



aaeh

australian  
alliance  
to end  
homelessness

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Census homelessness data reveals we can do better than this

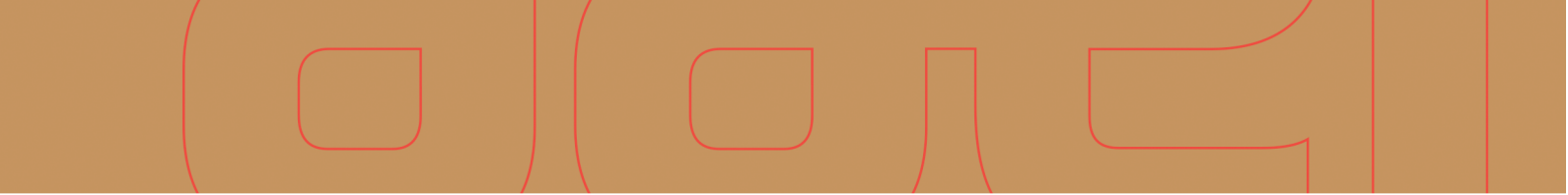
Today's release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' [2021 Census data on estimating homelessness](#) paints a picture of a bad situation getting worse, with the data revealing a 5.2% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness nationally between 2016 and 2021 – or 6,067 people.

While overall homelessness decreased in New South Wales and the Northern Territory, it increased everywhere else. The amount of rough sleeping homelessness decreased in NSW, Victoria, SA and the NT.

The data shows that there was a slight overall decrease in the number of people experiencing rough sleeping, no doubt as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic response measures that were put in place across a number of jurisdictions when the Census occurred.

David Pearson, CEO of the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH), says that while the numbers from the Census are concerning, what should also alarm Australians is that **the data released today is already 19 months old.**

“In Australia, there are no national systems in place to regularly measure the rates of homelessness across the country – rather, we estimate it every five years. Imagine how



we'd manage problems like unemployment if we estimated the rates every five years and then took 588 days to release this information.

“You can't change what you don't measure, so it's unsurprising that we're not really managing the problem of homelessness in Australia. We can do better than this. As a nation, we are better than this,” says Mr Pearson.

The Census data is better than nothing, but rather than waiting for governments to make the investments to properly measure this issue, many communities across Australia have taken matters into their own hands.

Over 26 communities across Australia are working towards ending homelessness as a part of the [Advance to Zero Campaign](#), which is supported by the AAEH and based on the same methodology used by communities around the world that have successfully ended homelessness.

These communities work to collect monthly data on people experiencing homelessness, including their name, underlying health and mental health issues, housing needs, location and more, to measure what is occurring at a local level with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

“Despite the common misconception to the contrary, the scale of homelessness in Australia is both preventable and solvable. Communities and countries around the world are demonstrating that,” says Mr Pearson.

“The Census data shows that when evidence-based, targeted investments are made, like what happened in some states in response to COVID-19, progress can be made.

“We commend the Australian Government on its commitment to develop a National Housing and Homelessness Plan (the Plan) and introduce the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF). After years of inaction, this is sorely needed.

“What we also need is a sustainable way to fund the data collection that is integral to ending homelessness, which is why the AAEH is calling on the Australian Government to financially support the Advance to Zero Campaign so we can measure how many people are experiencing homelessness in communities across the country.”

The AAEH is also calling for greater investment in supportive housing and for the health needs of people experiencing homelessness to be better met.

**Track the progress of some of the Australian communities collecting real-time data and working to end homelessness at these links:**

- [Adelaide](#)
- [Brisbane](#)
- [Logan](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Western Australia](#)
- [Melbourne](#)

**-ENDS-**

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**About the Alliance to End Homelessness**

[The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness](#) (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending homelessness in Australia – starting with rough sleeping homelessness. The AAEH supports Australian communities to individually and collectively end homelessness. Specifically, we work with local communities at all levels to ensure everyone has access to safe and sustainable housing services and that any incidents of homelessness that do occur are rare, brief and non-recurring.