



2011 CENSUS **FACT SHEET**

2011 CENSUS OF POPULATION & HOUSING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COUNTING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

When is the Census?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) will be conducting the next Census of Population and Housing on Tuesday 9th August 2011.

What is the Census?

The Census aims to take a 'snapshot' of the nation every five years. It collects vital information on the social, economic and housing characteristics of Australian society. Community organisations, government and business all rely on Census information to plan community facilities and services like housing, health, education, language services and special assistance programs.

Who is counted in the Census?

Everyone in Australia, except foreign diplomats and their families, on the night of 9th August 2011, including people experiencing homelessness. This includes:

- people living in hostels and refuges;
- people without a usual address staying temporarily with friends or family, and those in temporary accommodation (e.g., motel, hotel or night shelter);
- people living in a single room, with no kitchen or bathroom of its own, in a private unlicensed boarding house; and
- people living rough on the night of Tuesday 9th August 2011.

Why are people who are homeless counted?

The Census aims to count every person in Australia on Census Night. People who are homeless are part of our community and need to be counted in the Census. The collection of data about this segment of the community is especially vital when forming policy, allocating resources and providing services.

How do you count people who are 'sleeping rough'?

For 'rough sleepers', the Census will send Special Collectors to go to places where they can usually be found, using a short version of the Census form. This activity may take up to a week to complete, depending on local conditions.

The Census will seek to recruit workers and volunteers from homeless services to be Special Collectors, as well as people who are or have been homeless, but the positions are open to anyone who wants to apply. The Special Collectors will receive training and are employed and paid by the ABS.

How do you count people experiencing homeless who are staying in accommodation?

It is important that all people who have no usual address answer 'None' for the question 'Where does the person usually live?' on the Census form, regardless of where they are staying that night. For example, they could be couch surfing, or staying in Temporary Accommodation such as emergency accommodation, refuges or hostels, or even caravan parks and motels.

The Census also works closely with service organisations to locate boarding houses, refuges and hostels and accurately count the people staying in them.



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How can homeless services contribute to the count?

- * By providing information on the extent, locations and services used by people who are Absolute Homeless to their State or Territory Census Management Unit.
- * By encouraging staff and volunteers to apply to the ABS for the temporary Special Collector positions for the count of people who are Absolute Homeless.
- * By encouraging their service users to take part in the Census, and distributing key Census messages aimed at people who are homeless, especially those who are 'couch surfing'.

Is the Census compulsory?

Yes, under the Census and Statistics Act 1905. It is important that everyone takes part, as Census information is used to make decisions on services, facilities and funding.

Does the ABS share my personal information with anyone else?

Absolutely not. The ABS does not share personal information with anyone else including State and Territory housing providers, Centrelink and the Police. All personal information provided remains confidential to the ABS. Once processing of forms is finished, records of names and addresses are destroyed and the paper pulped and recycled.

The Census and Statistics Act 1905 guarantees the confidentiality of personal information and legally binds staff, past or present, never to release personal information. Past and present ABS staff can be fined or jailed if they break this law.

What are the key messages about the Census for people who are homeless?

- * Your personal information is not shared with anyone else.
- * If you are homeless and 'couch surfing' or in Temporary Accommodation on Census night, write 'None' in the 'Suburb' part of the question 'Where does the person usually live?'
- * It is important to count everyone experiencing homelessness, because of the role Census information plays in providing the right homeless services in the right locations.

For more information on the 2011 Census and the count of people who are homeless in NSW and the ACT please contact:

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