

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Committee Secretary

Following attendance at the recent hearings into the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013 inquiry, I was asked to provide some supplementary information to assist committee members. The information relates to the links between mental health and homelessness, the geographical spread of the frail aged homeless population, and the spread of aged care services in receipt of the homeless viability supplement.

Mental health and homelessness.

The links between people who are homeless and the prevalence of mental illness is much discussed, but the documented figures vary depending on the report focus and the definition of mental health adopted in various research projects. So as an example, over a twelve month period in one of our crisis accommodation facilities, 600 men will be accommodated. Around 70 % of these residents will require some assistance with mental health issues, although only approximately 35% let us know that they have mental health issues when they take up the accommodation.

However, a report produced by RMIT in 2007, *Confronting the Challenge*, (Chamberlain, Chris; Johnson, Guy; Theobald, Jacqui) analyses the experiences of 4252 homeless people and 934 people who were at risk of homelessness. Major findings indicate that there are links between substance abuse and homelessness and mental illness and homelessness. However 66 per cent of those with a substance use problem had developed their problem after they became homeless. The researchers found that 30 per cent of the homeless had mental health issues. However just over half (53 per cent) developed mental health problems after becoming homeless.

Geographical analysis of homelessness amongst older people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics released its report, "Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness in November 2012. The report provides an estimate of the numbers of homeless people across Australia based upon data collected on Census night of 2011.

The report identifies the numbers of people homeless aged 55 or over as follows:

State	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Numbers of people homeless over 55	4530	2710	3446	817	1497	253	1424	172	14849
Percentage* approx	31	18	23	6	10	2	9	1	100

Whilst there is no suggestion that all homeless people over the age of 55 require residential aged care, it is interesting to note that the geographical spread of specialist homeless aged care residential facilities, defined as those being in receipt of the homeless viability supplement are as follows:

State	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	Tas	NT	Aust.
Nos of aged care facilities in receipt of viability supplement	3	10	0	1	2	0	0	16

There is clearly an uneven provision of services and a complete absence of specialist facilities in some areas of Australia.

I understand that the facilities provide approximately 716 beds across Australia.

I hope this information is of use to Committee members.

Please contact me if further information is required.

Netty Horton

Territorial Social Programme Director

The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory

Member, Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness