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Counting the homeless 2006

Victoria

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PREFACE

Counting the Homeless began as a research project with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, producing one report on the national homeless population in 1996. It has since developed into a cooperatively produced national data collection, involving the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and RMIT and Swinburne Universities. A national report was published by the ABS in September 2008, and for the first time the state and territory reports are published by the AIHW.

Funding for *Counting the Homeless 2006* was provided by the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council and the Housing Ministerial Advisory Committee and coordinated by the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). We are grateful to senior officers in FaHCSIA and the various state and territory departments which have facilitated this large and complex project at all stages.

The ABS has been a key partner from the outset and provided excellent in-kind support under its Australian Census Analytic Program. We thank our colleagues in the ABS for their continuing commitment to the project and for their generous advice and assistance, as well as their dedicated work in response to our many data requests.

Important supplementary information for the analysis comes from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection at the AIHW. The AIHW team responded quickly to our inquiries. We have greatly appreciated their interest and support.

Hundreds of people in schools, local council services and homeless agencies have assisted us during the school census, especially during the extensive national local area fieldwork. Their local knowledge has been an invaluable input to this report.

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP), Homelessness Australia, the National Youth Coalition for Housing (NYCH) and the Women's Services Network (WESNET) have been strong supporters of the project from the beginning and we have greatly appreciated their encouragement. Finally, we thank our editor, Estelle Tang, who provided invaluable editorial assistance.

Chris Chamberlain
David MacKenzie

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses the cultural definition of homelessness to enumerate the homeless population on census night (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). This definition distinguishes between people in primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness.

Primary homelessness describes the situation of all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, living in improvised dwellings (such as sheds, garages or cabins), and using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

Secondary homelessness describes the situation of people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) are considered part of this category. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own, and people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness describes the situation of people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. Residents of private boarding houses are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992): they do not have a separate bedroom and living room; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.

2 OVERCOUNTING AND UNDERCOUNTING

Chapter 2 summarises how the national homeless count enumerated the homeless population using census and other data sets. It contains a discussion of how there can be both overcounting and undercounting of homeless people. Undercounting is most likely in the census category

'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out', and overcounting is more likely in boarding houses because of misclassification.

The problem of establishing reliable figures is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time. There will always be people who are entering and leaving homelessness, as well as people moving between different locations. The challenge is to identify patterns in the population data that might inform the policy process.

3 ACCOMMODATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

Across Australia, 20 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses on census night and in Victoria it was 22 per cent (Table 1). Nationally, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Victoria it was 31 per cent. There were fewer people staying temporarily with other households in Victoria than there were nationally (36 per cent compared with 45 per cent), and there were fewer people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (11 per cent compared with the national figure of 16 per cent). The census was carried out in August, when people sleeping rough hide away to escape the cold, so there could have been undercounting in this category.

TABLE 1: PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia		Victoria	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	4457	22
SAAP accommodation/THM	19 849	19	6436	31
Friends/relatives	46 856	45	7414	36
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	2204	11
	104 676	100	20 511	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

4 AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age profile of the homeless population in Victoria was significantly younger than the age profile of the national population (Table 2). Sixty-three per cent of the homeless in Victoria were aged 34 or younger, compared with the national figure of 58 per cent. One-fifth (19 per cent) of the homeless in Victoria were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own). Fourteen per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another 12 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24, and 18 per cent were adults aged 25 to 34. Altogether, 37 per cent of the homeless in Victoria were aged 35 or older, compared with the national figure of 42 per cent.

TABLE 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia			Victoria		
	N	%		N	%	
Under 12	12 133	12		2794	14	
12–18	21 940	21		3896	19	
19–24	10 504	10	58	2512	12	63
25–34	15 804	15		3643	18	
35–44	13 981	13		2872	14	
45–54	12 206	12	42	2128	10	37
55–64	10 708	10		1468	7	
65 or older	7400	7		1198	6	
	104 676	100		20 511	100	

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

5 MALES AND FEMALES

In 2006, men outnumbered women in Australia's homeless population, 56 to 44 per cent (Table 3), and in Victoria men outnumbered women, 55 to 45 per cent. In Victoria, there were more females in the 12-to-18 age group and roughly equal numbers of males and females in the 19-to-24 and under-12 age groups. However, from age 25 onwards men typically outnumbered women, about 60 per cent to 40 per cent.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES BY AGE GROUP

Australia

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	46	53	57	63	64	61	64	56
Female	48	54	47	43	37	36	39	36	44
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Victoria

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	45	51	56	60	65	61	58	55
Female	48	55	49	44	40	35	39	42	45
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Victoria, 0.6 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 4 shows that Indigenous people were 1.4 per cent of those staying with other households, 1.7 per cent of the boarding house population, 2.6 per cent of people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough, and 8.3 per cent of persons in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Victoria.

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, VICTORIA*

	Boarding house (N=4457)	Friends/ relatives (N=7414)	SAAP (N=6436)	Improvised dwellings (N=2204)	All (N=20 511)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	98.3	98.6	91.7	97.4	96.2
Indigenous	1.7	1.4	8.3	2.6	3.8
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status.

7 MELBOURNE

The Melbourne statistical division comprises 16 subdivisions (Map 2). This analysis groups them into four areas which are referred to as the 'City Core', the 'Inner City Ring', the 'Outer City Ring' and the 'Frankston-Dandenong Corridor'.

The City Core is the subdivision of Inner Melbourne. It has a population of 271 000 and includes the central business district, the City of Port Phillip, the City of Yarra, and part of the City of Stonnington (Prahran).

The Inner City Ring (population 1.34 million) includes five subdivisions which have a boundary with the City Core. The subdivisions are Western Melbourne, Moreland, Northern Middle Melbourne, Boroondara and Southern Melbourne.

The Outer City Ring includes seven subdivisions with a population of 1.597 million. The subdivisions are Melton-Wyndham, Hume, Northern Outer Melbourne, Eastern Middle Melbourne, Eastern Outer Melbourne, the Yarra Ranges and South Eastern Outer Melbourne.

The Frankston-Dandenong Corridor includes the Greater Dandenong, Frankston City and Mornington Peninsula subdivisions. It has 380 000 people.

Table 5 shows that there were 3490 homeless people in the City Core, where the rate of homelessness was 129 per 10 000. The City Core had eight per cent of Melbourne's population, but 24 per cent of its homeless people. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Perth. People often gravitate to the inner city, where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, MELBOURNE

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Number	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568
Rate	129	38	40	28	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, there were 5047 homeless people and the rate was 38 per 10 000. There were 4501 homeless people in the Outer City Ring, where the rate was 28 per 10 000. The rate was 40 per 10 000 in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor, where there were 1530 homeless people.

Altogether, there were 11 078 homeless people in suburban Melbourne, compared with 3490 in the City Core. The provision of certain homeless services in suburban areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city.

8 WESTERN VICTORIA

There are four statistical divisions in Western Victoria: Barwon, Central Highlands, Western District and Wimmera (Map 1).

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, WESTERN VICTORIA AND MELBOURNE

	Three urban subdivisions	Eight rural subdivisions	Total	Melbourne
Number	975	1005	1980	14 568
Rate	35	37	36	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

There were 1980 homeless people in Western Victoria, where the rate of homelessness was 36 per 10 000, compared with 41 per 10 000 in Melbourne (Table 6). The rate of homelessness was 35 per 10 000 in the three urban subdivisions (Geelong, Warrnambool and Ballarat), which was similar to the rate in the eight rural subdivisions (37 per 10,000) (Table 6). There were 465 homeless people in Geelong, 399 homeless people in Ballarat and 111 in Warrnambool.

9 EASTERN VICTORIA

There are two statistical divisions covering Eastern Victoria (Map 1). They are Gippsland and East Gippsland. There were 962 homeless people in Eastern Victoria and the rate was 40 per 10 000, slightly higher than the rate in Western Victoria (36 per 10 000) and similar to the rate in metropolitan Melbourne (41 per 10 000). There were 285 homeless people in the La Trobe Valley subdivision and 260 in East Gippsland Shire.

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, EASTERN VICTORIA, WESTERN VICTORIA AND MELBOURNE

	Eastern Victoria	Western Victoria	Melbourne
Number	962	1980	14 568
Rate	40	36	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

10 NORTHERN VICTORIA

There are four statistical divisions in Northern Victoria (Map 1): Loddon, Goulburn, Ovens-Murray and Mallee. Table 8 shows that there were 1176 homeless people in the four urban subdivisions, where the rate of homelessness was 54 per 10 000. In the nine rural subdivisions, there were 1825 homeless people and the rate was 56 per 10 000. There were 315 homeless people in Bendigo, 306 in Wodonga, 300 in Mildura and 255 in Shepparton.

TABLE 8: NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

	Four urban subdivisions	Nine rural subdivisions	Total
Number	1176	1825	3001
Rate	54	56	55

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

INTRODUCTION

This is one of eight state and territory reports from the national project, *Counting the Homeless 2006* (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008). Chapters 1 and 2 include material from the national report on the definition of homelessness, methodological issues, and a summary of how the homeless enumeration was undertaken. This report introduces new information on the social characteristics of the homeless population in Victoria and the geographical distribution of homeless people. The report also includes new information on marginal caravan park dwellers and Indigenous homelessness.

The main data source for the analysis was the *ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006*. However, this data was supplemented by information from the *SAAP National Data Collection* and the third *National Census of Homeless School Students*. This data enabled us to make various technical corrections to the raw census figures and to produce the overall population estimates.

This report uses some qualitative data from telephone interviews with service providers and public officials. Local informants were selected purposively, in order to check the reliability of census data in particular communities and to understand more about what is happening on the ground. In most places, three to four people were interviewed. The report also uses qualitative data from questionnaires filled out by census collectors who enumerated the primary population in Victoria.

Each state and territory report is set out in the same way and contains a discussion of 'undercounting' and 'overcounting'. Counting errors are always an issue when enumerating the homeless population. Chapter 2 explains why some homeless people are not counted on census night ('undercounting') and why others may be counted more than once ('overcounting'). A careful consideration of such errors is important when attempting to establish the number of homeless people in particular communities.

Discrepancies due to undercounting and overcounting of homeless people tend to be masked when data is aggregated at the state or national level, but these discrepancies are more obvious in small-area analyses. Thus, it is possible that people with local knowledge may think that there are

more (or less) homeless people in a particular community than the number identified by the census.

The problem of establishing reliable figures in local communities is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time. First, there will always be some people entering and leaving the homeless population. Second, homeless people are more mobile than the general population. It is common for homeless people to move from one form of temporary shelter to another. It is also common for homeless people to move both within and between states. This means that the number of homeless people in a particular community may not be the same as the number on census night. The challenge is to identify patterns in the homeless population that might inform the policy process.

Chapter 1 outlines the cultural definition of homelessness which underpinned the ABS project. Chapter 2 summarises how the national report established the homeless count, as well as discussing overcounting and undercounting. Chapter 3 outlines the social characteristics of the homeless population in Victoria. Chapter 4 discusses different ways of approaching a geographical analysis, before focusing on the homeless population in Melbourne. Chapters 5 to 7 describe the homeless population in regional Victoria. Chapter 8 comments on Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness. Chapter 9 discusses policy issues.

1 DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The ABS uses the cultural definition to enumerate the homeless population. The cultural definition contends that 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' are cultural concepts that only make sense in a particular community at a given historical period (Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992). In a society where the vast majority of people live in mud huts, the community standard will be that these dwellings constitute adequate accommodation (Watson 1986, p. 10). Once this principle is recognised, then it is possible to define 'homelessness'.

First, the cultural definition identifies shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have the right to expect in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of a particular culture. Then, the definition identifies groups that fall below the minimum community standard.

Cultural standards are not usually stated in official documents, but are embedded in the housing practices of a society. These standards identify the conventions and cultural expectations of a community in an objective sense, and are recognised by most people because they accord with what they see around them. As Townsend (1979, p. 51) puts it:

> A population comes to expect to live in particular types of homes ... Their environment ... create(s) their needs in an objective as well as a subjective sense.

The vast majority of Australians live in suburban houses or self-contained flats, and 70 per cent of all households either own or are purchasing their home (ABS 2006a, Ch. 8). There is a widespread view that home ownership is the most desirable form of tenure (Kemeny 1983, p. 1; Hayward 1992, p. 1; Badcock and Beer 2000, p. 96). Eighty-eight per cent of private dwellings in Australia are houses and 75 per cent of flats have two or more bedrooms (ABS 2006a, Ch. 8).

The minimum community standard is a small rental flat—with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of security of tenure—because that is the minimum that most people achieve in the private rental market. However, the minimum is significantly below the culturally desired option of an owner-occupied house.

The minimum community standard provides a cultural benchmark for assessing 'homelessness' and 'inadequate housing' in the contemporary context. However, as Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) point out, there are a number of institutional settings where people do not have the minimal level of accommodation identified by the community standard, but in cultural terms they are not considered part of the homeless population. They include, inter alia, people living in seminaries, elderly people in nursing homes, students in university halls of residence and prisoners.

1.1 A MODEL OF HOMELESSNESS BASED ON SHARED COMMUNITY STANDARDS EMBODIED IN CURRENT HOUSING PRACTICES

Minimum community standard: equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom

Culturally recognised exceptions: where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard, e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence	**Marginally housed:** people in housing situations close to the minimum standard **Tertiary homelessness:** people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure **Secondary homelessness:** people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends and relatives, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses **Primary homelessness:** people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.)

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992, p. 291.

While it is true that that the concepts of 'housed' and 'homeless' constitute a continuum of circumstances, there are three situations that fall below the minimum community standard. This leads to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness. The model (shown in Figure 1.1) also includes the concept of the 'marginally housed'.

Primary homelessness accords with the common assumption that homelessness is the same as 'rooflessness'. The category includes people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, living in improvised dwellings (such as sheds, garages or cabins), and using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter. Primary homelessness is operationalised using the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'.

Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On census night, it includes all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The starting point for identifying this group is the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. They report 'no usual address' on their census form. Secondary homelessness also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium- to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. Residents of private boarding houses do not have separate bedrooms and living rooms; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease. They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard.

The terms primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are widely used, particularly when talking about census counts. However, the profile of the homeless population looks different if you classify people on the basis of their housing histories, rather than on the basis of their accommodation on census night. In a study of 4291 homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that 92 per cent of their sample had moved regularly from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Nearly everyone had stayed with friends or relatives, but 85 per cent had also stayed in a boarding house, 60 per cent had been in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 50 per cent had slept rough. People show up in particular places on census night but many homeless people will be somewhere else a few weeks later. Transience is the typical pattern. Primary, secondary and tertiary homelessness are useful categories to describe people's housing situations on census night, but there are not three distinct groups of homeless people.

In *Counting the Homeless 2001*, we also identified 'marginal residents of caravan parks'. These people were defined as renting caravans, at their usual address, with no one in the household having full-time work. Like boarding house tenants, these households have one room for eating and sleeping and communal bathroom facilities. The 2001 research found that two-thirds (67 per cent) of boarding house residents were in the capital cities whereas three-quarters (78 per cent) of marginal residents of caravan parks were in regional centres and country towns (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch. 7). In some communities, there are no boarding houses and SAAP workers send people to the local caravan park if there is no emergency accommodation available.

There is some disagreement as to whether marginal residents of caravan parks constitute a separate category. Reid, Griffin and Murdoch (2005) have examined this analysis carefully. They conclude that marginal residents of caravan parks are really part of the tertiary population. Giovanetti, Reid, Murdoch and Edwards (2007, p. 275) take a similar position:

> Marginal residents of caravan parks were categorised as belonging to the tertiary homelessness category ...

