

Counting boarding Houses: Reflections on Homelessness Research in Australia

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Traditionally, a boarding house provided long-term single room accommodation and also provided meals ... A rooming house did not ... Nowadays, the terms boarding house and rooming house are used interchangeably (Greenhalgh et al. 2004: 2).

***The Road Home* specifically noted that
'tertiary homelessness includes people living
in boarding houses ... both short and long-
term' (Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
2008: 3).**

Table 1: Number of persons in boarding houses, Australia, 2001 and 2006

	2001	2006	% change
New South Wales	8,374	6,303	- 25
Victoria	5,701	3,355	- 41
Queensland	5,613	4,145	- 26
South Australia	1,336	1,129	- 15
Western Australia	1,456	1,085	- 25
Tasmania	241	176	- 27
Northern Territory	845	593	- 30
Aust. Cap. Territory	185	44	- 76
Australia	23,750	16,830	- 29

Source: ABS (2011, p.73 & p.85)

- 1 Official definition**
- 2 Five sources of evidence**
- 3 New method – council records**
- 4 Main findings**
- 5 Characteristics of dwellings**
- 6 Conclusion – 3 points**

According to the Victorian *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, a rooming house is a building where ‘one or more rooms is available for rent and the total number of people who occupy those rooms is four or more’ (Department of Human Services 2011: 13).

- **They provide single room accommodation.**
- **There is shared access to common facilities such as bathrooms, kitchens, laundries and living areas.**
- **Residents enter into a tenancy agreement with the boarding house operator on an individual basis.**
- **There are locks on bedroom doors.**

- 1 97 % of councils (30 out of 31) provided updated figures**
- 2 31 interviews with council officers**
- 3 28 interviews with welfare staff at 15 agencies**
- 4 10 interviews with university housing officers; 6 interviews with TAFE staff**
- 5 250 field visits across Melbourne**

30 out of 31 councils provided updated figures – 1,276 registered rooming houses

Most thought there were unregistered properties

Wombat Housing and Support Services

175 unregistered BH identified

1276 + 175 = 1451 boarding houses

Table 2: Rooming houses, five councils

	N
Number of rooming houses	165
Number of bedrooms	1,603
Maximum number of tenants	1,969

175 unregistered

Looked at 1st 760 where information available

Inner Melbourne: 14 bedrooms

Suburban Melbourne: 8 bedrooms

Table 3: Number of rooming houses by geographical area, 2006 and 2011

SSD		ABS 2006	ABS 2011	2011 (Council records)
Inner Melb.	Inner Melbourne	128	134	188
Inner West	Western Melbourne			
Inner North	Moreland, Northern Middle Melb.	117	185	1,049
Inner East	Boroondara, Eastern Middle Melb.			
Inner S.E	Southern Melbourne, Dandenong			
Outer West	Melton-Wyndham			
Outer North	Hume, Northern Outer Melb.	18	37	214
Outer East	Eastern Outer Melb., Yarra Ranges			
Outer S.E.	S.E. Outer Melbourne, Frankston, Mornington Peninsula			
Total		263	356	1,451

Table 4: Number of rooming houses by statistical subdivision, 2006 and 2011

	ABS 2006	ABS 2011	2011 (Council records)
Inner Melbourne	128	134	188
Western Melbourne	26	34	339
Melton-Wyndham	1	0	35
Moreland City	1	7	64
Northern Middle Melb.	6	44	90
Hume City	1	0	37
Northern Outer Melb.	2	0	25
Boroondara City	28	0	33
Eastern Middle Melb.	21	45	361
Eastern Outer Melb.	4	9	31
Yarra Ranges Shire	2	2	6
Southern Melbourne	10	19	73
Greater Dandenong	25	36	89
S.E. Outer Melb.	1	6	24
Frankston City	6	19	50
Mornington Peninsula	1	1	6
Total	263	356	1,451

