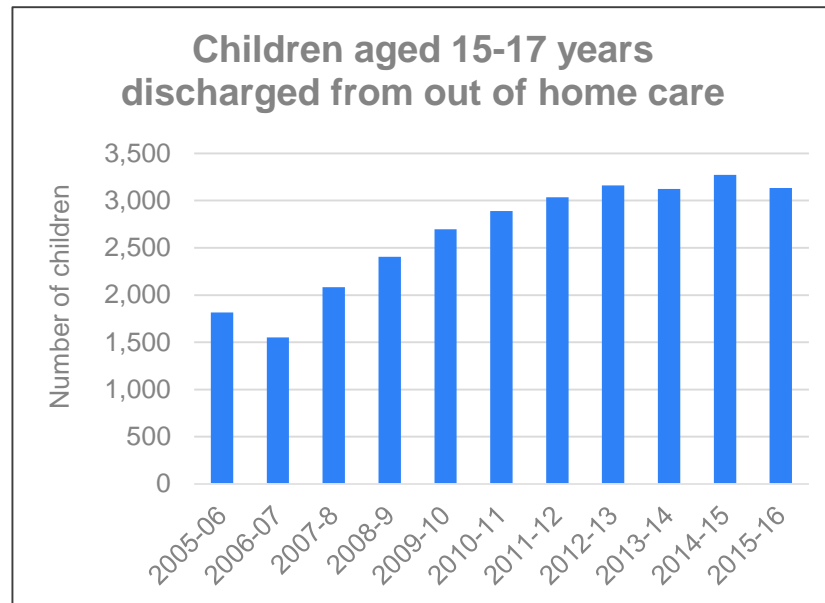
- Distinct tendency for rising NSA – the lowest and most conditional form of benefit
- Govt/Centrelink policy and practice changes implicated



Source: DSS

Institutional discharge

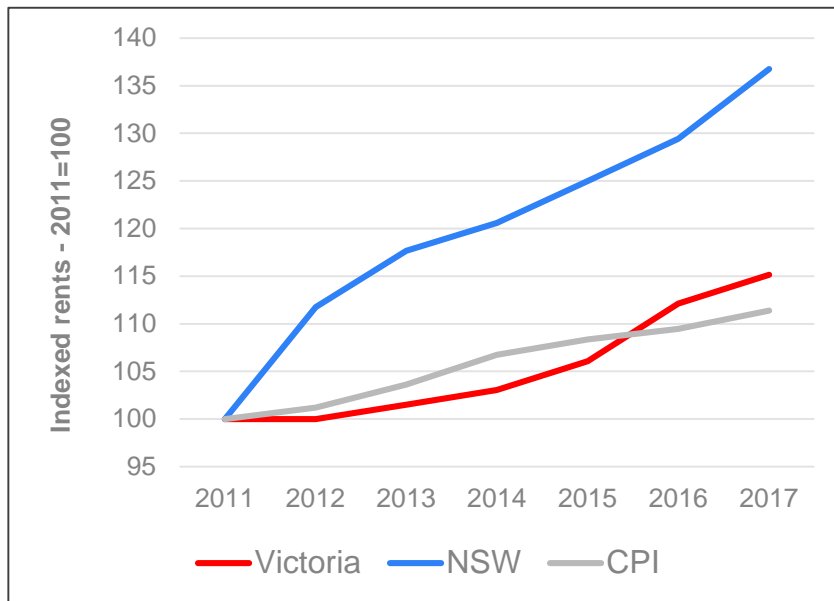
- Young people discharged from OOHC rose rapidly to 2011-12
- Rising rates of imprisonment (ABS) ongoing – implies upward prisoner discharge trend



Source: AIHW

Private rent trends

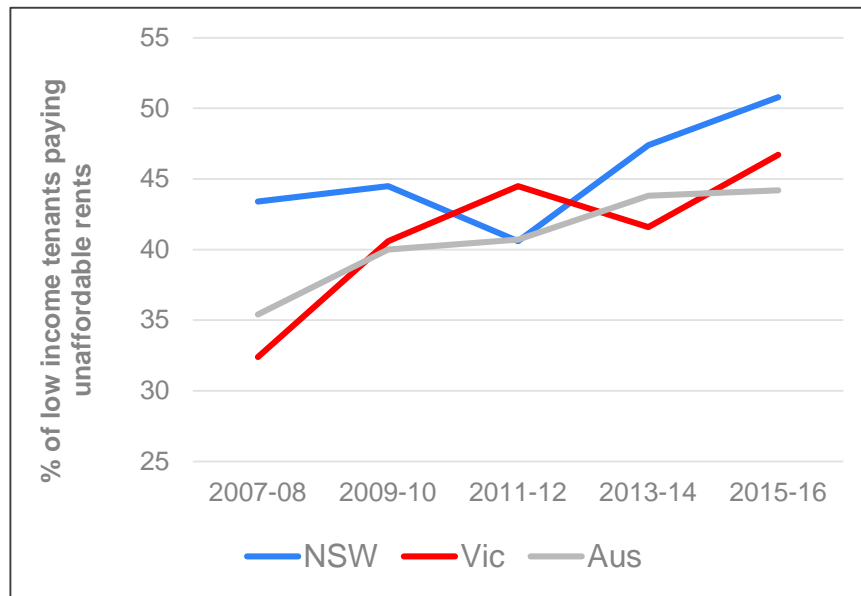
- NSW rents rising well ahead of inflation post-2011
- No true national comparator data available