We have two reservations about this approach. First, it is difficult for the wider community to accept that some people living in caravans are part of the tertiary homeless population when most caravan dwellers are on holiday or own their own caravan. The 2006 Census found that 56 per cent of individuals in caravan parks were on holiday. The census was held in winter and this figure would have been much higher in the summer months. Another 25 per cent owned their caravan and many had made a lifestyle choice to live in a caravan, typically following retirement. Only 14 per cent were marginal residents on census night and this figure would be significantly below 10 per cent in the summer months.

Second, it is now common to find that cabins are the main type of accommodation in caravan parks, and cabins often have better facilities than caravans. A cabin usually has a separate kitchen and bathroom and often has one or more bedrooms. The census cannot distinguish between households in caravans and cabins with certainty, but in 2006 we estimated that somewhere between one-quarter and one-half of marginal residents of caravan parks were living in cabins (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2008, Ch. 7). This finding undermines the argument that marginal residents of caravan parks should be considered part of the tertiary population. It also means that our 'marginal residents' category is broader than indicated in *Counting the Homeless 2001*.

2 OVERCOUNTING AND UNDERCOUNTING

This chapter summarises how the national project enumerated the homeless population using the census and other data sets. It also contains a discussion of how there can be both overcounting and undercounting of homeless people. This is relevant to understanding why there can be anomalies when we examine the number of homeless people in particular communities.

2.1 IMPROVISED HOMES, TENTS AND SLEEPERS OUT

The operational category for primary homelessness is 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'. This category includes:

> Sheds, tents, humpies, and other improvised dwellings, occupied on Census Night ... It also includes people sleeping on park benches or in other 'rough accommodation'. (ABS 2006b, p. 182)

First, we explain how the count was carried out. Then we estimate the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (public places, derelict buildings, tents, cars etc). Finally, we point out that rough sleepers are a very mobile population and therefore the numbers identified on census night may not accord with what people 'know' on the ground.

The efficacy of the local count depends on census collectors having good local knowledge. They have to know, for example, whether there are people squatting in empty buildings in their local community, or whether there might be families living in their cars, or whether there could be people camping in the bush.

In 2006, there was a special effort to count the primary population in all states and territories. People without conventional accommodation are particularly difficult to count because they usually hide away at night to escape the cold and census collectors may not be aware of their presence. The 2006 Census was carried out in winter in the southern states, where night-time temperatures were generally cold. Counting the primary population is a major practical challenge.

There were a number of components to the ABS strategy. Field staff were encouraged to work closely with local service providers who might

know if people were squatting in derelict buildings or sleeping rough in their community. In all states, local services provided intelligence on where people might be found sleeping rough. In some cases, census forms were handed out at these agencies. It was also widely reported that mobile food vans were a good place to hand out census forms. This strategy was used in capital cities and in some regional centres, but implementation varied across the states.

The ABS also had short census forms that could be filled out by ABS staff where personal forms were judged inappropriate. The short forms were less intimidating than the longer personal forms.

In addition, there was a procedure for filling out a substitute form when a homeless person was observed by a census collector but was not able to be interviewed. Observation is an accepted method for counting people sleeping rough. Collectors were asked to record sex, estimated age and location.

The category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' also included overseas visitors and Australian residents who were on camping holidays. International visitors can be identified because they report a usual address overseas, and Australian holidaymakers can be identified because they report a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'. Once both groups were removed, this left 16 375 individuals nationally in 'improvised dwellings, tents and sleepers out', including 2204 people in this category in Victoria.

Next, we estimate the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (public places, derelict buildings, tents, cars etc). In public discussions about homelessness, it is sometimes assumed that there are 16 375 rough sleepers. However, the category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' includes a wide range of situations from someone sleeping in a park, to someone sheltering in a derelict building, to someone living in a shed of some kind. Sheds can vary from broken-down buildings to assembled colour-bond farm sheds and garages.

There were 16 375 people in the 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' category, made up of 9414 households. It is not possible to quantify with certainty the number of people in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of rough sleepers, but if we make two assumptions we can make some estimates.

First, we examined the responses of people in the 'improvised homes' category to the census question about dwelling tenure. We found that 10 per cent were in rented dwellings and 39 per cent of households were in dwellings that were owned or being purchased. After talking with building

inspectors and town planners across the country, we made the judgment that the 'owner, purchaser, renter' reply indicated that these households were usually living in improvised dwellings such as sheds, garages and shacks. In the case of owners and purchasers, this was their own property. It is also probable that people living in cars would have reported 'owning' their dwellings and this is more likely to be the case in the cities.

Second, 51 per cent of households did not answer the question about dwelling tenure and we took this to indicate that they were sleeping rough, squatting in derelict buildings, or living in other forms of temporary shelter. This assumption was in accord with other information from service providers and council staff in local areas. If both assumptions are reasonable, then we can estimate the numbers in improvised dwellings and sleeping rough, but we cannot quantify this exactly.

In the capital cities, about 75 per cent of households in the primary homelessness category were sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings and in Melbourne it was about 60 per cent. However, in regional Australia about 60 per cent of these households were living in sheds, garages and shacks and in regional Victoria it was about 70 per cent. Most of these dwellings were on land that was 'owned or being purchased', but about 20 per cent of the dwellings were rented. Both owners and renters were living in rural poverty.

Building inspectors and town planners across the country reported that most people living in sheds were not building houses. In many cases, the householder had laid a concrete slab and then erected a metal shed, assembled from a prefabricated kit. We were told that people in improvised dwellings had often moved into communities where it was possible to purchase cheap blocks of land and they had probably dreamed of building houses on their blocks. However, these were also communities where unemployment was high and the newcomers remained unemployed or marginally attached to the labour force. These families may have dreamed of building a house, but the dream had not been realised and they were living in rural poverty.

In the capital cities, people in the category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out' are usually transient and without conventional shelter. In regional and remote Australia, about 40 per cent of households in this category were transient but 60 per cent were living in improvised dwellings which they owned, rented or were purchasing. These dwellings were below the community standard, but these households were not 'rough sleepers' and they were not transient.

In the cities, people sleeping rough, squatting in derelict buildings or using vehicles for shelter are likely to move from place to place. Twenty people may show up in a particular subdivision on census night, but a week later they may be somewhere else. When we carry out a local analysis there is a risk that it will not accord with what people 'know' on the ground, because the population may have changed since the time of the census. However, in inland Australia, people in improvised dwellings are more stable.

2.2 SAAP SERVICES

The starting point for counting people in accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was the census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. However, we knew that many of these dwellings were misclassified at previous censuses (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, pp. 23–24). Youth refuges and women's refuges often look like suburban houses and sometimes census collectors did not realise they were SAAP accommodation. These dwellings were mistakenly classified as 'private dwellings'. The ABS convention is to replace census figures with information from the SAAP National Data Collection if the SAAP figures are higher.

In 2006, the ABS had two strategies to count people accommodated in refuges, hostels and other forms of emergency accommodation. The 'list strategy' required the Census Management Unit (CMU) in each state/territory to consult with the relevant government department to see if the department could supply a list of all their SAAP properties. The ABS guaranteed the confidentiality of these lists. The lists were passed on to specified ABS officers to assist with confidential data processing. The lists enabled ABS staff to identify SAAP properties that had been classified as private dwellings.

All states provided lists but they were of uneven quality. Some states provided a comprehensive list of their supported accommodation. Other states provided a list but excluded women's refuges (for security reasons), while other states provided only partial lists of their SAAP properties.

The second component of the ABS approach was the 'green sticker' strategy which was first used in 2001. This involved the distribution of information to service providers offering them an alternative way to return their census forms. Service providers were advised that they could request a mail-back envelope from the census collector to ensure confidentiality. Service providers were asked to return the census forms directly to the Data Processing Centre and to attach a green sticker which facilitated the identification of SAAP accommodation.

Overall, the census strategy worked better than in 2001, but in all states (except Victoria) the census count was lower than the SAAP count. In Victoria, the Department of Human Services provided the ABS with a full list of its SAAP addresses as well as a full list of its Transitional Housing Management (THM) properties. We followed the established convention and replaced the census data with National SAAP Data for all states and territories except Victoria. There were 19 849 people in SAAP across Australia and 6436 in Victoria.

2.3 FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Homeless people staying temporarily with friends or relatives were identified at the question: 'What is the person's usual address?' There was an instruction on the census form that people with no usual address should write 'none' in the suburb/locality box. In 2006, the number of people staying temporarily with other households was 32 200.

The census underestimates the number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 who are staying temporarily with friends or relatives, because people filling out the census forms often record that these teenagers have a usual address elsewhere (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 2008, Ch. 3). We corrected for undercounting in this age group using information from the third National Census of Homeless School Students.

The count of homeless school students was carried out in the same week that the ABS undertook the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Welfare staff in secondary schools identified 7035 homeless students using the cultural definition of homelessness. This figure was used in conjunction with SAAP data on the proportion of school students accommodated in SAAP to estimate the overall homeless population aged 12 to 18. The final correction for undercounting was 14 656. The number of homeless people staying temporarily with friends and relatives was 46 856, including 7414 people in Victoria.

There was no information on how the missing 14 656 young people were distributed geographically within each state and territory. An assumption was made that they were distributed in the same way as other persons staying temporarily with friends and relatives. This assumption cannot be corroborated independently, and it could mean that homeless people in this category were overestimated in some geographical areas and underestimated in others.

The method of estimating the number of persons staying temporarily with other households also depends on how people interpret the census question that asks for each person's usual address. For example, an

Indigenous household may be unwilling to record that a relative escaping domestic violence has 'no usual address'. We have a method for estimating the undercount for those aged 12 to 18, but there is no method for estimating the undercount in other age groups or for Indigenous people.

Finally, it is important to remember that the number of people staying temporarily with friends and relatives also goes up and down, because most people stay temporarily with other households on a short-term basis.

2.4 BOARDING HOUSES

The final category is people living in boarding houses. This was the most complicated part of the count and it is explained fully in Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008). Here the main points are summarised in three steps: a discussion of the 'basic rules', the '2001 conventions' and the '2006 conventions'.

Basic rules

The 2006 Census used 20 categories for coding non-private dwellings. The categories included 'hotel, motel, bed and breakfast' and 'boarding house, private hotel'. This distinction draws attention to the fact that there are major differences between conventional hotels that many travellers use and boarding houses (often called 'private hotels').

The 2006 Census identified 16 273 people in 'boarding houses and private hotels'. However, three groups had to be excluded: owners and staff members who were sleeping over on census night; guests who reported a usual address 'elsewhere in Australia'; and backpackers who reported a usual address overseas.

In addition, there are four ABS conventions to correct for the fact that census collectors sometimes misclassify 'boarding houses', 'hotels' and 'staff quarters'. After applying the 'basic rules', the number in boarding houses was 14 490 in 2006 compared with 17 972 in 2001.

2001 conventions

There was an important change in ABS procedures in 2001 which impacted on the boarding house count. Following the 1996 census, ABS staff telephoned those dwellings where there was insufficient information to identify dwelling type. Where additional information could be obtained a more accurate classification was entered. In 2001, these follow-up telephone calls were discontinued and the number of dwellings in the 'other' category increased from 536 to 2784. The number of persons in those dwellings jumped from 12 938 to 54 636 and it remained at 54 000 in 2006.

The '2001 conventions' involve the application of five rules to identify boarding houses in the 'other' category (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, Ch. 3). When these rules were applied in 2006, they produced a correction of 3763.

2006 conventions

Boarding houses have been closing down in the inner suburbs of the capital cities, but new boarding houses have been opening up in some outer suburbs. These dwellings often look like suburban houses and rarely have a sign outside. Census collectors could have misclassified these boarding houses as 'private dwellings'.

In 2006, an investigation was undertaken to see whether it was possible to identify boarding houses in the 'private dwellings' category. The final stage of the investigation focused on 9000 private dwellings that had five or more unrelated adults. A small boarding house or a share household could have five or more unrelated tenants. Five criteria were devised to exclude working households, student households, housing for disabled people and dwellings that were too small to be boarding houses. After the rules were applied, there were 705 dwellings remaining with 3343 residents. These were boarding houses that had been misclassified as private dwellings.

In 2006, the total number of persons in boarding houses was 21 596 (14 490 + 3763 + 3343 = 21 596), compared with 22 877 in 2001. The number of boarding house residents in Victoria was 4457 in 2006, compared with 5264 in 2001.

The ABS conventions for identifying boarding houses are complicated and it is possible that some dwellings could have been misclassified at all three stages of the analysis. Undercounting could have occurred in some communities and overcounting in others because of misclassification. This can lead to anomalies when we examine the number of people in boarding houses in particular subdivisions.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The census provides the best data that we have on the homeless population at a point in time, but as we have seen there can be 'undercounting' and 'overcounting' of homeless people on census night. Undercounting is most likely in the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out', and overcounting is more likely in the boarding house category because of misclassification.

The problem of establishing reliable census figures for policy purposes is compounded by the fact that the homeless population changes over time.

New people become homeless and some homeless people return to secure accommodation, so the number of homeless people goes up and down.

It is also common for homeless people to move between different forms of temporary accommodation within the same city, and to move both within and between states. The census data was collected in August 2006, and it is unrealistic to expect the same number of homeless people in particular areas at the current time. The challenge is to identify patterns in the population data that might inform the policy process.

3 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter describes the social characteristics of the homeless population in Victoria. First, we compare the rate of homelessness and the number of homeless people in each state and territory. Then we investigate where homeless people were staying on census night. After that we describe the age and gender characteristics of the population. Finally, we comment on the number of Indigenous people.

3.1 HOW MANY?

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important. First, there is the number of homeless people in each state and territory on census night. Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10 000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing states and territories of different sizes.

Table 3.1 shows that the rates of homelessness in each state and territory did not change much between 2001 and 2006. In New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, there were 42 homeless people per 10 000 in 2006, similar to the rates recorded in those states in 2001. South Australia and Tasmania had a rate of 53 per 10 000 in 2006, again similar to their rates in 2001. The rates of homelessness in the other states were higher. In Western Australia and Queensland, there were between 64 and 70 per 10 000 at both censuses. In the Northern Territory there were 248 homeless people per 10 000 in 2006.

3.1 RATE OF HOMELESSNESS PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	42	42	69	68	53	53	248	42	53
2001	42	44	70	64	52	52	288	40	53

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

Table 3.2 shows the number of homeless people in each state and territory in 2001 and 2006. In Victoria, it was 20 305 in 2001 and 20 511 in 2006. We know that the number of homeless people goes up and down, but

in Victoria a typical point-in-time figure is probably about 20 500, up from about 20 300 in 2001.

3.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS BY STATE AND TERRITORY

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
2006	27 374	20 511	26 782	13 391	7962	2507	4785	1364	104 676
2001	26 676	20 305	24 569	11 697	7586	2415	5423	1229	99 900

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

3.2 ACCOMMODATION ON CENSUS NIGHT

Across Australia, 20 per cent of the homeless were in boarding houses on census night and in Victoria it was 22 per cent (Table 3.3). Nationally, 19 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP accommodation, but in Victoria it was 31 per cent. There were fewer people staying temporarily with other households in Victoria (36 per cent compared with 45 per cent nationally), and there were fewer people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out (11 per cent compared with the national figure of 16 per cent). The census was carried out in August when people sleeping rough hide away to escape the cold, so there could have been undercounting in this category.

