

HALVING HOMELESSNESS

THINK TANK BALLARAT

Who is homeless in Ballarat and how do we respond?

By Grampians Homelessness Network co-ordinator Jax Roan

Following on from Thursday night's Think Tank, we have been contacted by a few people wanting more information about homelessness in Ballarat. We are unable to estimate how many people are staying with friends and family in overcrowded situations (couch surfing) as we can only effectively count them when we meet them.

Homeless services in Ballarat are funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, funding that is provided from a Federal and State Government agreement. What services are delivered and to whom is determined via these funding arrangements.

Our current service system incorporates a Homelessness Entry Point (provided through UnitingCare Ballarat), where any person experiencing housing difficulty can come and see a worker, talk through what is happening and be provided with information and, if required, referral to an appropriate service (support and/or housing).

This service is funded to operate Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, with an after-hours response provided statewide from Melbourne.

Someone requiring support can then be referred to a number of services depending on age, household type and need.

Support services are provided by Ballarat Community Health, Berry Street, Centacare, Child and Family Services, Salvo Connect, UnitingCare and WRISC.

Our services are generally funded to provide outreach support, with housing provided through UnitingCare Ballarat (except for Peplow House, which is operated for single men by Centacare; and Salvo Connect, which operates some properties for single mothers).

We operate under two funding models – crisis support (which provides 6 weeks' intensive support) and transitional support (which provides 13 weeks' support). Both of these timelines are averaged across the year (meaning you may work with some clients for shorter and longer periods).

Homelessness services are funded to assist people to access stable housing and link in with any support services they may require.

According to our entry point data from last year, a wide group of people came to seek assistance with a homelessness and housing related matter:

- 486 young people under the age of 25 with 84 accompanying children;
- 1176 people aged 26-55 with 604 accompanying children; and
- 123 people over the age of 55 with 16 children.

In total, 1785 adults and 704 children sought assistance from us.

Homelessness services are broken down across client types:

- single adult male and female;
- older people (over 50);
- families and single parents; and
- young people under the age of 25.