Source: Rental Bond Boards (rents); ABS (CPI)

Low income tenants in rental stress

- More important than trend in median rents is % of low income tenants in stress
- Markedly rising trend over 8 year period in NSW, Vic
- Rental market re-structuring gradually removing low rent segment – LQ rent value moving closer to median



Source: ABS

3. Policy developments – recent changes with positive and negative implications for homelessness

Policy inaction (1)

- Affordable Housing
 - Increased land value
 - Increasing homelessness services spend
 - Minimal action, Commonwealth and States, to demonstrably increase supply of housing that is affordable for low income Australians
 - Missed opportunities for taxation, financial incentives, and development of a diverse portfolio of social and affordable housing

“It does not matter how much support dollars are provided, if there is no housing, the support will have limited impact. I think support has been prioritised as the cheap option. We have welcomed support traditionally, but we are now saying unless you tackle of structural housing problems you are wasting our time.”

(Victorian stakeholder)

Policy inaction (2)

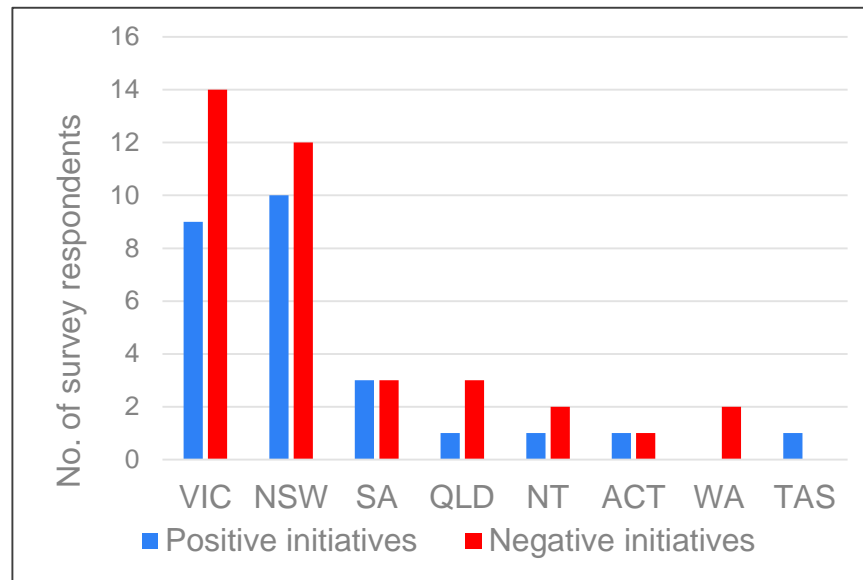
- Income Support
 - Newstart and Youth Allowance levels
 - Cost of living increases –vis-à-vis stagnant income support increases
 - Budget opportunities to increase Newstart missed

“Changes to Newstart allowance for clients who were previously on a parenting payment. Massive issue.”

(Vic non-metro provider)

Front-line service provider perspectives

- 71% of online survey respondents perceived that recent social security benefits changes had exacerbated homelessness
- Regarding state/territory govt policy moves, initiatives with perceived negative impacts outweighed positive initiatives in most jurisdictions – see graphic



Source: Authors survey

Detrimental policy drivers

- Push from Single Parent Payment to Newstart
 - \$60 per week loss
- Displacement from Disability Support Pension to Newstart
 - \$170 per week loss
- Welfare conditionality
 - Benefit sanctioning

“Conditionality just brings additional misery to people who are already doing it tough and find it difficult to comply.”

