

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

**Name:** David Bowman

**Organisation:**

**Organisation position:**

**In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this Inquiry into homelessness to consider:** Housing affordability, Family violence, Public housing, Rough sleeping, Indigenous people, Services, Mental health, Employment

**What best describes your interest in our Inquiry?** Working in the mental health sector , Working in the alcohol or other drug services sector , Working in Homelessness services , Concerned citizen

**Are there any additional themes we should consider?**

**Submission:** Working in the sectors of Drug and Alcohol, Homelessness and high risk individuals, the prevalence of housing has become paramount to the way in which services and assistance to individuals who are experiencing hardships can deliver positive outcomes. Currently the public housing stock appears to be limited, meaning there is not enough to go around, the affordability of private rental for individuals and families on Newstart exclude them from a home in the private sector, I understand there is the housing affordability scheme however it does not go far enough to alleviate the increasing needs. The cost involved in operating Supported Residential Services exclude those on Newstart unless co-contributions are made to meet the \$50 a day estimated cost of providing the service. Crisis housing do not have the funds to provide long term solutions let alone short term solutions. After the initial few days that crisis accommodation can be funded there is no further opportunity to place the homeless in a long term housing solution.

Over the last twelve months it is noted that there is a move to provide more public housing however this does not address the immediate crisis. Understandably people are choosing rough sleeping over the prospect of being in a boarding house and subject to harassment, theft and violence, (note this is not in all boarding houses) although it appears to be the norm. Boarding houses require an overhaul on how they are being run and the availability of new ones opening. It also would appear that when one closes there is not another to replace them (The Gatwick) for example. I would like to submit this scenario which has happened to an individual, the person has a drug and alcohol addiction, is unemployed, separated, has not seen his child for 6 years, lost their Grandmother a few years ago and never fully

processed the loss, recently the mother passed away and the public housing property reverted back to stock. The person receives Newstart, has difficulty attending and maintaining appointments, uses substances to relieve the mental and physical pain of the circumstance, has medical and mental health issues with several hospital admissions in the last year. Is unable to access home visits as they are homeless, cannot afford Supported Residential Services, discharged from hospital after a few days back to the streets. They also do not meet the minimum criteria for a Disability support Pension, the person requires assistance with hygiene, travel, mental health, drug and alcohol, They are unable to access private or share rental without having enough funds to feed themselves after rent. Still they are unable to buy necessities for health and hygiene. This particular person has fallen through the gaps(YES). They are not the only one, there are several more just like them with no place to go, no real hope of change and not a lot to look forward to. Well the question here is what can be done to alleviate the circumstances. Not a lot, funding is not high enough to provide a house, pay the medical and health costs, Government Benefits are too low to provide relief. In some circumstance medical aid, support or even home visits cannot be made without a place of residence. The solution is not so easy, provision for more housing to be allocated to public housing from builders of new estates providing a percentage of new homes. An increase in the basic payments to allow access to services. Provision of cheaper rents for those experiencing homelessness on an assessed income. I understand I am only one voice, however a voice of despair as the growing vulnerable disadvantaged population become a drastic statistic rather than a positive outlook and a positive statistic. I trust our future to be bright and not fraught with despair.

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?**

Keeping the current assessment criteria for housing addresses the immediate needs of those who require escape from Domestic Violence and those requiring assistance accordingly as dictated by their needs. What is needed is more public housing, subsidies for private housing, an increase in well run crisis accommodation. Of course more funding in general.

**Signature:**

David Bowman