



Update, July 2024

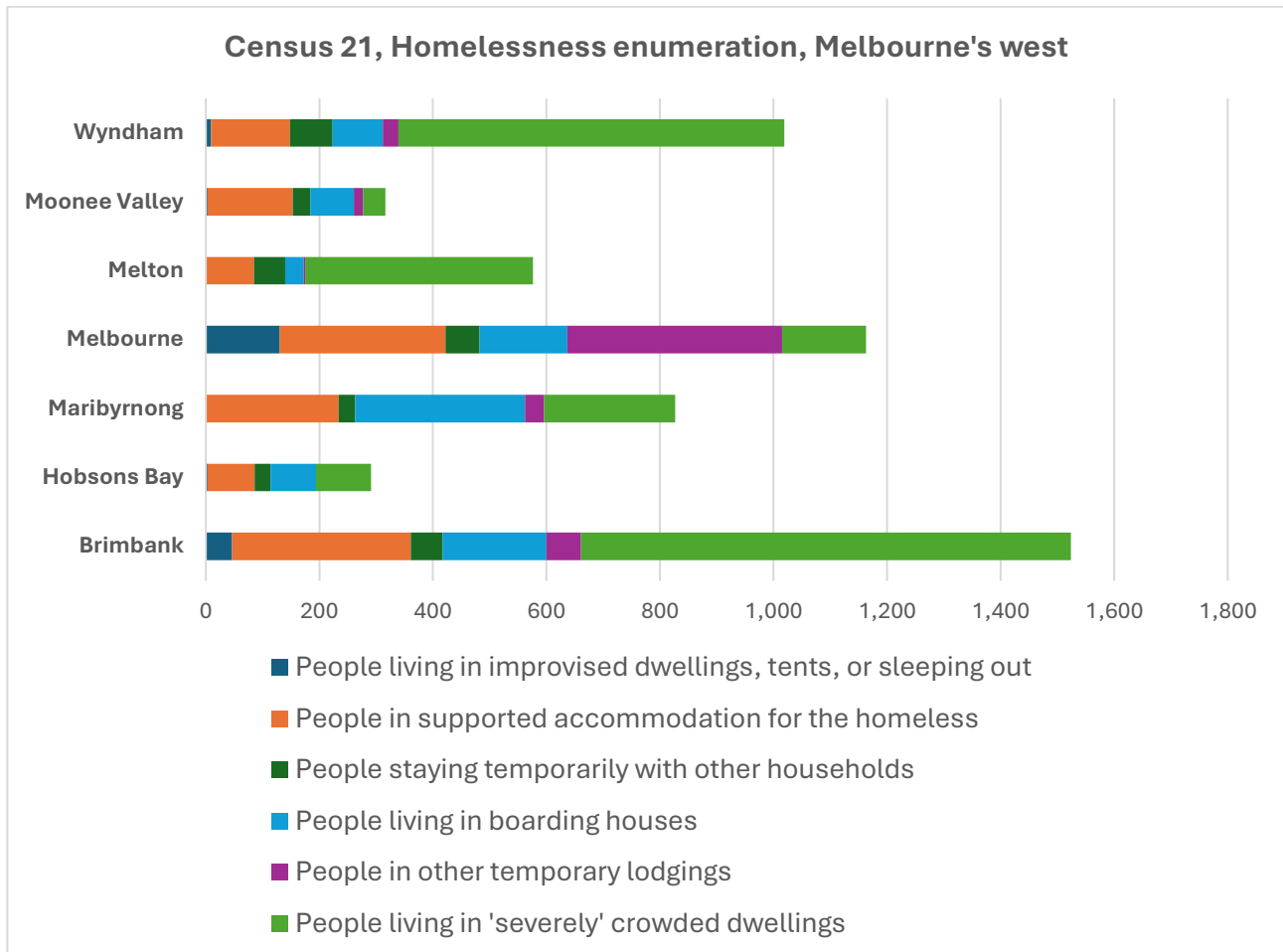
Homelessness in the West

Having a stable and affordable home is key to good health, mental health, stability and capacity to participate in society. It is not acceptable, in a country as wealthy as Australia no-one should be without a safe, stable home.