(Victorian stakeholder)

Optimism and policy success

- Housing First
 - Street to Home
 - Permanent supportive housing
- Domestic Violence
 - Housing supply
 - Safe at Home
 - Opportunities for work with perpetrators

4. Indigenous homelessness in Northern Australia

Indigenous homelessness in Northern Australia (1)

- Continued pattern of housing exclusion
- Northern Territory
 - Highest rate in Australia
 - Severe crowding in remote Indigenous communities
 - 11,065 people homeless because of severe crowding
 - 10,710 of these people were Indigenous
 - The racial nature of this homelessness is undeniable

Indigenous homelessness in Northern Australia (2)

- Doubly homeless
 - Moving between severe crowding and rough sleeping

When I visit, “we see tents in people’s yard, or even a tent in the lounge room for privacy”; “The tent actually gives the family privacy.” I’ve even seen them sleeping in old car bodies.

(NT Government Stakeholder)

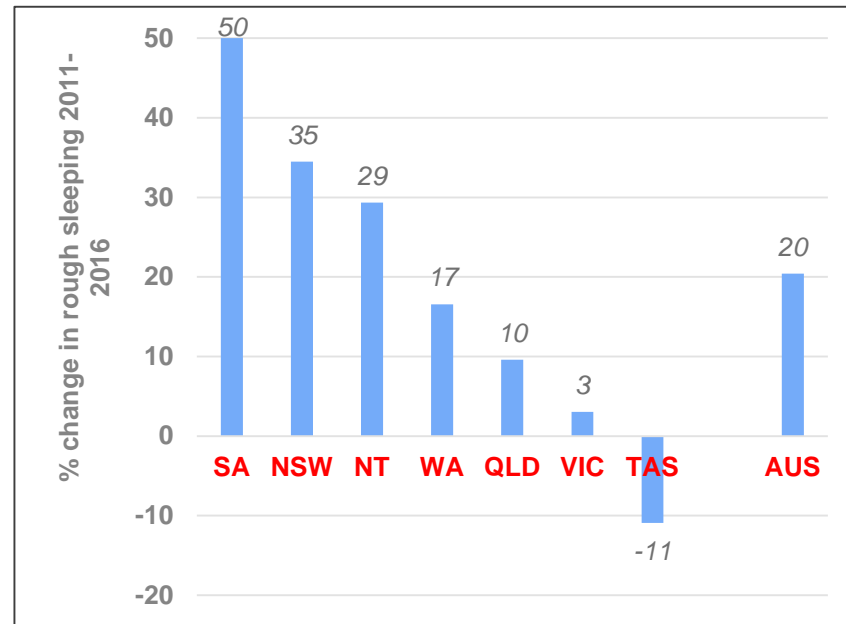
5. The changing incidence of homelessness in Australia

Section structure

- a) Incidence of rough sleeping
- b) Homelessness overall (including rough sleeping)
- c) Spatial contrasts and trends
- d) Homelessness causes

Incidence of rough sleeping: 1. Change in rough sleepers by state/territory

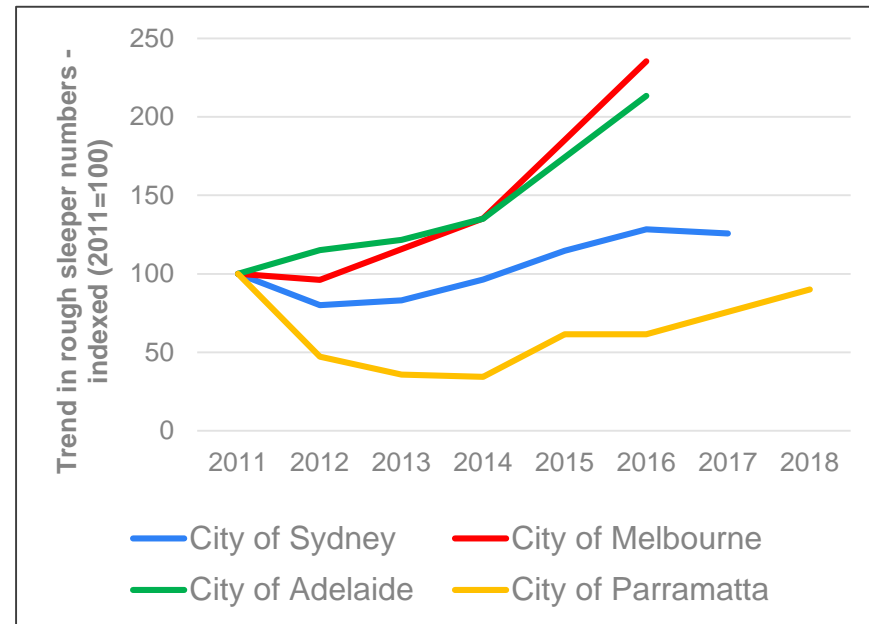
- 5-year national increase: 20%
- Highly variable by jurisdiction
- Largest numerical increase: NSW – up from 1,924 to 2,588
-