3.3 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, 2006

	Australia		Victoria	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	21 596	20	4457	22
SAAP accommodation/THM	19 849	19	6436	31
Friends/relatives	46 856	45	7414	36
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	16 375	16	2204	11
	104 676	100	20 511	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In Victoria, the homeless population was distributed somewhat differently in 2006 compared to 2001 (Table 3.4). The largest group on census night was people staying with other households (36 per cent in 2006 compared with 40 per cent in 2001). Boarding house residents accounted for 22 per cent of the homeless in 2006, down from 26 per cent in 2001. The number in SAAP was up from 25 per cent to 31 per cent, reflecting a significant expansion in Victoria's Transitional Housing Management (THM) program. The number of people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough increased from nine per cent to 11 per cent (1871 to 2204 people).

3.4 PERSONS IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, VICTORIA, 2001 AND 2006

	2001		2006	
	N	%	N	%
Boarding houses	5264	26	4457	22
SAAP accommodation/THM	5146	25	6436	31
Friends/relatives	8024	40	7414	36
Improvised dwellings, sleepers out	1871	9	2204	11
	20 305	100	20 511	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students, 2001, 2006.

The census takes a 'snapshot' of where homeless people are staying on census night, but it is important to remember that homeless people often move from one form of temporary accommodation to another. There is a high degree of permeability between the four operational categories used to count the homeless population on census night. There would have been some people living in boarding houses on a long-term basis (tertiary homelessness) and some people living permanently in improvised dwellings (primary homelessness). However, most homeless people would have been moving between different forms of temporary accommodation, including friends and relatives, SAAP accommodation, boarding houses and improvised dwellings. Transience is the typical pattern.

3.3 AGE DISTRIBUTION

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that the homeless population was disproportionately made up of middle-aged and older men (de Hoog 1972; Jordan 1973, 1994). For example, Jordan (1994, p. 21) reported that there were few teenagers in the population and that 80 per cent of the men in his sample were aged 35 or older. De Hoog (1972) gives a similar impression in his ethnographic account of life on Sydney's skid row at the end of the 1960s.

Table 3.5 shows that the age profile of the population is now very different. First, we examine the national figures, then we look at the figures for Victoria.

In 2006, 58 per cent of the homeless across Australia were in the younger age groups and only 42 per cent were aged 35 or older. Twelve per cent of the homeless were children under 12. These young people were with parents on census night. Another 21 per cent of the homeless were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own) and 10 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24. The age profile of the population is now much younger than 40 to 50 years ago.

The age profile of the homeless population in Victoria was significantly younger than the age profile of the national population (Table 3.5). Sixty-three per cent of the homeless in Victoria were aged 34 or younger compared with the national figure of 58 per cent. One-fifth (19 per cent) of the homeless in Victoria were teenagers aged 12 to 18 (mainly on their own). Fourteen per cent of the homeless were children under 12 who were with one or both parents. Another 12 per cent were young adults aged 19 to 24, and 18 per cent were adults aged 25 to 34.

Altogether, 37 per cent of the homeless in Victoria were aged 35 or older, compared with the national figure of 42 per cent.

3.5 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOMELESS POPULATION

	Australia			Victoria		
	N	%		N	%	
Under 12	12 133	12		2794	14	
12–18	21 940	21		3896	19	
19–24	10 504	10	58	2512	12	63
25–34	15 804	15		3643	18	
35–44	13 981	13		2872	14	
45–54	12 206	12	42	2128	10	37
55–64	10 708	10		1468	7	
65 or older	7400	7		1198	6	
	104 676	100		20 511	100	

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006;,National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

3.4 MALES AND FEMALES

Men outnumbered women in the national homeless population 56 to 44 per cent in 2006 (Table 3.6), and in Victoria men outnumbered women 55 to 45 per cent. There were more females in the 12-to-18 age group and roughly equal numbers of males and females in the 19-to-24 and under-12 age groups. However, from age 25 onwards men typically outnumbered women 60 per cent to 40 per cent.

3.6 PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES BY AGE GROUP

Australia

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	46	53	57	63	64	61	64	56
Female	48	54	47	43	37	36	39	36	44
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Victoria

	Under 12	12–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	52	45	51	56	60	65	61	58	55
Female	48	55	49	44	40	35	39	42	45
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 3.7 shows the proportion of males and females in different sectors on census night. Nationally, 72 per cent of boarding house residents were male and in Victoria the proportion was 70 per cent. Amongst people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, men outnumbered women 58 to 42 per cent in Victoria. There were more women in SAAP than men (53 per cent female and 47 per cent male), and there were roughly equal numbers of males and females staying with other households (51 to 49 per cent).

3.7 PERCENTAGE OF MALES AND FEMALES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

Australia

	Boarding house (N=21 596)	Friends/ relatives (N=46 856)	SAAP (N=19 849)	Improvised dwellings (N=16 375)	All (N=104 676)
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	72	52	47	60	56
Female	28	48	53	40	44
	100	100	100	100	100

Victoria

	Boarding house (N=4457)	Friends/ relatives (N=7414)	SAAP (N=6436)	Improvised dwellings (N=2204)	All (N=20 511)
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	70	51	47	58	55
Female	30	49	53	42	45
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

3.5 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Victoria, 0.6 per cent of people identified as Indigenous at the 2006 Census. Table 3.8 shows that Indigenous people were 1.4 per cent of those staying with other households, 1.7 per cent of the boarding house population, 2.6 per cent of people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, and 8.3 per cent of persons in SAAP. Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sections of the homeless population in Victoria.

3.8 PERCENTAGE OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, VICTORIA*

	Boarding house (N=4457)	Friends/ relatives (N=7414)	SAAP (N=6436)	Improvised dwellings (N=2204)	All (N=20 511)
	%	%	%	%	%
Non-Indigenous	98.3	98.6	91.7	97.4	96.2
Indigenous	1.7	1.4	8.3	2.6	3.8
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status.

There is a risk that Indigenous people staying temporarily with other households were undercounted. The census asked for each person's usual address, and people with no usual address were asked to write this in. Indigenous people interpret this question within a different cultural frame of reference.

Often, Indigenous people do not think of 'home' as a particular dwelling, because they are attached to their traditional land. Indigenous people also have extended kinship networks and they move between dwellings belonging to extended family members. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they usually move in with households that are related to them. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on census night, because 'home' is understood in a different way.

3.6 SUMMARY

The number of homeless people fluctuates because people move in and out of homelessness. In Victoria, we estimate that a typical point-in-time figure is about 20 500, up from about 20 300 in 2001.

In Victoria, 36 per cent of the homeless were staying temporarily with other households on census night and 22 per cent were in boarding houses. The proportion in SAAP was up from 25 per cent in 2001 to 31 per cent in 2006, reflecting a significant expansion in Victoria's Transitional Housing Management (THM) program. The number of people in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough increased from nine per cent to 11 per cent (from 1871 to 2204 people).

Nationally, 56 per cent of homeless people were male and 44 per cent were female. In Victoria, men outnumbered women, 55 to 45 per cent. The homeless population in Victoria was younger than the homeless population in other states, with 63 per cent of the homeless aged 35 or younger, compared with 58 per cent nationally. In Victoria, Indigenous people were overrepresented in all sectors of the population, but particularly in SAAP.

4 MELBOURNE

This chapter discusses different ways of approaching a geographical analysis. Then it focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Melbourne.

4.1 NUMBERS AND RATES

There are two ways of approaching the geographical spread of the homeless population and both are important. First, there is the number of homeless people in particular communities on census night. This is the 'raw' count and policy makers always need to be aware of these figures.

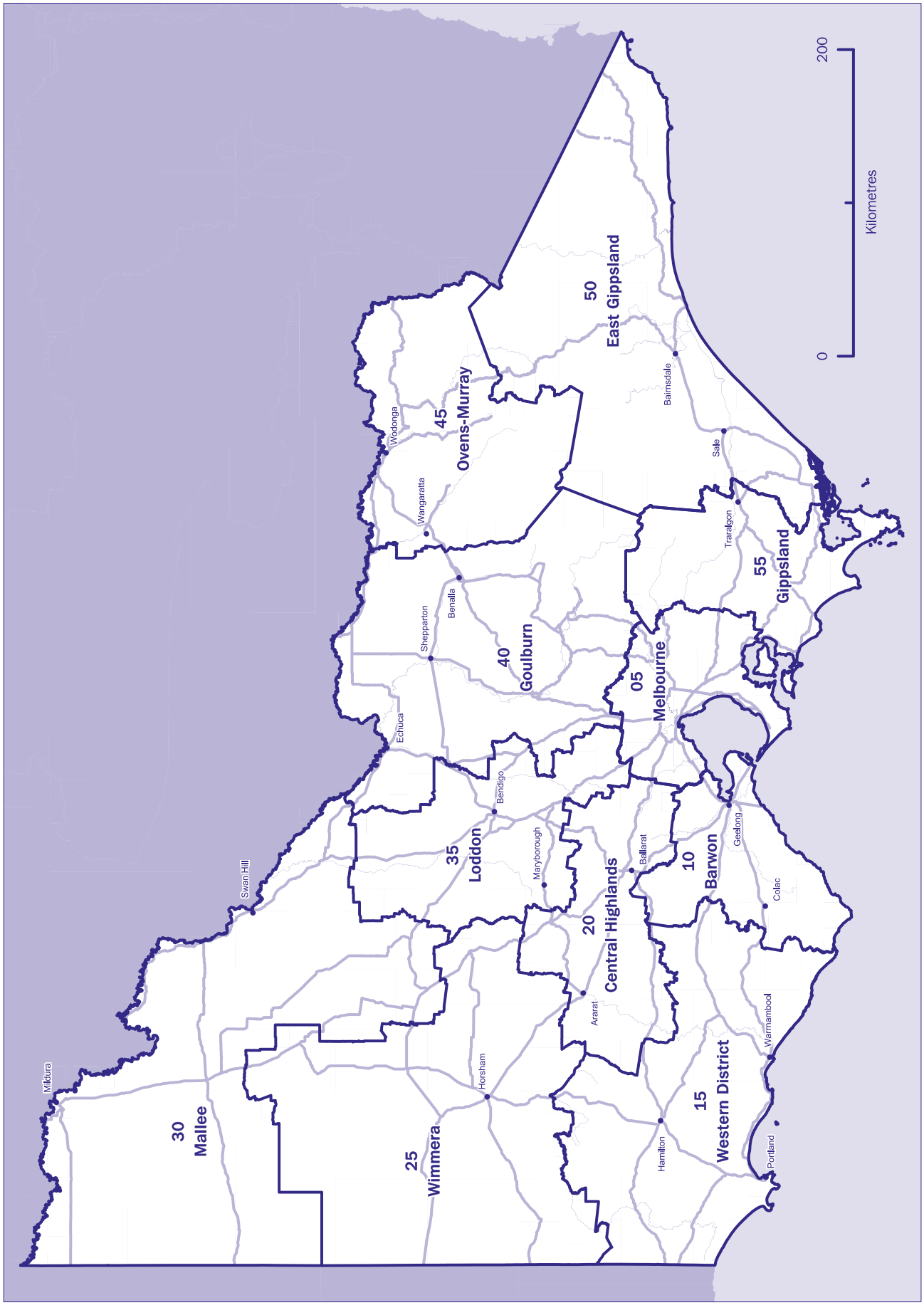
Second, homelessness can be expressed as a rate per 10 000 of the population. This statistic is required for comparing communities of different sizes. For example, the number of homeless people will always be greater in Melbourne than in a regional city, because of the difference in population size, but the rate of homelessness may be the same in both communities.

However, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for two reasons. First, the rate of homelessness in a particular area does not tell us how many people in that community became homeless. For example, the rate of homelessness in Ballarat quantifies the number of homeless people in relation to the Ballarat population, but it does not tell us whether those people came from Ballarat, other parts of Victoria or from interstate. Homeless people move around and the numbers in particular areas partly reflect the services that are available.

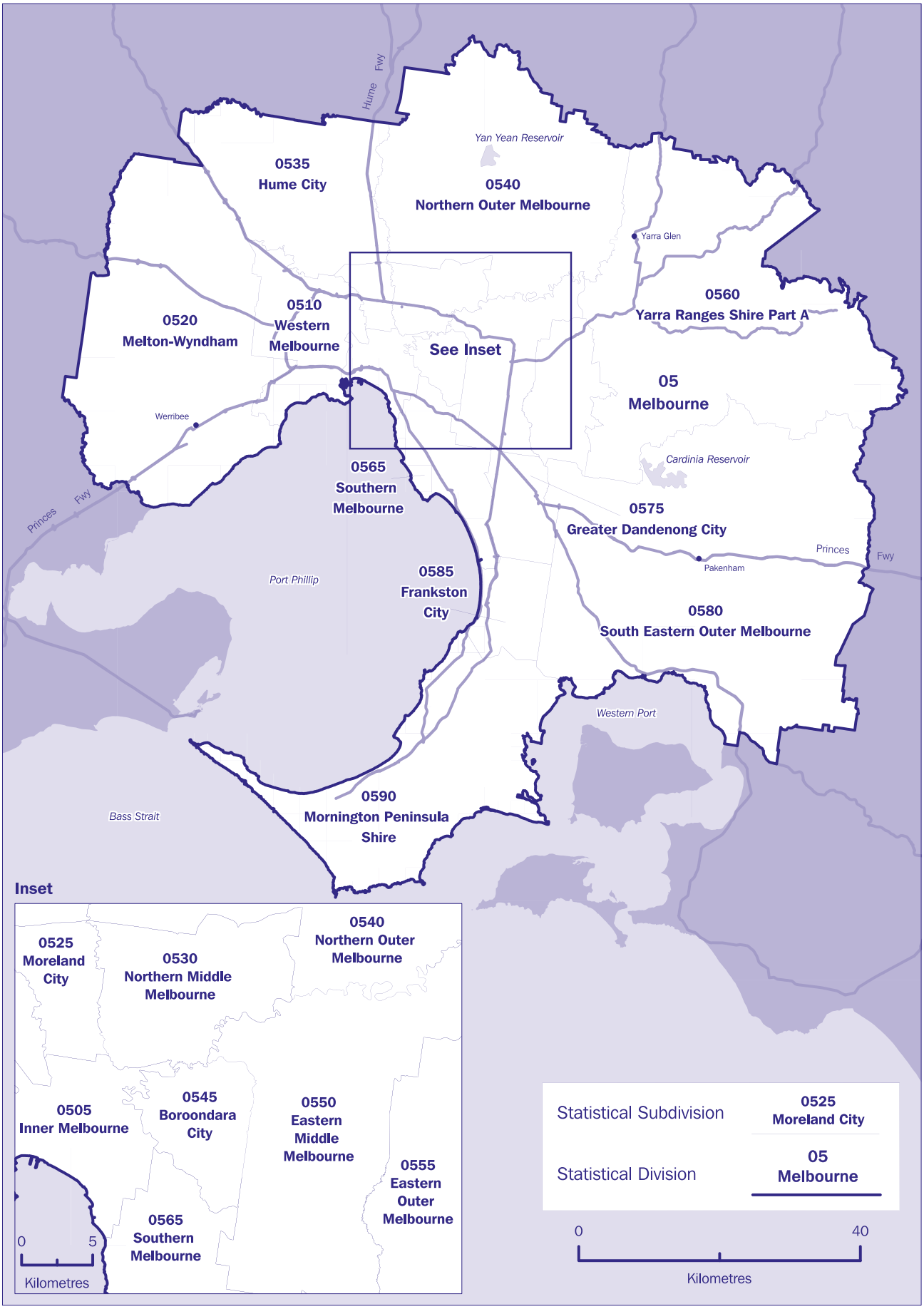
Second, it is important to be cautious when interpreting rates for geographical areas with small populations. Suppose that policy makers have the resources to fund one new SAAP service and they are evaluating the competing claims of two communities. In a small town of 2000 people the rate of homelessness was 100 per 10 000, whereas in a regional city of 30 000 it was 30 per 10 000. Should the resources go to the rural community or to the regional city?

