

FACTSHEET: HOMELESSNESS

ACTIVITY **BUST SOME MYTHS!**

Ask the students 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 ensuring 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, Karen 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 emergency accommodation and food when people need it most, on-going support to help with different concerns along the way, as well as domestic violence help and more. These services try to prevent the cycle of homelessness. This means helping people through tough times, to keep them from falling into homelessness. This might mean helping to buy food and pay bills when they might not otherwise be able to pay for them. Helping with these small things can mean the difference between people being able to stay in their own home and having to find alternative, cheaper housing.

For people that are experiencing homelessness, Vinnies tries to help find permanent, safe accommodation as soon as possible.

VINNIES CAMPAIGNS

Vinnies tries to get the government to see these bigger issues and find solutions to prevent more people from experiencing homelessness. There are different Vinnies campaigns running all the time online which your school can get involved in – sometimes the campaign might ask you to collect signatures for a petition, speak with your local Mayor, or call the Prime Minister.

“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. It’s very hard to get a job or keep a job if you do not have a place to call home. It’s nigh impossible to study at TAFE, university or school, if you do not have appropriate housing. It’s hard to take care of your health. It’s hard to build relationships or to maintain them. It’s impossible to feel safe, to feel that you are a respected member of society...”

– Dr 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 of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers in the world today, and bust those myths!

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. Run a fundraising activity at school. Get in touch with a local Vinnies service to check what donations are needed most.



ACTIVITY

Imagine what it would be like to be a person who has been forced to flee their country for their own safety. What are some challenges you might face when arriving into a new country? For example: no job, different language, etc.

Draw a mind map with these challenges in thought bubbles then add some flow on challenges that you might face.

It should quickly become clear that some challenges often cause other issues, which leads to greater disadvantage for people seeking safety in a new country.

CONNECT WITH US



@vinniesnsw