Source: ABS Census

Incidence of rough sleeping: 2. Change in rough sleepers: selected cities

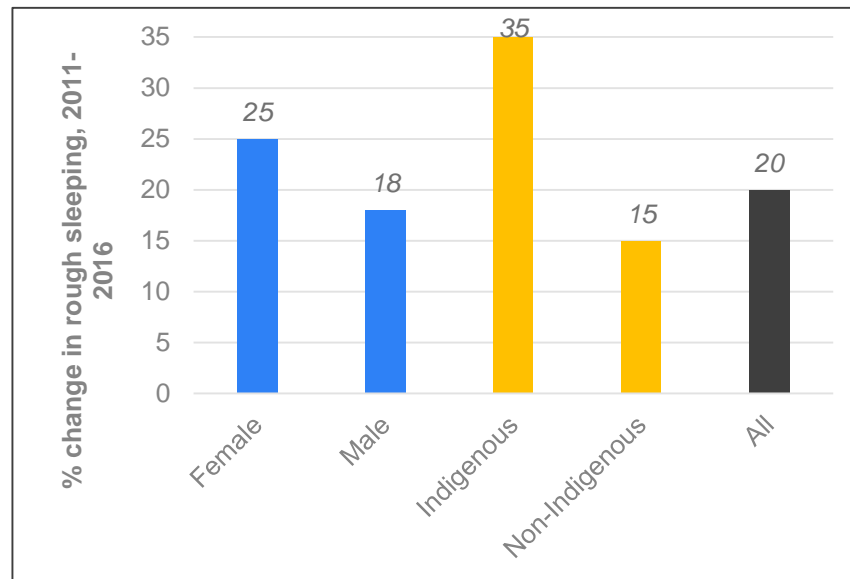
- City council counts provide an alternative data source
- Annual or bi-annual counts
- City of Melbourne numbers indicate >200% increase 2011-2016
- Inconsistent with Vic trend recorded in census



Sources: named municipalities

Incidence of rough sleeping: 3. Contrasting rough sleeping trends for different cohorts

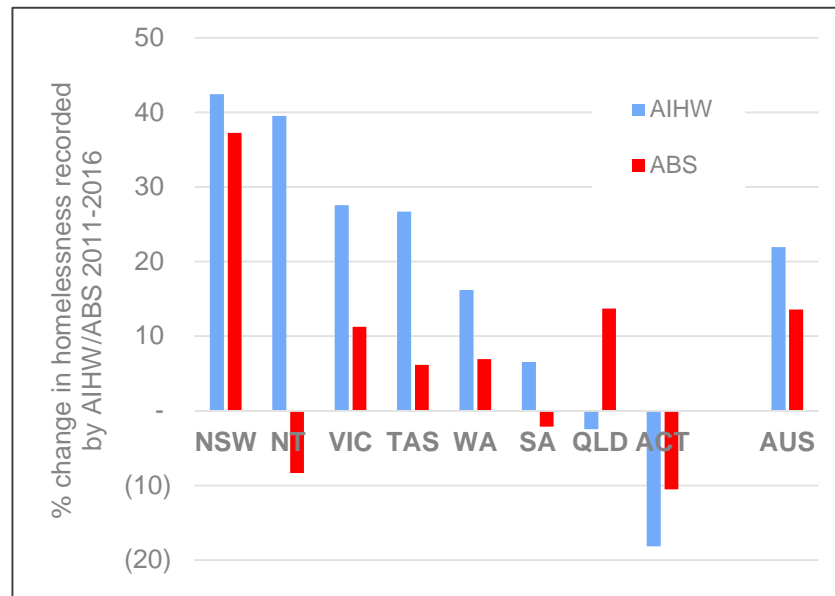
- Disproportionate increases in rough sleeping recorded for:
 - Females
 - Indigenous



