

FACTSHEET: HOMELESSNESS



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

ACTIVITY: BUST SOME MYTHS!

Ask the group to stand in the middle of the room. When you share the following statements, get them to run to the front of the room (if they think it's a fact) or the back (if they think it's a myth). Then share the answers.



- People experiencing homelessness always live on the street. **myth**
- More than 100,000 people experience homelessness in Australia today. **fact**
- It's mainly older men who are homeless. **myth**
- Being homeless is a choice. **myth**



DANIEL'S STORY

Daniel was 14 when he and his mum moved to Sydney for her new job. When the job fell through they were left with minimal savings, no income, and after a month of scraping by they couldn't afford their accommodation and sought refuge at Vincentian House. This is a crisis accommodation and case management service run by the St Vincent de Paul Society that supports families, women and children at immediate risk or currently experiencing homelessness. During their stay at Vincentian House, Daniel met with a Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP) case worker. This program was developed with the understanding that during times of upheaval, education can be a powerful tool in overcoming disadvantage for children. This support person helped Daniel stay engaged with school, focused on being a positive role model for Daniel, and ensured that he had a trusted adult to support him with his hopes and dreams. To help with one of these dreams, Daniel's case worker arranged singing lessons for him, at no cost to him and his mum. Both Daniel's case worker and his mother observed a significant shift in Daniel, reporting that his confidence and attitude were positively boosted through the lessons.

After 4 months at Vincentian House, Daniel's mum was on her feet and they moved into a private rental. Since then, Daniel has continued meeting with his case worker, and has felt more comfortable sharing some of the struggles he has faced being separated from his father, coping with his mother's mental health issues, and his challenges with school. Daniel continues to work on his case plan goals, including continuing his music, attending school 5 days a week, and looking for part-time work in the near future.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Ask the group questions then discuss the facts.

WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS MEAN?

What does 'safe' mean to you? What about 'secure' and 'adequate'?

A person experiencing homelessness does not have access to safe, secure and adequate housing.

Only 6% of people experiencing homelessness stay in improvised dwellings, tents or sleep out.

The majority are staying:

- In severely overcrowded dwellings 39%
- In supported accommodation for the homeless 20%
- With other households 17%
- With boarding houses 17%

WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

OVER 105,000
PEOPLE EVERY NIGHT
IN AUSTRALIA

Male 56% Female 44%
Indigenous 25%
Born overseas 30%
Aged over 55 - 14%
Aged 25 - 55 - 44%
Aged Under 25 - 42%

WHY DO YOU THINK SOMEONE MAY BE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

- Domestic and family violence 23%
- Financial difficulties 16%
- Housing crisis 15%
- Inadequate or inappropriate dwellings 11%
- Relationship or family breakdown 6%
- Housing affordability stress 5%
- Other reasons 20%

WHAT VINNIES DOES

VINNIES HOMELESS SERVICES

Includes crisis and/or transitional accommodation, case management support, domestic violence services, meals, and more. These services focus on preventing the cycle of homelessness, to support people with housing, cost of living and other pressures to keep them from falling into homelessness. If they do experience homelessness, the focus is to help find permanent accommodation as soon as possible.

VINNIES CAMPAIGNS

Vinnies strongly advocates for government to take action on these issues at a National and State level. Check out the *Ache for Home* report and our campaigns online to get involved or to start your own local campaign.

ACTIVITY

What are some of the societal factors that contribute to homelessness?

Talk about this as a group, and skim some newspaper/news site headlines as a group if you need a starting place (clue: unemployment, high rental prices, unaffordable housing, etc.). How did each of these issues arise? As you can see, homelessness is not a stand-alone issue, and there are clear trends in our society, often backed by unfair government decisions that lead to these alarming statistics.

"It's easy to talk about embracing uncertainty and disruption when you know you have a few certainties you can rely on, especially if appropriate housing is one of them... Which is why, if the government were truly serious about... (preventing) people falling into poverty or homelessness, it would make a massive, much needed, investment in social housing, in the order of \$10 billion over four years, to meet the massive shortfall in social housing."

– John Falzon, CEO,
St Vincent de Paul Society Australia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

BE ADVOCATES

Talk to your family, friends, classmates, and community to help raise awareness about homelessness and fight negative stereotypes.

Research the topic; see what Vinnies is doing in your local area and how they're advocating to government. Collect signatures for a Vinnies petition, start your own or invite a local MP or Mayor to your group meeting or event so you can share your concerns with them – and let us know about it!

BE GENEROUS

Get on board with the Winter Appeal or Christmas Appeal to collect money, clothing or food donations.

- Run a Sleepout to raise awareness and much needed funds to directly support people who are sleeping rough.
- Check the helpful guides on how to do this online.
- Volunteer at a local Vinnies

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