In the rural community, there would have been 20 homeless people (20 x 10 000/2000 = 100 per 10 000), whereas in the regional city there would have been 90 homeless people (90 x 10 000/30 000 = 30 per 10 000). When policy makers allocate resources, they have to consider both the number of homeless people in a community and the rate of homelessness, as well as local intelligence about what is happening 'on the ground', in order to match services with expressed need.

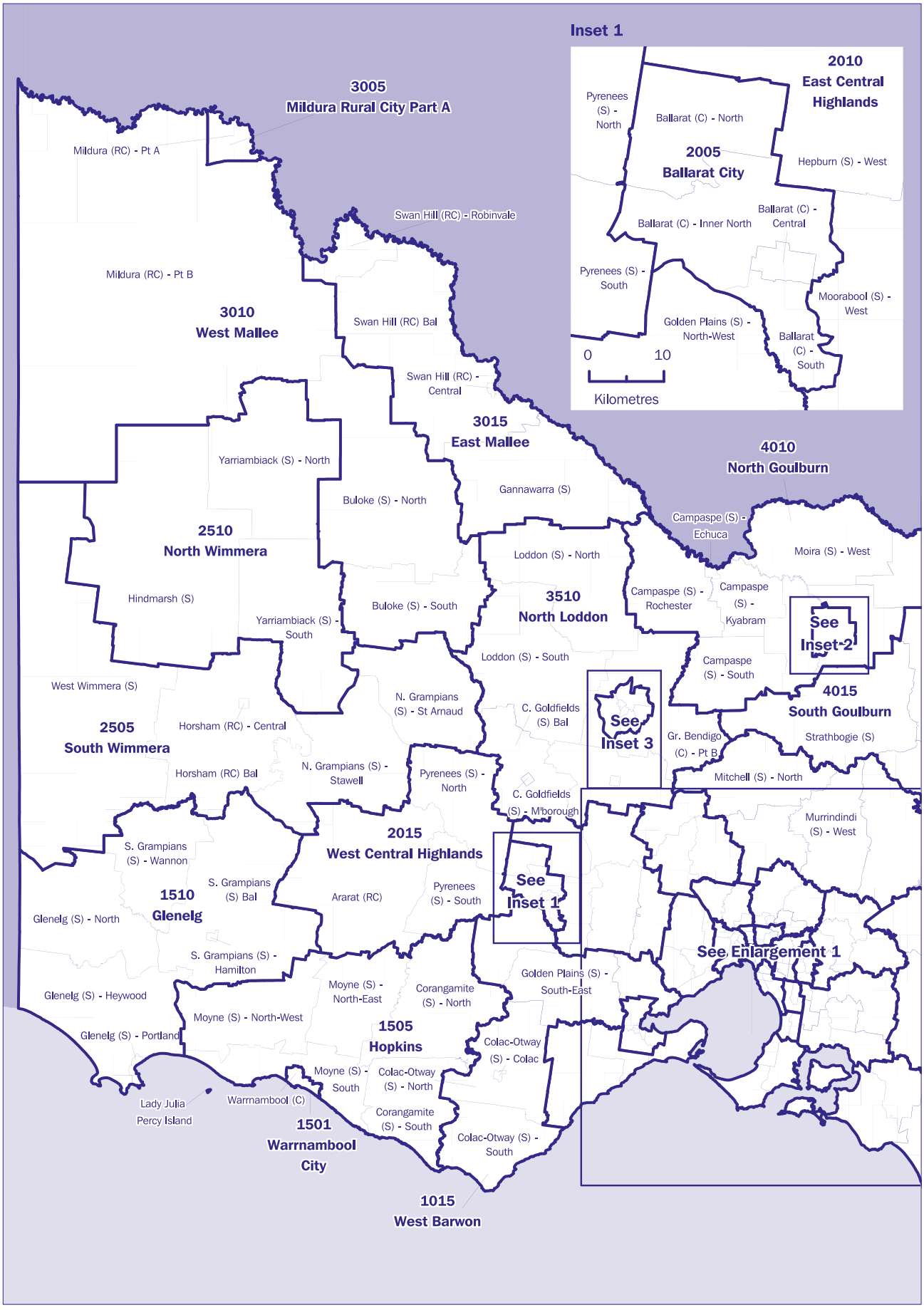
MAP 1: VICTORIA, Statistical Divisions



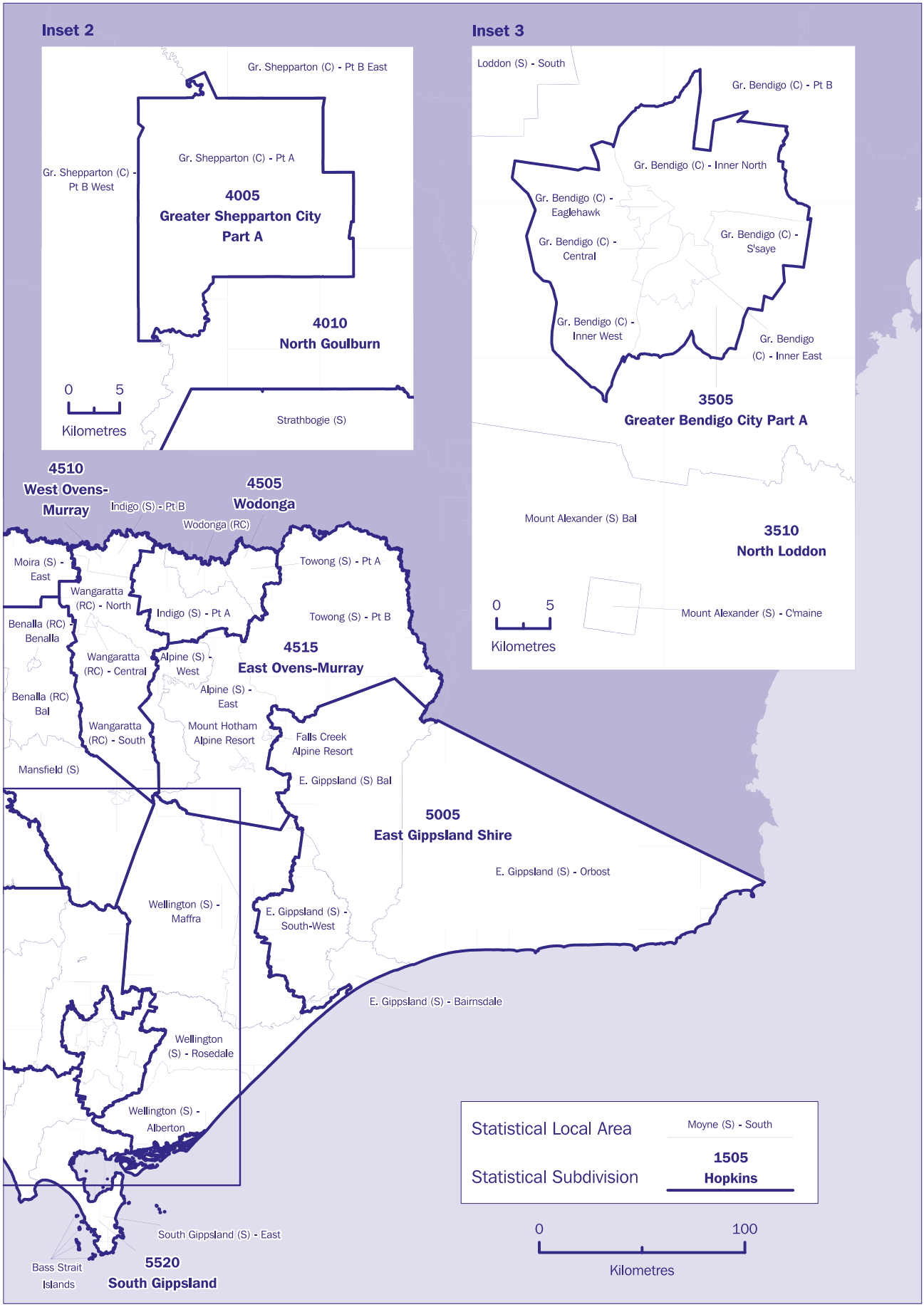
MAP 2: VICTORIA, Melbourne Statistical Division



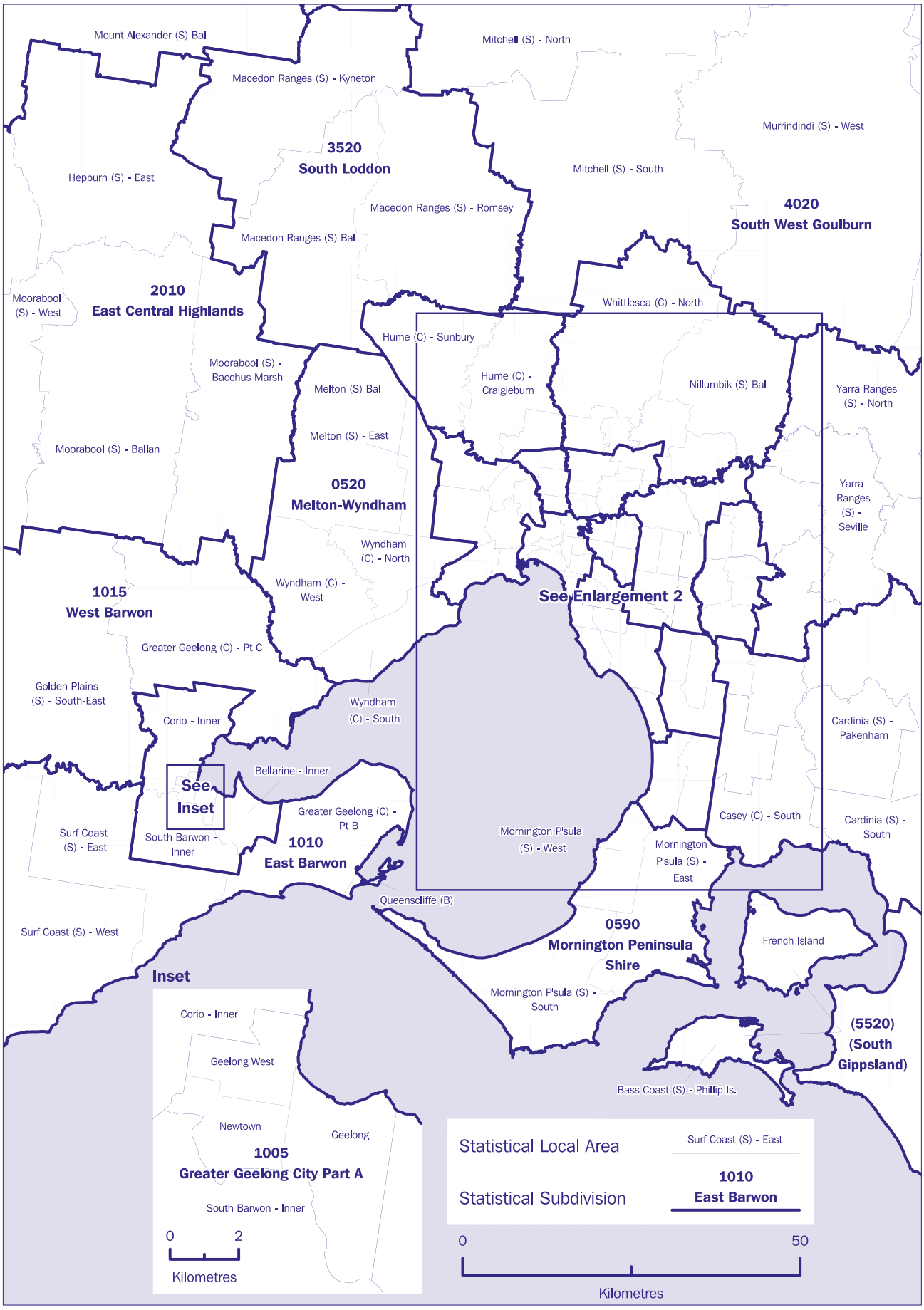
MAP 3: VICTORIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas



MAP 3: VICTORIA, Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas



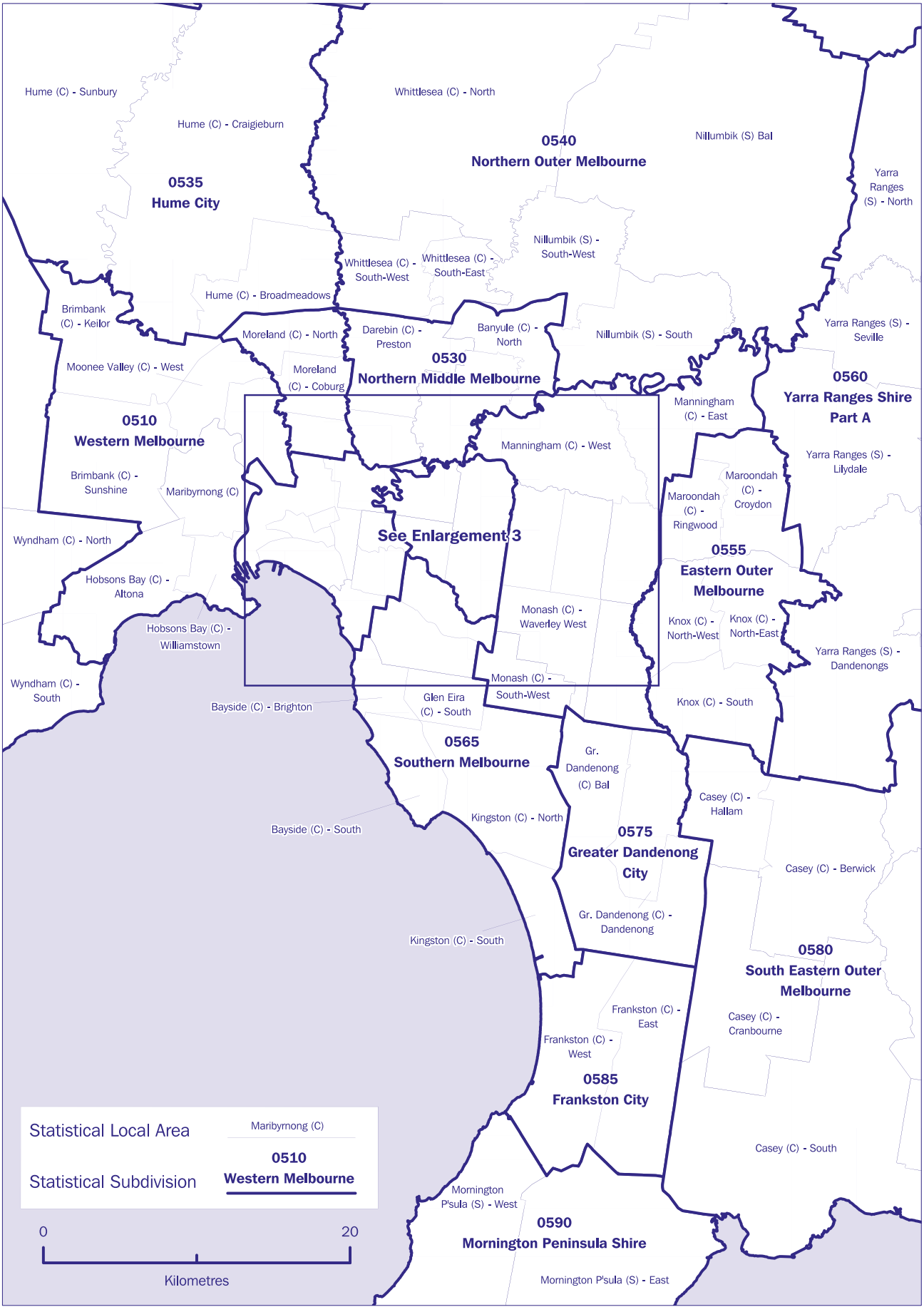
MAP 4: Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 1