Source: ABS Census

Homelessness overall: 1. Trends at state/territory scale

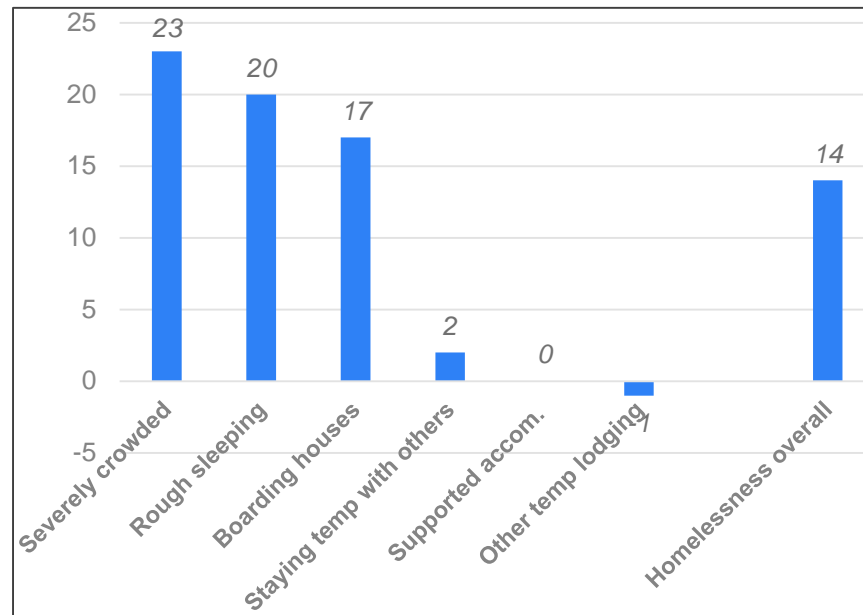
- Homelessness service users enumerated in SHS up by 22% 2011-12 - 2016-17
- SHS statistical series initiated 2011-12; 2016 Census first opportunity for triangulation
- A degree of consistency – e.g. NSW and ACT
- But also some inconsistencies



Sources: ABS Census; AIHW SHS statistics

Homelessness overall: 2. Rates of 2011-2016 change by homelessness cohort

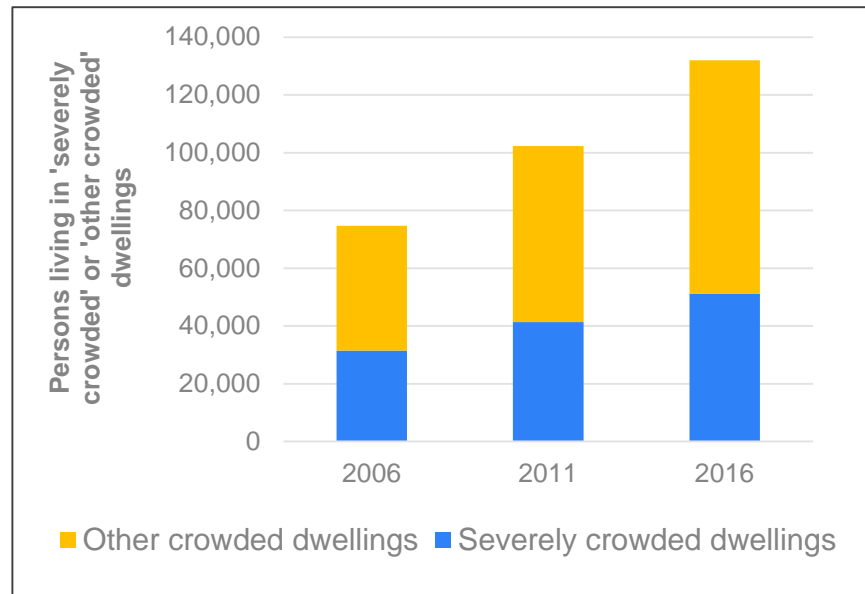
- Severely crowded households account for around half of national homeless total
- Fastest rate of increase, 2011-2016
- Partly associated with overseas student population



Source: ABS Census

Homelessness overall: 3. Rising 'severe overcrowding' part of larger trend

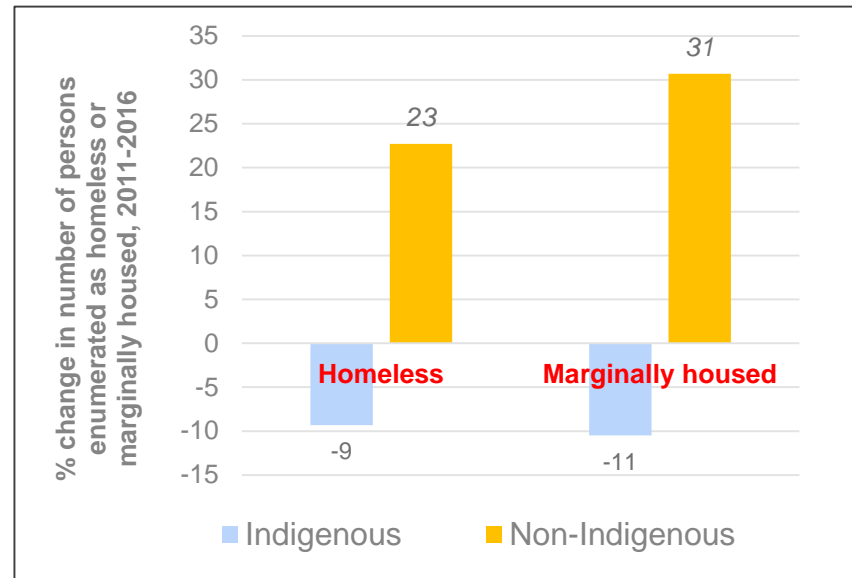
- Going back 10 years 'severe overcrowding' and 'other overcrowding' up 77%



