



Gippsland Homelessness Network



Recommendations to address the Housing and Homelessness crisis in Gippsland

The Gippsland Homelessness Network is one of 9 Homelessness Networks in Victoria with a membership of 11 funded Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) across Gippsland from Leongatha to Mallacoota.

The Network's aim is to end homelessness and work together to deliver a co-ordinated homelessness response to the community of Gippsland.

Our belief is that housing is a basic human right.

This Gippsland Election Platform has been prepared to outline the current situation in our Region, our needs and the actions required to address the housing and homelessness crisis that Gippsland is experiencing and has been for some time.

ACTIONS

1. **A review of the Unit Price for the delivery of Specialist Homelessness Services**

The Unit Price for the delivery of Specialist Homelessness Services has not been reviewed since 2000/2001. This review should be undertaken along with the changes to the new Activity Structure and the Reform of the service delivery model.

2. **Workforce expansion (Intake Assessment and Planning (IAP) and Case Management Support)**

In line with demand for service and the complexity of the households accessing Specialist Homelessness Services the IAP workforce across the Gippsland region requires an increase of at least 6 fulltime positions and include Assertive Outreach as an early intervention/prevention measure, and a further 7 fulltime Case Management Support positions. People who are at risk or experiencing homelessness require early intervention; an interim response or brief intervention to limit the amount of time people are without or waiting for assistance or support. The Homelessness sector is experiencing worker fatigue and burn out – long-term employees are leaving the sector due to the increased demands on staff, the complex nature of presentations, few resources, lack of housing options and lengthy waitlists for case management support. This is exacerbated by decreased referral options to other sectors such as mental health, youth services, alcohol and other drug services who also feel the strain of the demand for service.

3. **Increased funding of the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF)**

HEF is primarily used to cover the cost of emergency accommodation. Given the inadequate supply of social housing, the high demand, limited supply and soaring cost of private rental the need for emergency accommodation has increased but the funding has not. The maximum stay in emergency accommodation is 3 days.

4. **Victoria requires a minimum build of 6,000 social housing dwellings per year for at least 10 years to bring it up to the national average of social housing**

According to Everybody's Home, to end homelessness 3,100 dwellings are needed in the Gippsland Federal Electorate and 3,000 in the Federal Electorate of Monash.

This must include medium density (1-2 bedroom) housing stock to meet the demand for singles and couples accommodation.



5. **Housing First**²

The Gippsland Homelessness Network endorses the Housing First approach which provides permanent housing to end homelessness and wrap around support to improve quality of life and sustain tenancies.

6. **Pilot Functional Zero in Gippsland**³

Gippsland has been using a by name approach to source stable housing options for 26 households (including 55 children) who have been living in motels for an extended period of time due to COVID-19. Homelessness services, Family Violence and DFFH staff have applied a collective impact collaboration approach and have chased down any and all opportunities to source accommodation. Of the 26 households there is now only one household without an exit from motels.

7. **A minimum of 60 Youth Foyer-like accommodation beds for Gippsland**

To support young people who are experiencing homelessness and want to participate in education, training and employment Gippsland needs Youth Foyer-like accommodation. Gippsland has only 16 refuge beds for young people across the region with stays of 6 weeks. From there if you're lucky its Transitional Housing or if you're really lucky a shared private rental. Young people experiencing homelessness have limited options, the youth allowance is barely enough to survive on and if you're leaving care the housing outcomes are dismal.

“The Keep Caring Report (December 2020)⁴ completed by the Commission for Children and Young People highlights that 30% of young people become homeless within 3 years of leaving care in Victoria.”

8. **Aboriginal Housing**

The Gippsland Homelessness Network supports self-determination and the implementation of the Aboriginal Housing & Homelessness Framework;
Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home⁵

9. Large Development contracts to include the building of accommodation for their workers rather than taking up local rentals

Developments such as the recent Federal announcement of a wind farm in Bass Strait. Developers must build accommodation for their workers of a quality that can be utilised for social housing post the completion of the development. This will leave a legacy for the community rather than taking up private rentals, pushing up the cost of rentals and pushing out the locals.

10. Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2026 - events in Gippsland.

Commonwealth Games events to be secured for Gippsland. Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) recommends that 300 dwellings be built in each of the 4 regional sites and convert to social housing post the Games.

11. Inclusionary Zoning to be legislated

Legislate Inclusionary Zoning for scaled up percentage (starting at say 5-10%) of social housing in new housing developments.

12. Unoccupied dwellings

Census 2021 identified that Gippsland has 29, 081 unoccupied dwellings. An average of 19.76 % of total dwellings across the region. Of East Gippsland's total dwellings 18.8% are unoccupied, Bass Coast 39.4% unoccupied, South Gippsland 25.7% unoccupied, Wellington 21% unoccupied, Baw Baw 8.2% unoccupied, Latrobe 8.8% unoccupied. NSW has legislated that Short Term Rental properties can only be let for a maximum of 180 days per year. Victoria should consider similar legislation. Some Local Governments in Gippsland are sending out letters with Rate Notices asking owners of more than one property to consider renting out the property to assist in addressing the housing crisis.