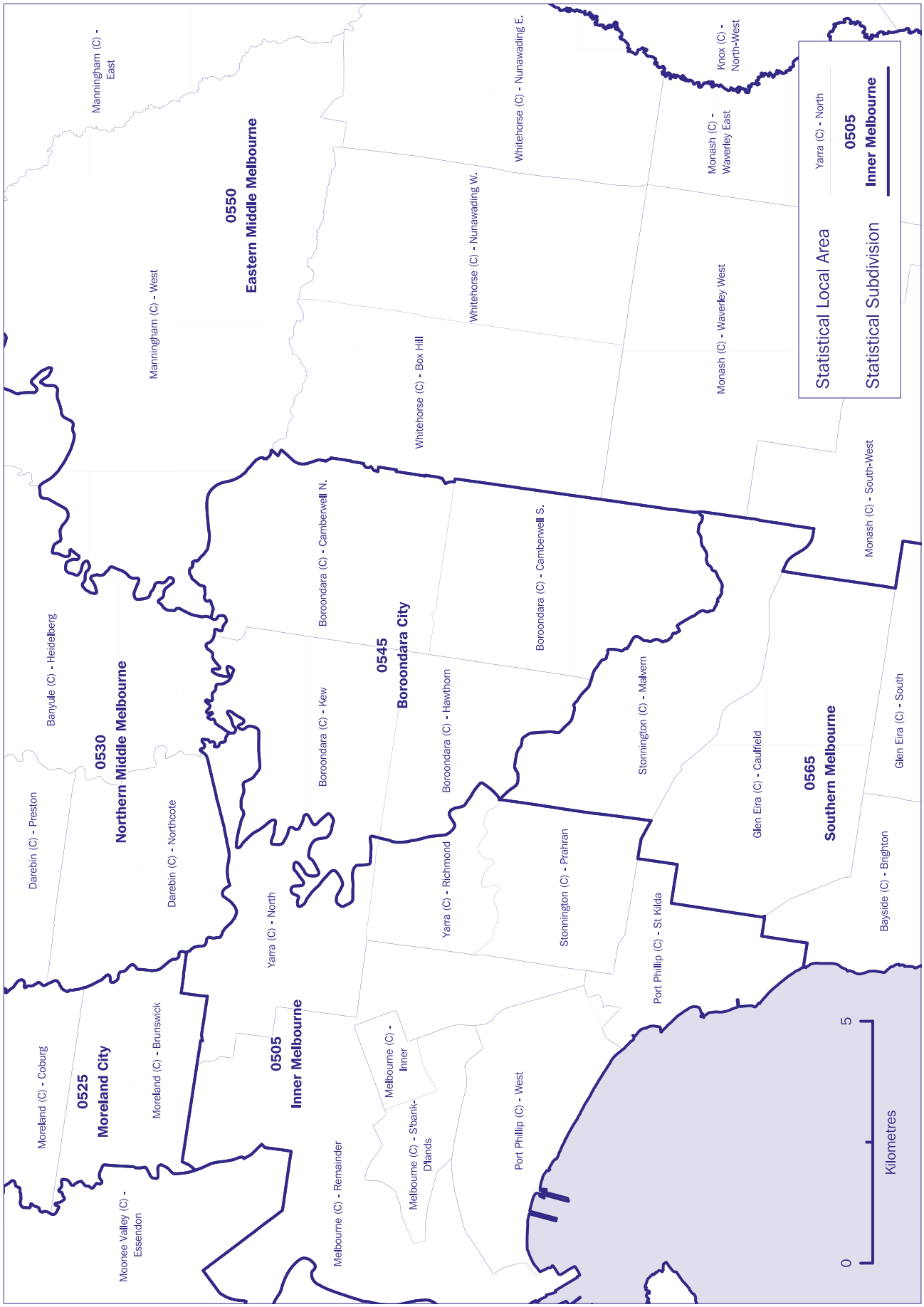
MAP 4: Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 1



MAP 5: Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 2



MAP 6: Statistical Subdivisions and Statistical Local Areas: Enlargement 3



4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

There are a number of ways of approaching a geographical analysis. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) for the collection and dissemination of geographically organised statistics (ABS 2006c). The ASGC provides seven interrelated classification structures which are designed for different practical purposes. This report uses the 'Main Structure' which covers the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. The Main Structure comprises five hierarchical levels: census districts, statistical local areas, statistical subdivisions, statistical divisions, and states and territories. This analysis uses statistical divisions and statistical subdivisions as the main geographical categories, because patterns can be identified more easily if larger geographical categories are used.

In each state and territory, the capital city is treated as a statistical division which includes the greater metropolitan area and any anticipated growth corridors for at least the next 20 years. The statistical division 'represents the city in a wider sense' (ABS 2006c, p. 15). Statistical divisions outside of the capital cities are 'relatively homogeneous region(s) characterised by identifiable … links between the inhabitants and between the economic units within the region, under the unifying influence of one or more major towns or cities' (ABS 2006c, p. 15).

Victoria is divided into 11 statistical divisions, as shown in Map 1 (excluding off-shore and migratory). They are Melbourne, Barwon, Western District, Central Highlands, Wimmera, Mallee, Loddon, Goulburn, Ovens-Murray, East Gippsland and Gippsland.

Statistical subdivisions are defined as 'socially and economically homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable links between the inhabitants' (ABS 2006c, p. 14). Melbourne is divided into 16 statistical subdivisions. There are also statistical subdivisions which correspond to major regional population centres. There are 44 of these across the country, including eight in Victoria. They are Geelong, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Mildura, Bendigo, Shepparton, Wodonga and the La Trobe Valley.

In other cases, statistical subdivisions cover non-urban areas. These are defined as rural areas which do not include cities with populations of 25 000 or above. These non-urban areas are said to have 'identifiable links between economic units within the region' and there may be the 'unifying influence' (ABS 2006c, p. 14) of one or more country towns. These rural/remote subdivisions have small populations, and sometimes they have high rates of homelessness but few homeless people.

4.3 OVERVIEW: VICTORIA

Three-quarters (73 per cent) of the population of Victoria lives in Greater Melbourne and this is where we find the largest concentration of homeless people. Table 4.1 shows that the census identified 14 568 homeless people in Melbourne, where the rate of homelessness was 41 per 10 000. This is similar to the rate of homelessness in Sydney (39 per 10 000) and Canberra (42 per 10 000), but lower than the rate in Brisbane (45 per 10 000) and Adelaide (47 per 10 000).

4.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, MELBOURNE AND REGIONAL VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Regional	Victoria
Number	14 568	5943	20 511
Rate	41	44	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The homeless population was distributed fairly evenly in Victoria. There were 5943 homeless people in regional Victoria where the rate was 44 per 10 000, similar to the rate in Melbourne (41 per 10 000).

This chapter focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Melbourne. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 discuss regional Victoria.

4.4 MELBOURNE

The Melbourne statistical division comprises 16 subdivisions (Map 2). This analysis groups them into four areas which we refer to as the 'City Core', the 'Inner City Ring', the 'Outer City Ring' and the 'Frankston-Dandenong Corridor'.

The City Core is the subdivision of Inner Melbourne. It has a population of 271 000 and includes the central business district, the City of Port Phillip, the City of Yarra, and part of the City of Stonnington (Prahran).

The Inner City Ring (population 1.34 million) includes five subdivisions which have a boundary with the City Core. The subdivisions are Western Melbourne, Moreland, Northern Middle Melbourne, Boroondara and Southern Melbourne.

The Outer City Ring includes seven subdivisions with a population of 1.597 million. The subdivisions are Melton-Wyndham, Hume, Northern Outer Melbourne, Eastern Middle Melbourne, Eastern Outer Melbourne, the Yarra Ranges and South Eastern Outer Melbourne.

The Frankston-Dandenong Corridor includes the Greater Dandenong, Frankston City and Mornington Peninsula subdivisions. It has 380 000 people.

Table 4.2 shows that there were 3490 homeless people in the City Core and the rate of homelessness was 129 per 10 000. The City Core had eight per cent of Melbourne's population, but 24 per cent of its homeless people. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Perth. People often gravitate to the inner city where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, MELBOURNE

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Number	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568
Rate	129	38	40	28	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, there were 5047 homeless people and the rate was 38 per 10 000. There were 4501 homeless people in the Outer City Ring, where the rate was 28 per 10 000. The rate was 40 per 10 000 in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor where there were 1530 homeless people.

Altogether, there were 11 078 homeless people in suburban Melbourne, compared with 3490 in the City Core. The provision of services in suburban areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city.

Table 4.3 shows the proportion of people in different sectors of the homeless population. In the City Core, 58 per cent of homeless people were staying in boarding houses, 19 per cent were with friends or relatives and 18 per cent were in supported accommodation (SAAP or THM). There were 160 people (five per cent) in squats or sleeping rough, although it is unlikely that everyone was counted. One census collector reported 'four people sleeping on the banks of the Yarra'. Another collector sighted a 'group sleeping in Albert Park', and another counted 'people on benches outside a church'.

4.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, MELBOURNE

Percentage

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Boarding house	58	18	20	11	26
SAAP/THM	18	44	32	34	33
Friends/relatives	19	35	37	47	35
Improvised dwellings	5	3	11	8	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Boarding house	2040	922	308	469	3739
SAAP/THM	630	2224	487	1543	4884
Friends/relatives	660	1757	567	2 116	5100
Improvised dwellings	160	144	168	373	845
	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, 35 per cent of homeless people were staying with other households, 44 per cent were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 18 per cent were in boarding houses. There were 144 people (three per cent) in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, including 50 in Western Melbourne.

In the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor, the proportion of people staying with other households was similar to the Inner City (37 per cent). However, in Frankston-Dandenong, there were fewer people in SAAP/THM accommodation (32 per cent) and more people (11 per cent) in improvised dwellings and sleeping rough, including 133 in Frankston City. There was a coding error by a census collector in Frankston City and the improvised dwellings count was actually 61. Local service providers in Frankston confirmed that sleeping out is common. One person said, 'Homeless people sleep down near the beach and there are quite a few squats in town'. Others talked about 'people sleeping in the tea tree shrub along the foreshore'. Another knew of a couple 'living in a toilet block'.

In the Outer City Ring, about half (47 per cent) of the homeless were staying with other households (2116 people), 34 per cent were in SAAP and 11 per cent were in boarding houses. There were 373 people (eight per cent) who were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. One census collector counted 'three people sleeping at the football ground, one person sleeping

in a car, one person sleeping in a disused shed, and two people behind some shops'. Another collector counted people 'behind the railway station and at the back of a church'.

Altogether, 35 per cent of the homeless (5100 people) in Melbourne were staying with other households, mainly in suburban Melbourne. Another 33 per cent (4884 people) were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and about three-quarters (77 per cent) of this group were in the Inner City or Outer City Ring. One-quarter (26 per cent) of the homeless were in boarding houses (3739 people), mainly in the City Core and inner suburbs. Finally, six per cent (845 people) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.

4.5 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

The national report pointed out that boarding houses are more common in capital cities and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes refer homeless people to the local caravan parks if there is no emergency accommodation available. Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting caravans or cabins, living at their usual address, and with no one in the dwelling having full-time employment.

Seventy per cent of boarding house residents across the country were in capital cities, and in Victoria 84 per cent of boarding house residents were in Melbourne (Table 4.4). Most regional centres had a small number of boarding house residents.

4.4 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS IN BOARDING HOUSES AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, VICTORIA

	Boarding house (N=4457)	Caravan (N=2789)
	%	%
Melbourne	84	45
Remainder of Victoria	16	55
	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Nationally, 71 per cent of marginal caravan park residents were outside of the capital cities and in Victoria this figure was 55 per cent (Table 4.4). In some communities, local SAAP workers send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no alternative accommodation available. Caravan parks may also house some people on a longer-term basis who are unable to re-enter the private rental market.

Table 4.5 shows that there were 1247 marginal residents of caravan parks in Melbourne. Eighty-four per cent were in the Frankston Dandenong Corridor (617 people) or the Outer City Ring (428 people).

In general, caravan parks in Melbourne fall into two groups. First, there are caravan parks which are used by tourists in the summer, as well as people who own their caravans. In winter, the number of tourists declines and some of these parks remain closed for part of the year. In other cases, owners rent out vans to poor people during the winter months. Before summer, rents are increased and marginal tenants are forced to move on.

4.5 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, MELBOURNE

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Homeless	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568
Rate per 10 000	129	38	40	28	41
Caravans	0	202	617	428	1247
Total	3490	5249	2147	4929	15 815
Rate per 10 000	129	39	56	31	44

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Second, there are caravan parks which are used as permanent accommodation for poor people and as emergency accommodation. Local informants in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor told us that there are a number of these parks in their community. One was described as 'backing on to a freeway, with more than 100 vans and small cabins'. Another was described as a 'dumping ground for people with mental health issues and other problems'.

In the Northern and Western suburbs a number of the caravan parks are in industrial locations close to major highways. These parks provide permanent accommodation for poor people, as well as emergency accommodation for the homeless.

For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks might be thought of as part of the tertiary homeless population. If this broader definition is employed, then the rate of homelessness was 44 per 10 000 in Melbourne, compared with 41 per 10 000 using the ABS definition. The broader definition makes a significant difference in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor where the rate increases from 40 to 56 per 10 000.

5 WESTERN VICTORIA

5.1 OVERVIEW

There are four statistical divisions in Western Victoria. They are Barwon, Central Highlands, Western District and Wimmera (Map 1).

Barwon has a population of 259 000 and includes three subdivisions. Geelong is the major regional centre with a population of 161 000. East Barwon includes Queenscliff, Greater Geelong Part B and the Surf Coast (population 58 000). West Barwon is a rural community with a population of 39 700.

The Central Highlands has a population of 142 000. The major regional centre is Ballarat (population 85 000). There are two rural subdivisions: East Central Highlands and West Central Highlands.

The Western District (population 98 900) has three subdivisions. The major urban area is Warrnambool with a population of 30 400. Glenelg includes Portland and Hamilton, and Hopkins is a rural subdivision.

The Wimmera includes North and South Wimmera (populations 13 600 and 34 900 respectively).

In some country areas there are small numbers of homeless people spread across large geographical areas. There can be high rates of homelessness in these communities, but relatively few homeless people.

5.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, WESTERN VICTORIA AND MELBOURNE

	Three urban subdivisions	Eight rural subdivisions	Total	Melbourne
Number	975	1005	1980	14 568
Rate	35	37	36	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 5.1 compares the rates of homelessness in Western Victoria and Melbourne. There were 1980 homeless people in Western Victoria where the rate of homelessness was 36 per 10 000, compared with 41 per 10 000 in Melbourne.