Source: ABS Census

Homelessness overall: 4. Falling rates of homelessness and marginal housing for Indigenous Australians

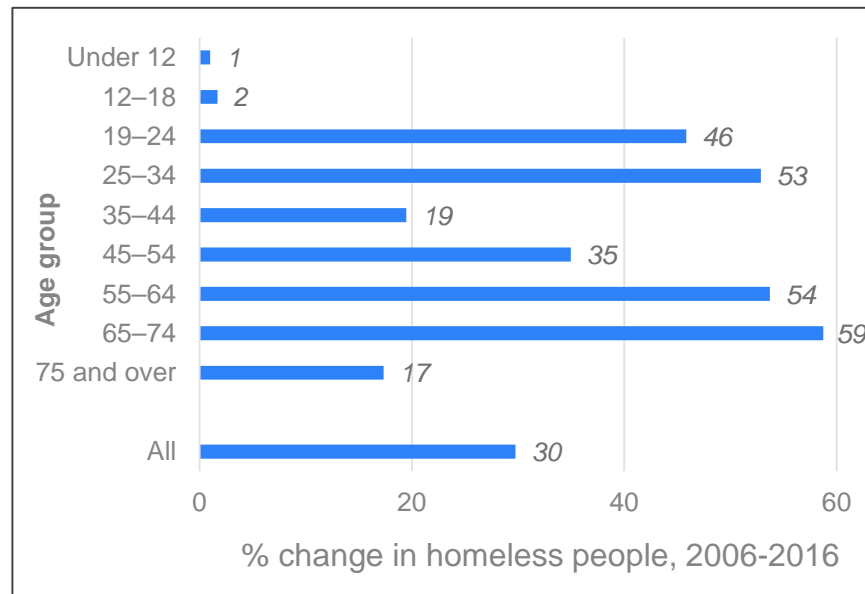
- Indigenous homelessness rate remains 10x non-Indigenous rate
- But Indigenous number down 2011-2016 according to Census; same for marginally housed
- Rate of increase for non-I cohort: 23% (not 14%)
- Possible partial explanation: NPARIH construction program in remote Australia
- But census not corroborated by AIHW data – no of Indigenous homelessness service users *grew disproportionately* (up 39%)



Source: ABS Census

Homelessness overall: 5. Homelessness change by age cohort – decade trend

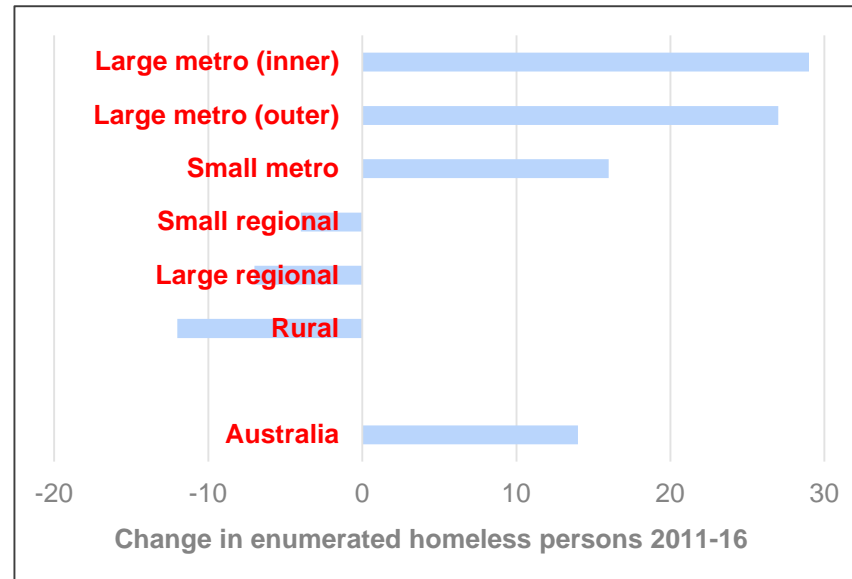
- Fastest growing age cohort in % terms: older people aged 55-74
- Largest numerical growth: young adults
- Very limited increase for young people aged under 18 and over 75s possibly indicates effective policy action



