

MEDIA RELEASE

Urgent action required to address inner city Sydney homelessness

With the February 2016 numbers of the City of Sydney Street Count at an all-time high of 486 rough sleepers in the City of Sydney LGA and crisis accommodation services 98% full there has never been a greater demand for an integrated government response to inner city homelessness.

Homelessness NSW today released the Inner Sydney Registry Week Report (the Report) to assist Government, services and the community to effectively eliminate homelessness in inner Sydney. The Report provides a detailed overview of the housing and support needs and health issues of 516 people experiencing homelessness in Inner Sydney who were surveyed in December 2015 and provides information on particular cohorts including young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, people over 55 and veterans.

The Report identifies that only 8 of the 260 people interviewed in 2010 when a similar survey was undertaken are still experiencing homelessness.

'This clearly demonstrates that a supply of affordable housing with support can eliminate homelessness, said Katherine McKernan, CEO Homelessness NSW.

'The data clearly shows that a lack of affordable housing is a major driver of homelessness as all people surveyed are struggling to live on less than \$400 a week – this places them all below the poverty line.'

'In 2010 we had a supply of affordable housing, and supported housing such as Common Ground and Platform 70 coming online, and this worked towards ensuring a housing outcome for people experiencing homelessness at that time.'

'We also know that we need to stop people becoming homeless in the first place and the fact that we have so many new people on the street shows the failure of the broader government service system that has been unable to turn off the tap.'

The data shows that mental health and drug and alcohol services need to be more readily available to prevent people from becoming homeless and to support homeless people to move off the streets - of the 516 people surveyed 72% reported having a substance abuse problem, 53% reported having a mental health issue and of those 53%, 64% reported having both a mental health and substance abuse problem.

The data also shows that 53% of the respondents had been in prison and 65% had been arrested. There is an urgent need for corrections to reduce the number of people exiting into homelessness.

Homelessness NSW calls on the State Government to work across the housing, community services, health and justice portfolios to urgently address inner city homelessness and come up with a targeted, integrated plan as to how this will be achieved.

The Inner City Sydney Registry Report can be found at: <http://www.homelessnessnsw.org.au/>