The rate of homelessness was 35 per 10 000 in the three urban subdivisions (Geelong, Warrnambool and Ballarat) (Table 5.1), similar to the rate in the eight rural subdivisions (37 per 10 000). However, there were some important differences within urban and rural communities.

5.2 URBAN

There were 465 homeless people in Geelong, where the rate of homelessness was 29 per 10 000 (Table 5.2). The rate was 37 per 10 000 in Warrnambool and 47 per 10 000 in Ballarat.

5.2 NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, GEELONG, BALLARAT AND WARRNAMBOOL

	Geelong	Ballarat	Warrnambool	Total
Number	465	399	111	975
Rate	29	47	37	35

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

5.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, GEELONG, BALLARAT AND WARRNAMBOOL

Percentage

	Geelong	Ballarat	Warrnambool	Total
Boarding house	10	31	4	18
SAAP/THM	38	35	51	38
Friends/relatives	43	28	39	36
Improvised dwellings	9	6	6	8
	100	100	100	100

Number

	Geelong	Ballarat	Warrnambool	Total
Boarding house	49	125	4	178
SAAP/THM	175	138	57	370
Friends/relatives	200	111	43	354
Improvised dwellings	41	25	7	73
	465	399	111	975

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The proportion of people in different sectors of the population also varied between the urban subdivisions (Table 5.3). In Geelong, 43 per cent

of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives, 38 per cent were in SAAP/THM accommodation and 10 per cent were in boarding houses.

In Warrnambool, 51 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP/THM accommodation, 39 per cent were with other households, and only four per cent were in boarding houses.

In Ballarat, 35 per cent were in SAAP/THM accommodation, 31 per cent were in boarding houses and 28 per cent were with other households.

Ballarat had more people in boarding houses than Geelong and Warrnambool, but all three cities had a substantial number of people in SAAP/THM accommodation (35 to 51 per cent), a significant number with other households (28 to 43 per cent), and few people in the primary population (six to nine per cent).

5.3 RURAL

There was variation in the number of homeless people in the eight rural subdivisions (Table 5.4). There were 28 homeless people in North Wimmera where the rate was 21 per 10 000. The number was highest in West Barwon where there were 214 homeless and the rate was 54 per 10 000. In most rural subdivisions, there were between 110 and 190 homeless people.

5.4 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, WESTERN VICTORIA

	Barwon		Central Highlands		Western District		Wimmera		Total
	East	West	East	West	Hopkins	Glenelg	South	North	
Number	111	214	186	62	115	152	137	28	1005
Rate	19	54	47	35	36	42	39	21	37

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006, SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 5.5 shows the distribution of homeless people in different sectors of the population. Once again, there is variation across the subdivisions but three points stand out. First, nearly half (44 per cent) of the homeless in rural Victoria were staying with other households. A number of local informants told us that 'couch surfing is very common'.

Second, about one-fifth (18 per cent) were in SAAP accommodation, usually provided in regional centres, and few people were in boarding houses (five per cent).

Third, about one-third (33 per cent) of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, compared with eight per cent in urban areas (Table 5.3). We investigated the situation in two rural subdivisions. One

informant said, 'most people couch surf but sometimes people sleep out'. Another talked about 'young people sleeping rough occasionally', and a third had provided blankets to 'people sleeping in unregistered vehicles.'

However, the census data indicated that most people in the primary population were living in improvised dwellings that were owned or being purchased. These dwellings were usually 'some distance out of town'. One informant described various dwellings 'out in the bush'. She said one man lived in 'a shack with just one room and an external pit toilet'. Another couple 'get water from the local river'. A third family lived in 'a large shed with an outdoor toilet'. Most of these people had low incomes and were living in rural poverty.

5.5 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, WESTERN VICTORIA

Percentage

	Barwon		Central Highlands		Western District		Wimmera		Total
	East	West	East	West	Hopkins	Glenelg	South	North	
Boarding house	0	6	9	0	8	0	2	25	5
SAAP/THM	0	17	15	28	12	30	26	11	18
Friends	61	35	40	53	28	44	36	64	44
Improvised dwellings	39	42	36	19	32	26	36	0	33
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Barwon		Central Highlands		Western District		Wimmera		Total
	East	West	East	West	Hopkins	Glenelg	South	North	
Boarding house	0	13	17	0	9	0	3	7	49
SAAP/THM	0	36	28	17	14	46	36	3	180
Friends/relatives	68	76	74	33	55	67	49	18	440
Improvised dwellings	43	89	67	12	37	39	49	0	336
	111	214	186	62	115	152	137	28	1005

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

5.4 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

It was pointed out earlier that in some communities caravan parks are used as an alternative to boarding houses. There were 49 boarding house residents in Geelong (Table 5.3), but 121 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 5.6). The pattern in the rural subdivisions of Western Victoria was similar to the pattern in Geelong. There were 49 people in boarding

houses (Table 5.5), but 169 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 5.6). There are many communities across the country where caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses.

5.6 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, GEELONG, BALLARAT, WARRNAMBOOL AND RURAL WESTERN VICTORIA

	Geelong	Ballarat	Warrnambool	Rural	Total
Homeless	465	399	111	1005	1980
Rate per 10 000	29	47	37	37	36
Caravan	121	22	19	169	331
Total	586	421	130	1174	2311
Rate per 10 000	36	49	43	43	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006, SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Overall, in Western Victoria, there were 36 homeless people per 10 000 of the population using the ABS definition of homelessness, but 42 per 10 000 if marginal residents of caravan parks are included.

6 EASTERN VICTORIA

6.1 OVERVIEW

There are two statistical divisions covering Eastern Victoria (Map 1). They are Gippsland and East Gippsland.

Gippsland has a population of 159 500 and there are three subdivisions. The La Trobe Valley (population 73 500) is the only major urban area. It includes the cities of Traralgon, Morwell and Moe. South Gippsland and West Gippsland are predominantly rural communities with populations of 52 400 and 33 600 respectively.

East Gippsland stretches from the Gippsland Lakes to the New South Wales border. Wellington Shire (population 40 000) includes Sale. East Gippsland (population 40 000) includes Bairnsdale and Orbost.

Table 6.1 compares the rate of homelessness in Eastern Victoria, Western Victoria and Melbourne. There were 962 homeless people in Eastern Victoria and the rate was 40 per 10 000, slightly higher than the rate in Western Victoria (36 per 10 000) and similar to the rate in metropolitan Melbourne (41 per 10 000).

6.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, EASTERN VICTORIA, WESTERN VICTORIA AND MELBOURNE

	Eastern Victoria	Western Victoria	Melbourne
Number	962	1980	14 568
Rate	40	36	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6.2 EASTERN VICTORIA

There were 591 homeless people in Gippsland and the rate of homelessness was 37 per 10 000 (Table 6.2). The rate was similar in Gippsland's three subdivisions—the La Trobe Valley, West Gippsland and South Gippsland—but there were more homeless people in the La Trobe Valley which has a larger population.

In East Gippsland, the rate of homelessness was 46 per 10 000. There were 260 homeless people in East Gippsland Shire where the rate was 64 per 10 000, compared with 111 in Wellington Shire where the rate was 28 per 10 000.

6.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, GIPPSLAND AND EAST GIPPSLAND

	Gippsland				East Gippsland		
	La Trobe Valley	West Gippsland	South Gippsland	Total	East Gippsland	Wellington Shire	Total
Number	285	122	184	591	260	111	371
Rate	39	36	35	37	64	28	46

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 6.3 shows the proportion of people in different sectors of the homeless population. In Gippsland, 41 per cent were staying with friends or relatives. One-quarter (26 per cent) were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 18 per cent were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.

In East Gippsland, one-quarter (27 per cent) of the homeless were with other households, one-third (31 per cent) were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and another one-third (30 per cent) were in improvised dwellings. These were probably rudimentary shacks where people were living in rural poverty, but one census collector reported people living in a cave.

6.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, GIPPSLAND AND EAST GIPPSLAND

Percentage

	Gippsland				East Gippsland		
	La Trobe Valley	West Gippsland	South Gippsland	Total	East Gippsland	Wellington Shire	Total
Boarding house	15	18	12	15	11	13	12
SAAP/THM	35	23	14	26	31	32	31
Friends/relatives	39	53	35	41	27	27	27
Improvised dwellings	11	6	39	18	31	28	30
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Gippsland				East Gippsland		
	La Trobe Valley	West Gippsland	South Gippsland	Total	East Gippsland	Wellington Shire	Total
Boarding house	42	22	23	87	30	15	45
SAAP/THM	101	28	25	154	80	35	115
Friends/relatives	112	65	65	242	70	30	100
Improvised dwellings	30	7	71	108	80	31	111
	285	122	184	591	260	111	371

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

6.3 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

There were 45 people in boarding houses in East Gippsland (Table 6.3), but 152 marginal residents of caravan parks (Table 6.4). If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the homeless population, then the rate of homelessness increases from 46 to 65 per 10 000 in East Gippsland.

Similarly, there were 87 boarding house residents in Gippsland, but 188 marginal residents of caravan parks. If marginal residents of caravan parks are included in the homeless population, then the rate of homelessness increases from 37 to 49 per 10 000 in Gippsland.

6.4 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, GIPPSLAND AND EAST GIPPSLAND

	Gippsland				East Gippsland		
	La Trobe Valley	West Gippsland	South Gippsland	Total	East Gippsland	Wellington Shire	Total
Homeless	285	122	184	591	260	111	371
Rate per 10 000	39	36	35	37	64	28	46
Caravan	52	47	89	188	113	39	152
Total	337	169	273	779	373	150	523
Rate per 10 000	46	50	52	49	93	37	65

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

There are many communities across the country where caravans are used as an alternative to boarding houses, and it is relevant to consider this when making planning decisions at the local level.

7 NORTHERN VICTORIA

7.1 OVERVIEW

There are four statistical divisions in Northern Victoria (Map 1): Loddon, Goulburn, Ovens-Murray and Mallee.

Loddon has a population of 169 000 and includes three subdivisions. Bendigo is the major regional centre with a population of 82 000. North Loddon includes Maryborough and Castlemaine. South Loddon covers the Macedon Ranges.

Goulburn (population 195 000) has four subdivisions. Shepparton (population 44 600) is the major urban centre. North Goulburn covers Echuca and Kyabram, and South Goulburn includes Benalla. South West Goulburn is rural.

Ovens-Murray has a population of 92 500 and covers the North-East corner of the state. Wodonga (population 46 500) is the major regional centre. West Ovens-Murray includes Wangaratta and East Ovens-Murray covers the Victorian Alps.

The Mallee has 88 600 people. Mildura (population 46 000) is the main regional centre. East Mallee includes Swan Hill, and West Mallee is rural.

7.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Western Victoria	Eastern Victoria	Northern Victoria	Total
Number	14 568	1980	962	3001	20 511
Rate	41	36	40	55	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

There were 3001 homeless people in Northern Victoria where the rate of homelessness was 55 per 10 000 (Table 7.1), significantly higher than the rate of homelessness in Melbourne (41 per 10 000), Eastern Victoria (40 per 10 000) and Western Victoria (36 per 10 000).

Table 7.2 shows that there were 1176 homeless people in the four urban subdivisions—Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura and Wodonga—where the rate of homelessness was 54 per 10 000. There were 1825 homeless people in the nine rural subdivisions, where the rate was 56 per 10 000.

7.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

	Four urban subdivisions	Nine rural subdivisions	Total
Number	1176	1825	3001
Rate	54	56	55

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

7.2 URBAN

There were some important differences between urban communities. The rate was 38 per 10 000 in Bendigo where there were 315 homeless people (Table 7.3). In Shepparton there were 255 homeless people and the rate was 57 per 10 000. The rate was higher in Mildura and Wodonga. In Mildura, there were 300 homeless people and the rate was 65 per 10 000. In Wodonga, there were 306 homeless people and the rate was 66 per 10 000.

7.3 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, BENDIGO, SHEPPARTON, WODONGA AND MILDURA

	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Number	315	255	306	300	1176
Rate	38	57	66	65	54

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In Bendigo, Shepparton and Wodonga, between 37 and 42 per cent of the homeless were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and between 37 and 46 per cent were staying with other households (Table 7.4). Local informants reported 'lots of couch surfing' in these communities. In Mildura, 33 per cent were staying with other households, but there were more people in boarding houses (16 per cent) and more people in the primary population (20 per cent).

Service providers in these cities knew of people sleeping rough. A service provider in Wodonga talked about young people 'sleeping under bridges' and a couple 'sleeping in their car'. A service provider in another city knew of people 'sleeping in tents' and someone else referred to 'people under bridges, in cars and tents'.

However, the census data also indicated that some people in the primary population were living in improvised dwellings that were owned or being purchased. These were probably prefabricated sheds that can be assembled on a concrete slab. Some people had probably intended to build houses, but most people were living in poverty.

7.4 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, BENDIGO, SHEPPARTON, WODONGA AND MILDURA

Percentage

	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Boarding house	15	7	4	16	11
SAAP/THM	37	41	42	31	38
Friends/relatives	46	42	37	33	39
Improvised dwellings	2	10	17	20	12
	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Bendigo	Shepparton	Wodonga	Mildura	Total
Boarding house	47	18	11	50	126
SAAP/THM	117	104	130	93	444
Friends/relatives	146	107	113	98	464
Improvised dwellings	5	26	52	59	142
	315	255	306	300	1176

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

7.3 RURAL

The number of homeless people varied considerably between the nine rural subdivisions (Table 7.5). The rate was lowest (31 per 10 000) in South Loddon where there were 120 homeless people. The rate was highest (107 per 10 000) in East Ovens-Murray where there were 171 homeless people.

7.5 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

	Loddon		**Goulburn**			**Ovens-Murray**		**Mallee**		**Total**
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Number	289	120	386	159	227	173	171	55	245	1825
Rate	60	31	51	53	51	58	107	52	77	56

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In four subdivisions, there were more than 225 homeless people (Table 7.5), and in another four subdivisions there were between 120 and 175. The subdivisions with 225 or more homeless people were North Loddon (289), North Goulburn (386), South West Goulburn (227) and East Mallee (245).

7.6 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, RURAL SUBDIVISIONS, NORTHERN VICTORIA

Percentage

	Loddon		Goulburn			Ovens-Murray		Mallee		Total
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Boarding house	2	10	16	12	12	10	20	0	21	13
SAAP/THM	7	35	12	2	26	31	9	0	22	16
Friends/relatives	29	42	39	55	27	36	49	75	38	39
Improvised dwellings	62	13	33	31	35	23	22	25	19	32
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	Loddon		Goulburn			Ovens-Murray		Mallee		Total
	North	South	North	South	S. West	West	East	West	East	
Boarding house	7	12	64	19	27	18	34	0	52	233
SAAP/THM	19	42	46	3	58	53	15	0	53	289
Friends/relatives	85	51	149	87	62	62	84	41	93	714
Improvised dwellings	178	15	127	50	80	40	38	14	47	589
	289	120	386	159	227	173	171	55	245	1825

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 7.6 shows the proportion in different sectors of the population in all rural subdivisions. There is variation across the subdivisions but four points stand out.

First, 39 per cent of the homeless were staying with friends or relatives, and in five out of the nine subdivisions the figure was between 35 and 50 per cent.

Second, 32 per cent of the homeless were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, compared with 12 per cent in urban areas (Table 7.4). Many of the people in this category either owned or were purchasing their dwellings. They were probably living in improvised dwellings such as self-assembled garages and large metal sheds out in the bush. Some had probably intended to build conventional houses, but most were on low incomes and this dream had not been realised. Others were living in 'bush camps along the Murray'. One census collector saw 'a caravan in the bush … rotting away … no power or water'. Another reported 'people in tents near the river'.

