

Queensland women, children and families bear brunt of homelessness, say briefing papers

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The number of Queensland women and children experiencing homelessness would now be much higher than the just-released Census data due to the impact of COVID, population movement into the state, lack of supply of affordable housing and cost of living pressures says a QUT academic.

On Census night 2021, 44% of the overall number of people in Queensland experiencing homelessness were women and 24% were under the age of 18. How to address the growing problem will be the focus of a QUT Center for Justice public forum on March 29—[The future of housing and homelessness in Queensland](#), co-hosted with the QUT Center for Decent Work and Industry, and the TJ Ryan Foundation.

"Although the Census shows a slight overall reduction in rates of people experiencing homelessness in Queensland, it is important to note the 2021 Census data was collected when COVID19 lockdowns were occurring across the country and the pressures on housing in Queensland through population movement into the state and increasing cost of housing, was only just starting to occur," Dr. Shane Warren from the QUT Faculty of Health's School of Public Health and Social Work said.

"Our research with homelessness service providers at the end of last year made it very clear their services are under the most strain they have ever been under.

"Children, [young people](#), women, and families are groups increasing in

numbers experiencing homelessness and we know that domestic and [family violence](#) is a major driver of this. First Nations people also continue to be over-represented in the data."

Dr. Warren and Adam Barnes have co-authored a new briefing paper to give a voice to those most at risk, published by the QUT Center for Justice to coincide with its forum on homelessness.

Titled "'I've never seen it as bad as this': Community sector family homelessness research priorities in the current housing and homelessness crisis," the paper concludes the current housing and homelessness crisis throughout Australia reflects the failure of decades of neoliberal governance and widening social and economic inequalities.

"Many families are experiencing homelessness for the first time as well as prolonged durations of homelessness due to an inadequate supply of social and [affordable housing](#). Our paper explores the research, policy and practice nexus and identifies family homelessness research priorities," Dr. Warren said.

The QUT Center for Justice is publishing two other briefing papers on the subject.

The first, "Supporting Mature Women Experiencing Housing Stress: A Novel Strengths-Based Approach," is by Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett and Professor Melissa Bull, Director of the QUT Center for Justice and a key speaker at the panel discussion on Wednesday.

The paper focuses on how mature women in Australia are one of the fastest-growing groups at risk of homelessness. The researchers found many common challenges including [health issues](#), violence, debt, crisis, access to affordable homes, and in the case of their project, the impacts of a change of circumstance like losing a job, income, or

partner, can be a tipping point leading to homelessness.

"The Women's Butterfly Project applied a prevention-focused approach to create a [high-tech](#)/touch toolkit that leveraged the strengths of relevant industry partners, researchers, and the women themselves in order to empower women to retain appropriate [housing](#) and enhance their well-being," Professor Bull said.

The second is "Young homeless people and domestic and family violence: Experiences, challenges and innovative responses," written by Dr. Danielle Davidson, Adjunct Associate Professor Bridget Harris and Dr. Helena Menih from La Trobe University.

It looks at the complex needs of young people experiencing homelessness and domestic and family violence, as well as the extensive barriers they face when seeking support and assistance.

"Young people may not recognize or may normalize abuse, thereby compounding the issue. Unfortunately, non-government and government sectors and agencies can be siloed, further complicating responses, and hindering service provision," Dr. Davidson said.

"To overcome this, some agencies have gone with an innovative embedded worker model which aims to connect youth and domestic and family violence organizations, potentially addressing abuse better and bolstering youth safety and the capability and capacity of workers. Our paper includes the results of interviews we conducted with agencies in Brisbane who employ this model."

More information: 'I've never seen it as bad as this': Community sector family homelessness research priorities in the current housing and homelessness crisis: [research.qut.edu.au/centre-for ...](https://research.qut.edu.au/centre-for-research-in-urban-and-social-justice/)

[AL Warren Barnes.pdf](#)

Supporting Mature Women Experiencing Housing Stress: A Novel Strengths-Based Approach: research.qut.edu.au/centre-for ... sellBennett-Bull.pdf

Young homeless people and domestic and family violence: Experiences, challenges and innovative responses: research.qut.edu.au/centre-for ... L-online-version.pdf

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