Source: ABS Census

Spatial contrasts and trends: 1. Patterns of change at the macro scale

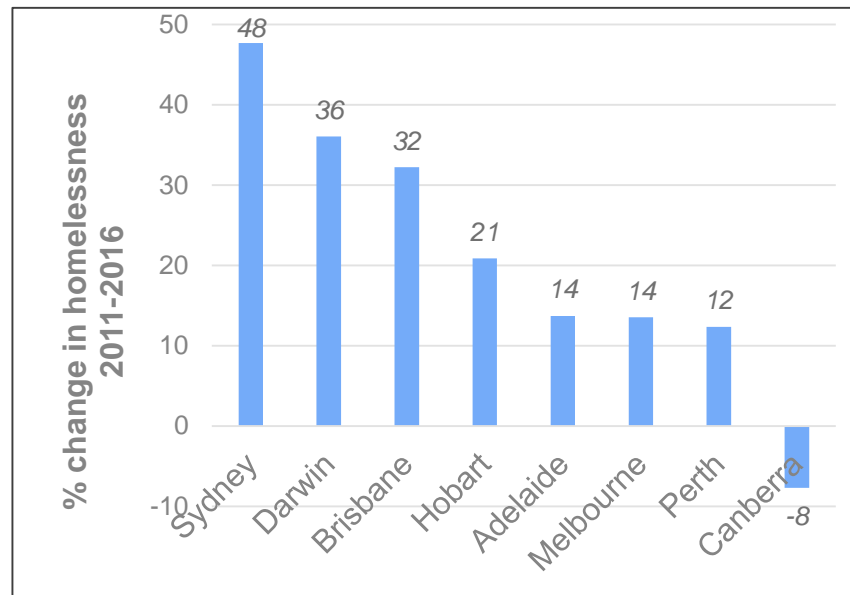
- Disproportionate rates of increase in capital cities
- Reductions in regional and rural Australia
- Possible consistency with reduced Indigenous homelessness



Source: ABS Census

Spatial contrasts and trends: 2. Contrasting trends at capital city level

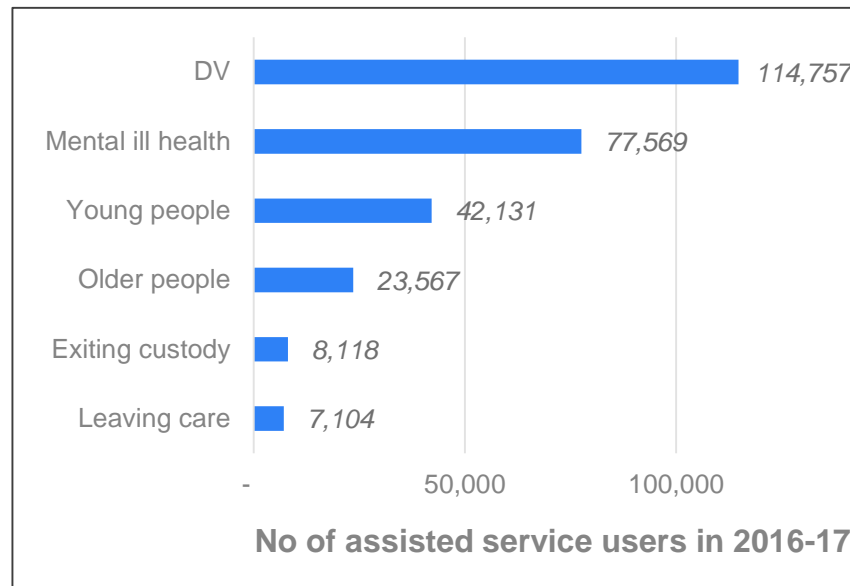
- All capital cities other than Perth and Canberra have seen increases equal to or above national increase
- Darwin result could reflect some 2011-2016 Indigenous population movement