Homelessness is not inevitable. With enough public and community homes and the right support, everyone in the community can be permanently housed.

Nearly 20% of all those people who identified as being homeless in Victoria on Census night 2021 were in Melbourne’s west (5,718 people identified as being homeless in the West on Census night 2021).

This is a 40% increase in the number of people who identified as being homeless in Melbourne’s West 10 years ago.



People seeking homelessness assistance in Melbourne's West

"Housing is an important thing for a human being. If you don't have a house, you will feel unbalanced."

"Every human being, no matter race, colour, have a heart and soul. Every single person has a story. We don't become homeless because we want to. I had a house, car, and worked until my partner's suicide. Now nothing."

"Homelessness has been traumatic and turned my life upside down."

"Homelessness is something that nobody should experience and when it happens, it can be unexpected and there is not enough support for people in need. Housing is an entitlement, not a dream."

"When you are homeless you never feel safe, who will hit you or where you are. When you have a government house, you feel safe even if you have no food. "

At a glance

Every year homelessness services across Melbourne's west support approximately 15,000 people, in 11,000 households. This equates to over **1M nights** of support.

The Sector has been working at capacity for many years, so this number rarely changes. Consequently, we are now turning away more and more people, because we have no capacity to assist them.

Can you imagine losing your home and not being able to find any assistance?

Of those who are seeking our assistance:

- 12% are young people who are alone.
- 61% are women.
- 36% identify family violence as one of the main reasons they are seeking homelessness assistance.
- Tragically 8% identify as First Nations (this is 8 times the proportion of First Nations people in the Victorian population)

More people are in dire need:

Many people are unable to access even an initial appointment for homelessness assistance.

One access point (front end) service has to turn 800 people away a month without an initial appointment.

The number of people presenting who are completely without a home has increased 65% in four years.

Nearly 40% of those people to be assisted by homelessness services are still without a home after seeking support. This number has increased 75% in the last five years!

90% of young people supported are experiencing mental ill health.

Funding for support and emergency accommodation is prioritised for families and young people. The system has almost no capacity to respond to single people who have no

The workforce is stressed and burnt out. Staff retention and recruitment is difficult.

The housing crisis in Melbourne's West

The growing number of people experiencing homelessness in the West is a direct result of the housing crisis we are experiencing— both in terms of supply and affordability.

Victoria does not have enough housing. Plan Melbourne estimates we will need 2.3M more properties in Melbourne by 2051.

Anglicare reports that there is not a single rental private rental property affordable for one or two parents with 1-2 children, in receipt of income security, in Melbourne.

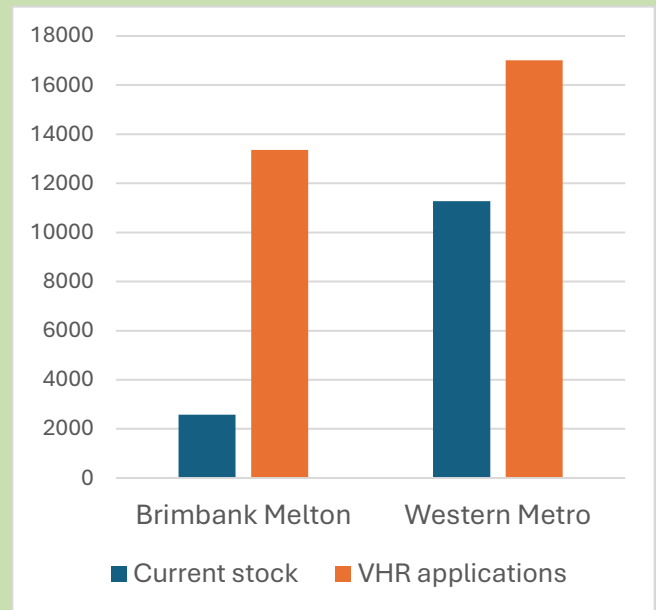
Victoria has the lowest proportion of public and community housing in Australia, and Australia has amongst the lowest rate in the OECD.

Private rental availability is at 1% and rents have risen 19% in the last year.