13. The Gippsland Homelessness Network has contributed to and supports the Council to Homeless Persons (the Homelessness sectors Peak Body) Election Platform

14. When will the Victorian 10 year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy be made public?





Housing Need in Gippsland

According to *Everybody's Home*⁷ there are **500** households in the Federal Electorate of Gippsland experiencing homelessness and a further **300**⁸ households experiencing homelessness in the Federal Electorate of Monash.⁹

Victorian Housing Register (Public & Community Housing)¹⁰

Gippsland has **2,268** households on **Priority Access** on the Victorian Housing Register.

These people are deemed most needy and

- Are homeless and receiving support
- Are escaping or have escaped family violence
- Have a disability or significant support needs
- Have special housing needs.

A further **1,677** eligible Gippsland household have applied and are listed on the **Register of Interest** for social housing. Those with Priority Access households are housed before Register of Interest.

Homelessness Entry Points¹¹

In 2021/22 **3,163** households accessed Homelessness Entry Points in Bairnsdale, Sale, Morwell, Warragul and Wonthaggi. **1,634** children under the age of 18 accompanied these households.

Young People¹²

230 young people were referred to youth homelessness refuges in Morwell and Bairnsdale. Gippsland has only two Youth Refuges with a total of 16 beds for the Region. The stay in refuge is for 6 weeks. With no exit points the housing crisis has caused the average length of a support period to grow which means clients stays are longer with less success in accessing a rental and thus cannot be closed from service. This creates a bottleneck in the system and more clients are waitlisted for support for longer periods of time.

The **Keep Caring Report (December 2020)**¹³ completed by the Commission for Children and Young People highlights that **30% of young people become homeless within 3 years of leaving care in Victoria**. The Better Futures program continues to grow with many more young people entering the care service system. Better Futures currently supports 185 young people across Gippsland. 97 new clients were taken on this year. The length of the support period is 5 years. The need for service is greater than the funding can accommodate. There is no dedicated housing attached to the program and Better Futures is not a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) despite housing support being a noted part of the service. Stable accommodation is the key barrier to young people transitioning successfully from care.

Family Violence

Family Violence exists in all our communities with much of it going unreported and unseen. 3 Gippsland Local Government Areas are in the top 10 highest rates of Family Violence in Victoria (No 2 - East Gippsland Shire, No 3 - Latrobe City, No 6 - Wellington Shire)¹⁴ For women and children to remain in their homes accommodation must be found for perpetrators. Private rental for singles is limited for people on low incomes, rooming houses are expensive and often sub-standard and the majority of singles social housing is for over 55s. Perpetrators will return to the family home if they can't access accommodation.

Working Families

The number of working families that have accessed homelessness services in 2021/22 **increased by up to 13%**¹⁵ in parts of the Region.

Late Term Pregnant Women

There has been an increase in late term pregnant women that have to return to living in cars and on the streets after their 3 nights of emergency accommodation in a motel funded through the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF). The likelihood of Child Protection intervention at birth is high. This has nothing to do with a mother not wanting to protect or cause harm to a child it is an issue of access to affordable, stable accommodation.

Rental/Mortgage Stress¹⁶

36.3% of Renters in the Federal electorate of Gippsland and **42%** of Renters in the Federal electorate of Monash are experiencing rental stress by paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

58.4% of households with a mortgage in the Federal electorate of Gippsland and **48.5%** of households in the Federal electorate of Monash are experiencing mortgage stress by paying more than 30% of their income to their mortgage.

Housing Availability in Gippsland

Private Rental Vacancy Rate¹⁷ in Gippsland is **less than 1%**

Unoccupied Dwellings

Census 2021 identified that Gippsland has **29,081 unoccupied dwellings**. **An average of 19.76%** of total dwellings **across the region**. Of East Gippsland's total dwellings 18.8%¹⁸ are unoccupied, Bass Coast 39.4%¹⁹ unoccupied, South Gippsland 25.7%²⁰ unoccupied, Wellington 20.8%²¹ unoccupied, Baw Baw 8.2%²² unoccupied, Latrobe City 8.8%²³ unoccupied.

Shortage of Private Rentals anecdotal information from Homelessness services reveals that there can be **50 -100 applicants for any one property** and to secure rentals potential renters are offering 3, 6 months and more rent in advance; seeking long leases and offering rent in excess of the listed rent. People on low incomes cannot compete.

Migration from Metro during COVID has led to property price increases and private rental increases making it difficult for local people on low incomes to access housing. People who have secured employment in Gippsland from out of area have been affected by the lack of housing to purchase and rent. This has impacted on recruitment and staffing of professional services and regional development.