Third, the proportion in SAAP/THM accommodation varied across the subdivisions, but overall it was 16 per cent, compared with 38 per cent in the urban subdivisions.

Finally, there were few people in boarding houses. In seven out of the nine subdivisions the number was below 35.

7.4 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

In 2001, there were 3404 marginal residents of caravan parks in Victoria, but this number declined to 2789 in 2006. In Northern Victoria, a number of local informants told us that it was now more difficult to get clients into caravan parks. One person said, 'The caravan parks are moving upmarket for the tourists'. Another said, 'They are full of itinerant workers in the summer' and a third said, 'They won't take our clients'.

Despite this, there were still 871 marginal residents in Northern Victoria in 2006, down from 1167 in 2001. In 2006, there were three subdivisions in Northern Victoria which had 90 or more marginal residents of caravan parks. They were North Goulburn (179), Mildura (139) and Shepparton (96).

Marginal residents of caravan parks outnumbered boarding house residents 871 to 359 in Northern Victoria. This is another area where caravan parks are used as an alternative to boarding houses. One local service provider said, 'We try to get people into overnight vans'. Another talked about clients 'living in a caravan park', and a third said, 'We put quite a few people in caravan parks using HEF' (housing establishment fund money).

7.7 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND NUMBER OF MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Western Victoria	Eastern Victoria	Northern Victoria	Total
Homeless	14 568	1980	962	3001	20 511
Rate per 10 000	41	36	40	55	42
Caravan	1247	331	340	871	2789
Total	15 815	2311	1302	3872	23 300
Rate per 10 000	44	42	54	71	47

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Table 7.7 compares the number of homeless people and the number of marginal residents of caravan parks. There were 1247 marginal residents of caravan parks in Melbourne and 871 in Northern Victoria. If marginal caravan park residents are included in the tertiary population, then the rate of homelessness in Melbourne increases from 41 to 44 per 10 000, but in Northern Victoria, the rate of homelessness increases from 55 to 71 per 10 000.

8 INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS

In Victoria, 95 per cent of people answered the census question: 'Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander origin?' and 0.6 per cent identified as Indigenous. However, there was no information on the Indigenous status of the homeless young people staying temporarily with friends or relatives, who were not counted in the census. We use census data on homeless people staying with other households (the 'usual address' question) to estimate how many Indigenous young people were missed by the census.

There is a risk of underestimation, because many Indigenous people make sense of the 'usual address' question within a different cultural frame of reference. When Indigenous people leave home to escape domestic violence or other family problems, they often move in with members of their extended family. In these circumstances, it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on census night, because 'home' is understood in a different way. This creates underreporting in this category.

8.1 NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATES PER 10 000, 2001 AND 2006

	2001			2006		
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total*	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Total
Number	19 634	564	20 305	19 734	777	20 511
Rate	42	217	44	40	246	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

* Figures were adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status, except in 107 cases where there was inadequate information to make the adjustment.

The research found 777 homeless Indigenous people in Victoria on census night 2006 (Table 8.1). The rate was 246 per 10 000 of the population compared with a rate of 217 in 2001. The rate of homelessness for non-Indigenous people was 40 per 10 000 in 2006, compared with 42 per 10 000 in 2001. Indigenous people were overrepresented in the homeless population in all states and territories in 2006, but the rate of Indigenous homelessness has increased in Victoria since 2001.

In Melbourne, there were 467 homeless Indigenous people (Table 8.2), including 315 in SAAP, 73 in boarding houses, 58 with other households and 21 in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough (Appendix 2). Two-thirds (65 per cent) of the homeless Indigenous people were in the Inner City Ring and Outer City Ring (Appendix 2).

8.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS HOMELESS PEOPLE, 2006

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	N	%	N	%
Melbourne	14 101	71	467	60
Northern Victoria	2819	14	182	24
Western Victoria	1931	10	49	6
Eastern Victoria	883	5	79	10
	19 734	100	777	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The other concentration of homeless Indigenous people was in Northern Victoria where there were 182 people. There were 94 in Mallee, 46 in Goulburn, 28 in Ovens-Murray and 14 in Loddon (Appendix 2). This included 59 homeless Indigenous people in Mildura, 21 in Shepparton and 11 in Bendigo.

There were 79 homeless Indigenous people in Eastern Victoria—45 in East Gippsland and 34 in Gippsland, including 16 in the La Trobe Valley.

There were 49 homeless Indigenous people in Western Victoria—21 in the Western District, 16 in Ballarat, eight in Geelong and four in the Wimmera.

9 DISCUSSION

The Australian Government's White Paper on homelessness has proposed two ambitious goals: 'to halve homelessness by 2020' and to provide 'supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it', along with interim targets for 2013. There is a National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness which covers the roles, responsibilities and funding contributions of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments will work together to achieve the targets specified in the White Paper. This chapter makes some comments on the White Paper's targets, on the basis of the 2006 statistical data on homelessness.

The White Paper highlights three strategies to achieve its goals. The first strategy is 'turning off the tap', which relates to the provision of services focusing on early intervention and prevention (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 3). The second strategy is 'improving and expanding services to end homelessness', which focuses on providing services that assist people into 'stable long-term housing, employment and training' or other forms of community participation (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 4). The third strategy is 'breaking the cycle', whereby homeless people can 'move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not reoccur' (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, Ch. 5).

The White Paper was accompanied by a significant financial commitment of $1.2 billion over five years, with $800 million allocated for prevention and early intervention services, and a further $400 million to increase the supply of 'affordable and supported housing for people who would otherwise be homeless'. Since the White Paper, the government has announced a further $6.6 billion to be spent on the construction of 20 000 homes for public housing, the largest expansion of public housing for many years.

The aim of the government is to reduce the number of homeless people from 105 000 in 2006 to 50 000 by 2020. The White Paper is not a detailed plan, but it does provide a policy framework for the national response to homelessness and foreshadows significant funded initiatives to achieve targeted social goals. However, the international economic environment is now far more problematic than it was prior to 2008, and the global economic recession may create additional pressures that exacerbate homelessness.

9.1 HOMELESS STATISTICS

There are three main sources of statistical data that inform policy. The first is the ABS Census of Population and Housing undertaken every five years. The 2001 Census reported 99 900 homeless people and the 2006 census reported 104 676. At both censuses the rate of homelessness was 53 persons per 10 000 of the population. On census night 2006, 16 375 people were counted in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping rough (primary homelessness), 46 856 people were staying temporarily with other households (secondary homelessness), 19 849 were in SAAP (secondary homelessness), and 21 596 were in boarding houses (tertiary homelessness).

The profile of the homeless population looks different if people are classified on the basis of their housing histories, rather than their accommodation on census night. In a study of 4291 homeless people in Melbourne, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that 92 per cent of their sample had moved regularly from one form of temporary accommodation to another. Nearly everyone had stayed with friends or relatives, but 85 per cent had also stayed in boarding houses, 60 per cent had been in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 50 per cent had slept rough. Homeless people show up in particular places on census night, but many of them will be somewhere else a few weeks later.

The second source of data is the National SAAP Data Collection which gathers information on all persons assisted by the SAAP program. The National SAAP Data Collection provides important information on the needs and social characteristics of people who use these services. Between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006, 106 500 homeless adults and 54 700 accompanying children were assisted, making a total of 161 200 persons in SAAP (AIHW 2007, p. xi). It would be possible to estimate the annual homeless population if we knew what proportion of homeless people use SAAP services, but we do not have this statistic.

The third source of statistical data is research surveys of different subgroups within the homeless population. These samples are usually drawn from service users. However, findings from this kind of research can be used to make inferences about the homeless population. In 2001, Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003) contacted all SAAP services in census week and were provided with 812 case studies. The research found that 48 per cent of SAAP clients had been homeless for one year or longer (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, p. 42).In a study of 630 SAAP clients, Eardley, Thompson, Cass and Dadich (2008, Ch. 5) found that 65 per cent had been homeless on two or more occasions and one-quarter had received help from SAAP for between one and five years; and in a study of 4291

people, Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007, p. 25) found that 64 per cent had been homeless for one year or longer. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of the homeless population have long-term housing problems. Making good use of the available statistical data necessarily means making reasoned inferences from the different data sources.

9.2 REDUCING HOMELESSNESS: OVERVIEW

Homelessness is a process including stages of becoming homeless, being homeless and at some point recovering from homelessness. In Australia, thinking about homelessness as a process is well-established and metaphors such as the 'homeless career' (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998) and 'homeless pathways' are widely used to refer to these transitions (Clapham 2003; Johnson, Gronda and Coutts 2008). The homeless population consists of diverse groups: single men and women, families with children, and young people on their own. For some people, homelessness is a short-lived experience, while for others homelessness lasts more than one year, and some people experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

People become homeless for diverse reasons. Teenagers typically experience homelessness following a breakdown in their family situation. Some families become homeless as debt mounts and they are evicted from their housing. For other people, it is a breakdown in their conjugal relationship, often involving domestic violence, that results in one partner (usually a woman with children) losing their accommodation. Mental health issues or drug and alcohol abuse may be directly implicated in some people becoming homeless, but other people develop these issues in the homeless population (Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald 2007).

It is known that some groups are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, such as young people who have been through the care and protection system (Johnson and Chamberlain 2008a). Also, it is known that Indigenous people are more vulnerable to becoming homeless than non-Indigenous Australians.

Reducing the size of the homeless population will require a significant investment in early intervention and applying appropriate intervention models for different subgroups in the population. There will also be a need for improved services to support people who are homeless and follow-up support to ensure that formerly homeless people can maintain their accommodation. Finally, a major investment in affordable housing, including public and community housing, will be needed over the next decade.

9.3 ROUGH SLEEPERS

The White Paper prioritises reducing the number of people sleeping rough and 'offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it' (Homelessness Taskforce 2008, p. 17). This is a commendable priority, but three points need to be borne in mind.

First, providing people with emergency accommodation can be justified on both moral and practical grounds, but moving rough sleepers into supported accommodation will not reduce the overall number of homeless people.

Second, it is important to recognise that most people do not sleep rough on a permanent basis. Chamberlain, Johnson and Theobald (2007) found that only two per cent of their sample was consistently without shelter, but 49 per cent of the sample had slept rough occasionally.

Third, the census identified 16 375 people in the 'improvised dwellings' category. However, this category includes a wide range of situations from sleeping in a park and sheltering in a derelict building, to living in a shed or garage of some kind. There is no simple way of disaggregating the category, but in 2006 we conducted further research. We examined census data, then we held many discussions with building inspectors, town planners and service providers across the country. This provided the basis for estimating the number of persons in improvised dwellings (sheds, garages and cabins) and the number of persons sleeping rough (for example, in public places, derelict buildings, cars and tents).

In Chapter 2, we estimated that in the capital cities about 75 per cent of households in the 'primary homeless' category were sleeping rough. However, in regional Australia the situation was different. About 60 per cent of households in this category were living in sheds, garages or shacks, most of which were owned or being purchased. Their living arrangements were below the community standard used to define homelessness, and in the main they were low-income households, but they were not transient and some were employed in local communities.

People sleeping rough or squatting in derelict buildings were more likely to be on their own, whereas people in improvised dwellings were more likely to be in families or group households. Overall, we estimate about 9900 persons in improvised dwellings across the country and about 6500 rough sleepers, although the latter group was undercounted.

9.4 YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth homelessness has been a major policy focus since the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's 1989 report, *Our Homeless Children*, and in 2008 there was a National Youth Commission report, *Australia's Homeless Youth*. Youth refers to young people aged 12 to 24. However, a distinction is often drawn between teenagers aged 12 to 18 and young adults aged 19 to 24.

There have been important initiatives to assist homeless teenagers and their families. The establishment of the Reconnect program in 1999 was a major early intervention initiative by the Australian Government to reduce youth homelessness. Reconnect was implemented in phases and was not fully operational until 2003. Twenty-nine services were funded in December 1999 (DFaCS 2003, p. 22). By 2003, there were 98 Reconnect services across the country. The most recent evaluation of Reconnect (DFaCS 2003, p. 8) found that the program had achieved positive outcomes for young people and their families.

In addition, several states implemented new programs such as the Youth Support Coordinators Program in Queensland and the Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program in Victoria. Some SAAP youth agencies also undertake early intervention with recently homeless young people. Since the late 1990s, several state and territory governments have expended additional funds to increase the number of welfare staff in schools and to improve assistance to young people and families in crisis.

9.1 CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION

	2001	2006	% change
Families with children	22 944	26 790	+16.8
Youth aged 12 to 18 (alone)	22 600	17 891	–20.8
Adults (singles and couples)	54 356	59 995	+10.4
	99 900	104 676	+4.8

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2001, 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2001, 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2001, 2006.

Table 9.1 shows that the number of homeless youth aged 12 to 18 decreased from 22 600 in 2001 to 17 891 in 2006, a decrease of 20.8 per cent. This is compelling evidence that these early intervention initiatives have been effective. There are currently 98 Reconnect services across the country, but it has been estimated that 50 per cent of communities do not have a Reconnect program (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, p. 41–43). At any point in time, there are 15 000 students across the country at risk

of becoming homeless (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2004, p. 42). Youth homelessness could be further reduced by expanding Reconnect to have national coverage.

In a study of 1642 homeless adults and young adults, Johnson and Chamberlain (2008a) found that 42 per cent of their sample had been in the state care and protection system. Young people who have been in state care are at greater risk of becoming homeless than most teenagers, and they are at much greater risk of making the transition from youth to adult homelessness. Targeted intervention and a reformed care and protection system are important components of an effective early intervention strategy for youth. In addition, such initiatives will have a flow-on effect by reducing the number of homeless teenagers moving into the adult homeless population.

9.5 FAMILIES

Another group for whom early intervention is a crucial issue is families. The number of persons in family households on census night increased from 22 944 in 2001 to 26 790 in 2006, an increase of 16.8 per cent (Table 9.1). Families make up 28 per cent of SAAP users (AIHW 2007, p. 37). In 2005–06, the number of children accompanying parents in SAAP was 54 700 (AIHW 2007, p. 15).

Most commonly, families become homeless because of a housing crisis or domestic violence. Adults in families experiencing a housing crisis are typically unemployed or outside of the labour force. These families are usually poor and often have accumulated debts. In most cases, the family is facing eviction because of rent arrears.

Early intervention with families experiencing a housing crisis involves providing families with assistance before they lose their accommodation, including family counselling to resolve relationship difficulties, financial advice, some funds to settle debts, and assistance with applications for public housing. There is a small national program providing this kind of response. In 2001, a pilot program of eight services known as the Family Homelessness Prevention Project (FHPP) was launched with a single service in each jurisdiction. From 1 July 2004, the program continued under a new name as the Household Organisational Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program.

An evaluation of the HOME program found that if families at risk of homelessness were reached with assistance before losing their accommodation, 86 per cent of those families remained in adequate housing or improved their housing situation during the period of support

(MacKenzie, Desmond and Steen 2007). The evaluation highlighted two key success factors: the availability of brokerage funds and a capacity to work through issues on a needs basis. The effects of this assistance were found to be sustainable for a majority of families in the 12 months after support.

The HOME Advice program was a small-scale initiative and had only a small impact on the overall population of at-risk families. Family homelessness could be reduced by expanding the HOME project to have national coverage. Preliminary estimates indicate the need for between 100 and 250 services.