Source: ABS Census

Homelessness causes: 1. Incidence of 'associated issues' 2016-17

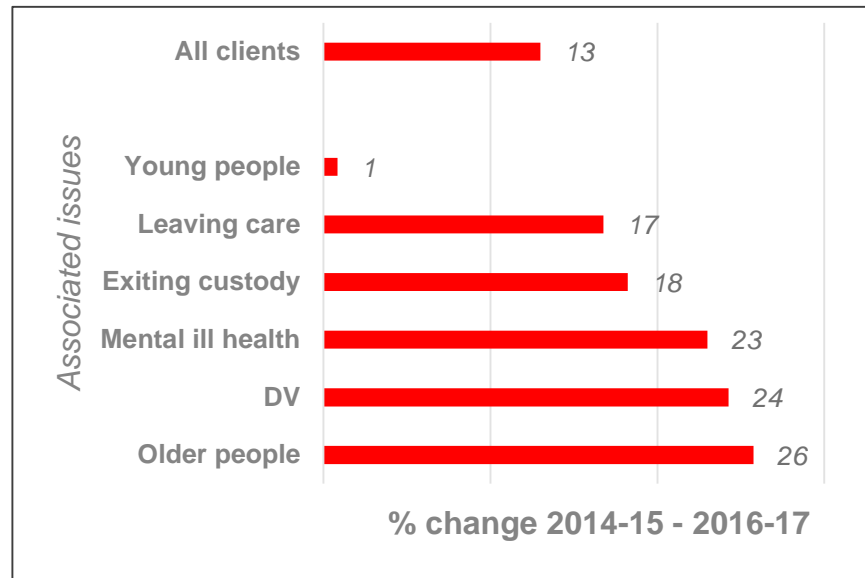
- In absolute terms, DV is by far the most commonly recorded 'associated issue'
- Institutional discharge numbers are modest



Source: AIHW SHS statistics

Homelessness causes: 2. Recent change in homelessness associated with different issues

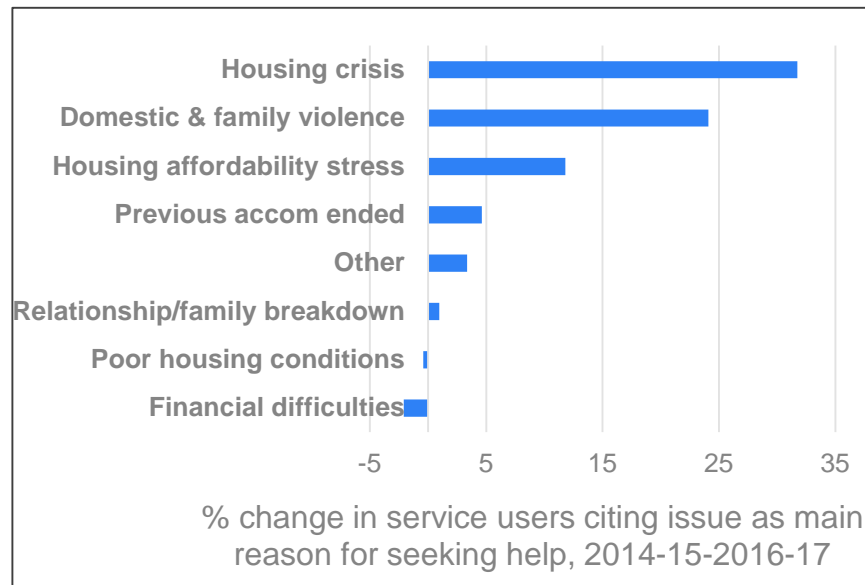
- Although relatively numerically small component of the total, older persons homelessness rising fastest
- Similarly, above-norm increases for institutional discharge categories



Source: AIHW SHS statistics

Homelessness causes: 3. Recent change in homelessness resulting from different causes

- Fastest rate of growth 'housing crisis' – maybe significant but perhaps typology in need of review
- Notable that 'financial difficulties' contracting as main cause during period when homelessness overall increasing



Source: AIHW SHS statistics

6. Conclusions

The national story: boiled down version

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>% change</i>
Homelessness – overall: snapshot total (000s)	102	116	14
Homelessness service users – no. recorded during year (000s)	236	288	22
Rough sleepers – sub-set of homelessness overall (000s)	6.8	8.2	20
Overall population (millions)	22.7	24.6	8
Social housing provision (dwellings – 000s)	420	433	3
% of low income tenants paying unaffordable rents	40.7	44.2	9
Govt expenditure: homelessness services (\$M – 2016-17 values)	634	817	29
Govt expenditure: social housing investment (\$M – 2016-17 values)	1420	1319	-7

Overarching narrative

- Consistent with evidence from UKHM, AHM demonstrates homelessness more likely to rise in boom times than in recession (as housing market tightens)
- Growing homelessness partly reflects policy complacency and inaction
- Unwillingness to recognise and own the problem (beyond funding emergency services)
- As in England, growing scale of homelessness also results from conscious policy choices:
 - Reduced govt spending thru' suppressing/cutting benefit entitlements (rather than – e.g. winding back tax concessions benefiting the wealthy)
 - Criminal justice policies pushing up prison populations – and therefore discharge rates
 - Gratefully absorbing higher property tax takes when housing markets boom, but doing little or nothing to expand social housing commensurate with need
- More optimistically, as seems to have been achieved in the US (homelessness down 14% over 10 years), policy change could disrupt rising trajectory