Allied service systems (family violence, health, settlement services) report that they cannot help people address the difficulties they are facing, in the absence of a safe, stable place to live.

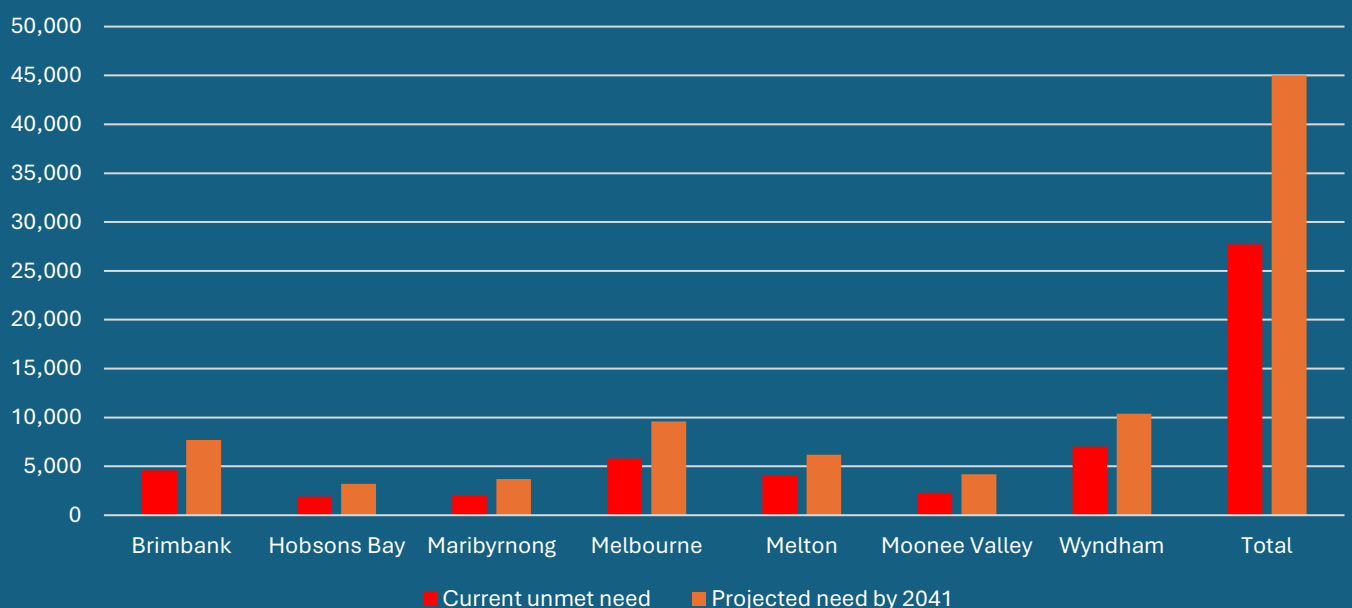
There is a complete lack of emergency accommodation funding and options for single adults and young people.

Current social housing stock vs applications in Melbourne's West



If all the social housing in Melbourne's West suddenly became available, we could fill it twice over with those on the wait list.

Current and projected need for social housing in Melbourne's West



What can be done?

We need State and Federal Governments to commit to jointly:

- Build at least 60,000 additional, appropriate social homes to meet current need in Victoria (with a focus on public housing); and
- Implement a 10 year National Plan, with a commitment to END homelessness, that comprehensively addresses all the policy and structural drivers of homelessness.

At the Federal level:

- Legislate for a bi-partisan Housing and Homelessness Plan that identifies housing as a human right and extends beyond election cycles.
- End negative gearing and capital gains tax exemptions.
- Provide a living income for those in receipt of income security.

At the State level:

- Legislate for inclusionary zoning.
- Prioritise construction of public housing.



The Western Homelessness Network



The Western Homelessness Network is the Network of the 24 Specialist Homelessness Services, managing 114 programs, in Melbourne's west.

The members meet every six weeks with 10 allied services, to improve responses to people experiencing homelessness in Melbourne's West, through management of coordinated homelessness service system arrangements, consumer consultation, linkages with allied service sectors and shared professional development.

Melbourne's west incorporates the Local Government Areas of Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Brimbank and Melton.