Table 5: Number of tenants by geographical area, 2006 and 2011

	SSD	ABS 2006	ABS 2011	2011 (Council records)
Inner Melb.	Inner Melbourne	1,795	1,880	2,682
Inner West	Western Melbourne			
Inner North	Moreland, Northern Middle Melb.	922	1,482	8,417
Inner East	Boroondara, Eastern Middle Melb.			
Inner S.E	Southern Melbourne, Dandenong			
Outer West	Melton-Wyndham			
Outer North	Hume, Northern Outer Melb.	106	301	1,469
Outer East	Eastern Outer Melb., Yarra Ranges			
Outer S.E.	S.E. Outer Melbourne, Frankston, Mornington Peninsula			
Total		2,946*	3,663	12,568

Table 6: Number of tenants by statistical subdivision, 2006 and 2011

	ABS 2006	ABS 2011	2011 (Council records)
Inner Melbourne	1,795	1,880	2,682
Western Melbourne	207	271	2,669
Melton-Wyndham	np	0	264
Moreland City	np	55	646
Northern Middle Melb.	46	353	673
Hume City	np	0	216
Northern Outer Melb.	15	0	142
Boroondara City	225	0	506
Eastern Middle Melb.	167	363	2,821
Eastern Outer Melb.	35	74	236
Yarra Ranges Shire	12	19	39
Southern Melbourne	80	151	460
Greater Dandenong	197	289	642
S.E. Outer Melb.	np	50	175
Frankston City	44	152	313
Mornington Peninsula	np	6	84
Total	2,946*	3,663	12,568

NP: not published to ensure confidentiality.

*Information missing on 123 cases.

Sources: ABS (2011; 2012), unpublished data

- 1 Traditional rooming house**
- 2 Small rooming house
(‘suburban’ RH)**
- 3 Community rooming house
(‘not for profit’ RH)**

Table 7: Size of rooming houses in Inner Melbourne

(N = 188)

	%
Large (20 or more bedrooms)	18
Medium (10 to 19 bedrooms)	38
Small (4 to 9 bedrooms)	44
	100

Table 8: Size of rooming houses in suburban Melbourne

	Inner suburbs (N = 1,049)	Outer suburbs (N=214)	Total (N = 1,263)
	%	%	%
Large (20+ bedrooms)	5	1	4
Medium (10-19 bedrooms)	15	6	14
Small (4 to 9 bedrooms)	80	93	82
	100	100	100

















Table 10: Rent and disposable income* by household type, Melbourne (September quarter, 2011)

Household type	Income source	Accommodation	Median rent	Income*	Disposable income
			\$	\$	\$
Couple (2 children)	AWE**	3 BR house	340	1,309	969
Single person (21+)	Newstart	2 BR flat (shared)	175	303	128
Single parent &1 child	Parenting	2 BR flat	350	525	175
Single person	Aged pension	1 BR flat	300	434	134
Single person	Austudy	2 BR flat (shared)	175	254	79

* Income includes Commonwealth rent assistance, family tax benefits and pharmaceutical allowances. Amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

** Average weekly earnings

Source: adapted from Tenants Union of Victoria (2011, p.3)

Table 11: Disposable income* after rent, by household type, capital cities (September quarter, 2011)

		Adelaide	Bris.	Canberra	Darwin	Hobart	Melb.	Perth	Syd.
		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Single person (21+)	Newstart	168	113	106	99	168	128	118	78
Sing. parent (1 child)	Parenting	255	145	130	117	255	175	155	75
Single person	Aged	204	144	159	141	244	134	134	19
Single person	Austudy	119	64	57	50	119	79	69	29

* Income includes Commonwealth rent assistance, family tax benefits and pharmaceutical allowances. Amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar. The calculations for this table are provided in Appendix 1.

Source: adapted from Tenants Union of Victoria (2011).

NATIONAL PICTURE?

ABS identified 3,663 people in boarding houses in Melbourne.

Alternative estimate using council records: 12,568

ABS identified $3,663/12,568 \times 100 = 29.15\%$

National estimate: $17,721 \times 100/29.1 = 60,897$