Developers and construction companies moving into Gippsland for work take up rentals. This pushes up rental prices and squeezes out the local community. An example of this is in Orbst when a gas plant was being developed Fibro houses that were fetching rental of \$250 per week were then being rented for \$450-500 per week.

Housing Affordability in Gippsland

According to the March, 2022 DFFH Rental Report – ‘In regional Victoria, the proportion of affordable rental lettings decreased to 26.5 per cent in the March quarter 2022, the lowest rate since this series first began in March 2000’²⁴

Private Rents increased by a range of 10.1% to 23.5% in Gippsland in 12 months (DFFH Private Rent Report March, 2022)

Affordable lettings by region for indicative households on Centrelink incomes
DFFH Rent Report March, 2022

Region	1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom		4+ Bedroom		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Barwon-South West	7	4.4%	67	10.6%	182	15.4%	78	11.6%	334	12.6%
Gippsland	1	1.3%	105	28.7%	233	33.7%	79	27.2%	418	29.3%
Goulburn-Ovens-Murray	15	20.8%	109	28.2%	268	33.9%	131	35.4%	523	32.3%
Loddon-Mallee	17	26.2%	111	27.6%	241	32.0%	83	29.1%	452	30.0%
Central Highlands-Wimmera	12	16.7%	99	30.3%	265	40.6%	174	51.5%	550	39.6%
<i>Regional Victoria</i>	52	11.6%	491	23.2%	1,189	29.2%	545	27.8%	2,277	26.5%
<i>Victoria</i>	208	1.4%	879	3.8%	2,880	15.2%	2,766	28.5%	6,733	10.1%

1 Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway | AHURI

2 <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/#:~:text=What%20is%20Housing%20First%3F,improve%20their%20quality%20of%20life.>

3 <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/brief/what-does-functional-zero-mean-relation-homelessness>

4 Keep Caring Report <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Uploads/CCYP-Keep-caring.pdf>

5 <https://vahhf.org.au/>

6 <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Under-review-and-new-Policy-and-Legislation/Short-term-rental-accommodation>

7 <https://everybodyshome.com.au/>

8 Everybody's Home <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/>

9 Everybody's Home <https://everybodyshome.com.au/heat-maps/>

10 Victorian Housing Register and transfer list, March, 2022

11 SHIP data from Entry Points, 30 June, 2022

12 Gippsland Youth Refuges (Morwell & Bairnsdale)

13 Keep Caring Report <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Uploads/CCYP-Keep-caring.pdf>

14 Crime Statistics Agency extract March, 2021 - 2022

15 SHIP data 30 June, 2012.

16 Everybody's Home <https://everybodyshome.com.au/financial-stress-map-victoria/>

17 Homes Victoria Rental Report, March quarter 2022

18 2021 East Gippsland, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

19 2021 Bass Coast, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

20 2021 South Gippsland, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

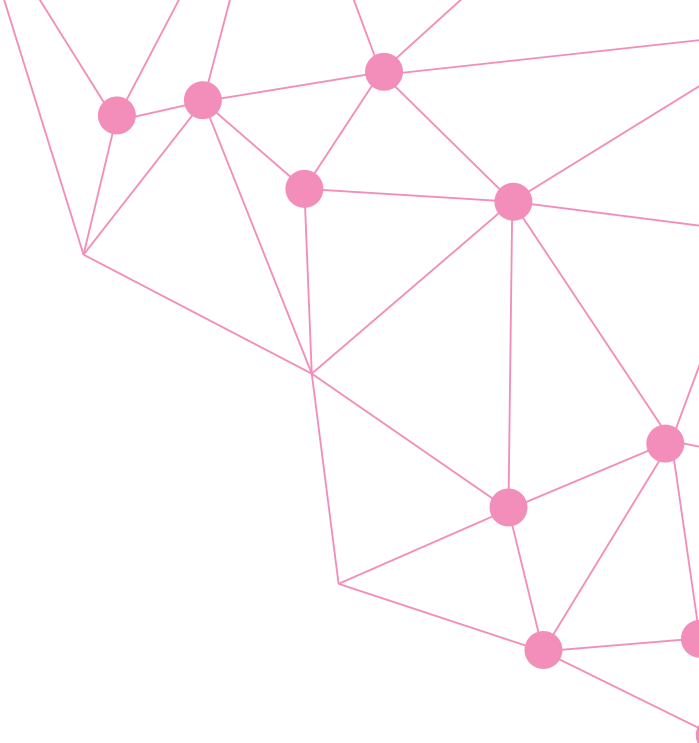
21 2021 Wellington, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

22 2021 Baw Baw, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

23 2021 Latrobe (Vic.), Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

24 Homes Victoria Rental Report, March quarter 2022





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Regional
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VACCA
Connected by culture



Statewide Children's
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THE
SALVATION
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GROUP OF COMPANIES

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