Some families become homeless as a result of family breakdown involving domestic violence. There has been a considerable investment in changing community attitudes towards domestic violence (Carrington and Phillips 2006), but it is not clear to what extent early intervention strategies have been implemented to assist women experiencing domestic violence. One impediment to implementing early intervention is that many women do not request assistance until they have left the family home.

One form of early intervention is family counselling to help couples work through their relationship issues, and another form of intervention is to remove the perpetrator of violence from the family home. Otherwise, 'early intervention' for victims of domestic violence means assisting them to move quickly to alternative, secure accommodation. The number of people using these services may not decrease, but if their time spent in homelessness services is minimised, then the number of families in the point-in-time census count will decrease over time. The current lack of affordable housing affects homeless families escaping domestic violence, by prolonging their homelessness and increasing the number of homeless people on census night.

9.6 ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN

There were 59 995 homeless adults without children on census night, up from 54 356 in 2001, an increase of 10.4 per cent (Table 9.1). Two-thirds of these adults were men and one-third were women. Adults without children are the largest group of service users and many have been homeless for extended periods of time or have moved in and out of homelessness. In general, early intervention strategies are not the issue for single adults with a history of homelessness, although over time early intervention for teenagers will stem the flow into the adult homeless population. The lack of affordable and appropriate housing is a major issue for this group.

Some 21 000 people live in boarding houses, and these properties are often in poor condition with issues of health and safety for the residents. Greater regulation to improve the living conditions in boarding houses and legislation to improve security of tenure would be stop-gap measures, but most people in boarding houses want affordable self-contained accommodation.

About one-quarter of the adults without children were aged 55 or older (15 000 people). An appropriate aged-care response could provide more adequate long-term accommodation for people who currently reside in boarding houses or take up places in the homelessness service system.

A significant proportion of the people with a long-term housing problem have substance abuse issues and/or mental health issues, which complicates their exit from homelessness (Johnson and Chamberlain 2008b). Most of the adults who were homeless on census night needed assistance to find appropriate, affordable housing, and long-term support to maintain that accommodation.

The main policy imperatives for this group are the creation of sufficient affordable housing stock, continuing support for individuals with complex housing needs, and sufficient levels of support to assist people who have experienced long-term homelessness to live in the community.

9.7 CONCLUSION

The White Paper proposes a long-term effort to halve homelessness by 2020. Achieving the right mix of interventions is one challenge. About 50 per cent of the homeless population could be assisted directly by the early intervention measures discussed above. The other component of a balanced response is the need for a steep increase in the stock of affordable housing, combined with policies that guarantee access for the most disadvantaged, and sufficient long-term, case-managed support to assist people out of homelessness and to prevent homelessness reoccurring. At this point, it is unclear whether sufficient resources have been deployed to fund the programs that are needed.

A second challenge is to recognise that it will take several years before an assessment can be made about the effectiveness of the White Paper's initiatives. It takes time to put new services in place and for those services to have their full impact. It will also take time to increase the supply of affordable housing, and other low-income people will be competing for the new housing stock.

The White Paper sets out interim targets for 2013, including an overall reduction in homelessness of 21 000 people (Homelessness Taskforce 2008,

p. 18). In 2013, homeless figures from the 2011 census will become available, but it is unlikely that the impact from the new initiatives will be apparent in 2011. The findings from the 2016 census will be of more relevance for assessing whether the White Paper's targets have been achieved.

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Appendix 1: Number of homeless people in Victoria by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board Hse	Group 4 SAAP/THM	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Melbourne	**845**	**5100**	**3739**	**4884**	**14 568**	**3 592 593**	**41**	**1247**	**15 815**	**44**
Inner Melbourne	160	660	2040	630	3490	270 963	129	0	3490	129
Western Melbourne	50	599	288	837	1774	419 910	42	69	1843	44
Melton-Wyndham	44	229	9	129	411	191 608	21	85	496	26
Moreland City	29	177	125	205	536	135 765	39	0	536	39
Northern Middle Melbourne	25	354	116	476	971	242 933	40	0	971	40
Hume City	5	166	27	148	346	147 781	23	168	514	35
Northern Outer Melbourne	42	184	32	190	448	184 439	24	0	448	24
Boroondara City	12	139	251	93	495	154 452	32	0	495	32
Eastern Middle Melbourne	56	561	294	529	1440	415 928	35	0	1440	35
Eastern Outer Melbourne	45	328	52	267	692	245 941	28	36	728	30
Yarra ranges Shire Part A	64	253	31	103	451	139 630	32	58	509	36
Southern Melbourne	28	488	142	613	1271	391 373	32	133	1404	36
Greater Dandenong City	8	224	245	287	764	125 517	61	161	925	74
South Eastern Outer Melbourne	117	395	24	177	713	272 069	26	81	794	29
Frankston City	133	168	53	141	495	117 803	42	280	775	66
Mornington Peninsula Shire	27	175	10	59	271	136 841	20	176	447	33
Barwon	**173**	**344**	**62**	**211**	**790**	**259 010**	**31**	**159**	**949**	**37**
Greater Geelong City Part A	41	200	49	175	465	160 990	29	121	586	36
East Barwon	43	68	0	0	111	58 314	19	20	131	22
West Barwon	89	76	13	36	214	39 706	54	18	232	58
Western District	**83**	**165**	**13**	**117**	**378**	**98 856**	**38**	**62**	**440**	**45**
Warrnambool City	7	43	4	57	111	30 393	37	19	130	43
Hopkins	37	55	9	14	115	32 067	36	7	122	38
Glenelg	39	67	0	46	152	36 396	42	36	188	52
Central Highlands	**104**	**218**	**142**	**183**	**647**	**142 217**	**45**	**60**	**707**	**50**
Ballarat City	25	111	125	138	399	85 196	47	22	421	49
East Central highlands	67	74	17	28	186	39 208	47	24	210	54
West Central Highlands	12	33	0	17	62	17 813	35	14	76	43

Appendix 1 (continued): Number of homeless people in Victoria by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board Hse	Group 4 SAAP/THM	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Wimmera	**49**	**67**	**10**	**39**	**165**	**48 440**	**34**	**50**	**215**	**44**
South Wimmera	49	49	3	36	137	34 880	39	41	178	51
North Wimmera	0	18	7	3	28	13 560	21	9	37	27
Mallee	**120**	**232**	**102**	**146**	**600**	**88 600**	**68**	**252**	**852**	**96**
Mildura Rural City Part A	59	98	50	93	300	46 034	65	139	439	95
West Mallee	14	41	0	0	55	10 632	52	39	94	88
East Mallee	47	93	52	53	245	31 934	77	74	319	100
Loddon	**198**	**282**	**66**	**178**	**724**	**168 841**	**43**	**162**	**886**	**52**
Greater Bendigo City Part A	5	146	47	117	315	81 936	38	66	381	46
North Loddon	178	85	7	19	289	48 544	60	71	360	74
South Loddon	15	51	12	42	120	38 361	31	25	145	38
Goulburn	**283**	**405**	**128**	**211**	**1027**	**195 238**	**53**	**361**	**1388**	**71**
Greater Shepparton City Part A	26	107	18	104	255	44 598	57	96	351	79
North Goulburn	127	149	64	46	386	75 784	51	179	565	75
South Goulburn	50	87	19	3	159	30 256	53	20	179	59
South West Goulburn	80	62	27	58	227	44 600	51	66	293	66
Ovens-Murray	**130**	**259**	**63**	**198**	**650**	**92 589**	**70**	**96**	**746**	**81**
Wodonga	52	113	11	130	306	46 566	66	37	343	74
West Ovens-Murray	40	62	18	53	173	30 028	58	37	210	70
East Ovens-Murray	38	84	34	15	171	15 995	107	22	193	121
East Gippsland	**111**	**100**	**45**	**115**	**371**	**80 116**	**46**	**152**	**523**	**65**
East Gippsland Shire	80	70	30	80	260	40 036	64	113	373	93
Wellington Shire	31	30	15	35	111	40 080	28	39	150	37
Gippsland	**108**	**242**	**87**	**154**	**591**	**159 483**	**37**	**188**	**779**	**49**
La Trobe Valley	30	112	42	101	285	73 479	39	52	337	46
West Gippsland	7	65	22	28	122	33 635	36	47	169	50
South Gippsland	71	65	23	25	184	52 369	35	89	273	52
Missing data	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**6440**		**0**	**0**	
Total	**2204**	**7414**	**4457**	**6436**	**20 511**	**4 932 423**	**42**	**2789**	**23 300**	**47**

Appendix 2: Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivisions, 2006*

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends	Group 3 Board Hse	Group 4 SAAP/THM	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Group 5 Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Melbourne	**Non-Indig**	**824**	**5042**	**3666**	**4569**	**14 101**	**3 577 613**	**39**	**1226**	**15 327**	**43**
	Indig	**21**	**58**	**73**	**315**	**467**	**14 980**	**312**	**21**	**488**	**326**
City Core	Non-Indig	145	652	2000	592	3389	270 037	126	0	3389	126
	Indig	15	8	40	38	101	926	1091	0	101	1091
Inner City Ring	Non-Indig	141	1381	795	1634	3951	1 339 621	29	198	4149	31
	Indig	3	22	11	114	150	4812	312	4	154	320
Frankston-Dandenong	Non-Indig	165	561	290	450	1466	1 590 151	9	603	2069	13
	Indig	3	6	18	37	64	7245	88	14	78	108
Outer City Ring	Non-Indig	373	2448	581	1893	5295	377 804	140	425	5720	151
	Indig	0	22	4	126	152	1997	761	3	155	776
Barwon	**Non-Indig**	**169**	**344**	**62**	**207**	**782**	**257 175**	**30**	**154**	**936**	**36**
	Indig	**4**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**8**	**1835**	**44**	**5**	**13**	**71**
Greater Geelong	Non-Indig	37	200	49	171	457	159 727	29	121	578	36
	Indig	4	0	0	4	8	1263	63	0	8	63
SD Balance	Non-Indig	132	144	13	36	325	97 448	33	33	358	37
	Indig	0	0	0	0	0	572	0	5	5	87
Western District	**Non-Indig**	**83**	**160**	**13**	**101**	**357**	**97 698**	**37**	**58**	**415**	**42**
	Indig	**0**	**5**	**0**	**16**	**21**	**1158**	**181**	**4**	**25**	**216**
Warrnambool City	Non-Indig	7	38	4	57	106	29 983	35	19	125	42
	Indig	0	5	0	0	5	410	122	0	5	122
SD Balance	Non-Indig	76	122	9	44	251	67 715	37	39	290	43
	Indig	0	0	0	16	16	748	214	4	20	267
Central Highlands	**Non-Indig**	**104**	**212**	**142**	**173**	**631**	**140 930**	**45**	**60**	**691**	**49**
	Indig	**0**	**6**	**0**	**10**	**16**	**1287**	**124**	**0**	**16**	**124**
Ballarat City	Non-Indig	25	105	125	128	383	84 303	45	22	405	48
	Indig	0	6	0	10	16	893	179	0	16	179
SD Balance	Non-Indig	79	107	17	45	248	56 627	44	38	286	51
	Indig	0	0	0	0	0	394	0	0	0	0
Wimmera	**Non-Indig**	**49**	**67**	**10**	**35**	**161**	**47 990**	**34**	**46**	**207**	**43**
	Indig	**0**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**4**	**450**	**89**	**4**	**8**	**178**

* Figures have been adjusted for missing data on Indigenous status.

Appendix 2 (continued): Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivision 2006

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends/rel	Group 3 Board Hse	Group 4 SAAP/THM	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Mallee	**Non-Indig**	**102**	**222**	**102**	**80**	**506**	**86 042**	**59**	**245**	**751**	**87**
	Indig	**18**	**10**	**0**	**66**	**94**	**2558**	**367**	**7**	**101**	**395**
Mildura City Pt A	Non-Indig	56	89	50	46	241	44 575	54	132	373	84
	Indig	3	9	0	47	59	1459	404	7	66	452
SD Balance	Non-Indig	46	133	52	34	265	41 467	64	113	378	91
	Indig	15	1	0	19	35	1099	318	0	35	318
Loddon	**Non-Indig**	**195**	**282**	**66**	**167**	**710**	**167 271**	**42**	**155**	**865**	**52**
	Indig	**3**	**0**	**0**	**11**	**14**	**1570**	**89**	**7**	**21**	**134**
Greater Bendigo	Non-Indig	5	146	47	106	304	80 967	38	66	370	46
	Indig	0	0	0	11	11	969	114	0	11	114
SD Balance	Non-Indig	190	136	19	61	406	86 304	47	89	495	57
	Indig	3	0	0	0	3	601	50	7	10	166
Goulburn	**Non-Indig**	**280**	**385**	**128**	**188**	**981**	**191 586**	**51**	**336**	**1317**	**69**
	Indig	**3**	**20**	**0**	**23**	**46**	**3652**	**126**	**25**	**71**	**194**
Greater Shepparton	Non-Indig	26	97	18	93	234	42 832	55	85	319	74
	Indig	0	10	0	11	21	1766	119	11	32	181
SD Balance	Non-Indig	254	288	110	95	747	148 754	50	251	998	67
	Indig	3	10	0	12	25	1 886	133	14	39	207
Ovens-Murray	**Non-Indig**	**130**	**259**	**63**	**170**	**622**	**91 682**	**68**	**88**	**710**	**77**
	Indig	**0**	**0**	**0**	**28**	**28**	**907**	**309**	**8**	**36**	**397**
Wodonga	Non-Indig	52	113	11	109	285	45 995	62	33	318	69
	Indig	0	0	0	21	21	571	368	4	25	438
SD Balance	Non-Indig	78	146	52	61	337	45 687	74	55	392	86
	Indig	0	0	0	7	7	336	208	4	11	327
East Gippsland	**Non-Indig**	**102**	**94**	**45**	**85**	**326**	**78 474**	**42**	**144**	**470**	**60**
	Indig	**9**	**6**	**0**	**30**	**45**	**1642**	**274**	**8**	**53**	**323**

Appendix 2 (continued): Estimated number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous homeless people by statistical division and selected subdivisions, 2006

		Group 1 Imp. dwell	Group 2 Friends/rel	Group 3 Board Hse	Group 4 SAAP/THM	Total	Usual Res. Population	Rate per 10 000	Caravan	Total (incl. caravan)	Rate (incl. caravan)
Gippsland	**Non-Indig**	**108**	**242**	**83**	**124**	**557**	**157 905**	**35**	**188**	**745**	**47**
	Indig	**0**	**0**	**4**	**30**	**34**	**1578**	**215**	**0**	**34**	**215**
La Trobe Valley	Non-Indig	30	112	42	85	269	72 562	37	52	321	44
	Indig	0	0	0	16	16	917	174	0	16	174
SD Balance	Non-Indig	78	130	41	39	288	85 343	34	136	424	50
	Indig	0	0	4	14	18	661	272	0	18	272
Total	**Non-Indig**	**2146**	**7309**	**4380**	**5899**	**19 734**	**4 894 366**	**40**	**2700**	**22 434**	**46**
	Indig	**58**	**105**	**77**	**537**	**777**	**31 617**	**246**	**89**	**866**	**274**
Missing data		0	0	0	0	0	6440		0	0	
Total		**2204**	**7414**	**4457**	**6436**	**20 511**	**4 932 423**	**42**	**2789**	**23 300**	**47**

Appendix 3: Percentage of homeless people by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Number	Percentage
Melbourne	**14 568**	**71.0**
Inner Melbourne	3490	17.0
Western Melbourne	1774	8.7
Melton-Wyndham	411	2.0
Moreland City	536	2.6
Northern Middle Melb	971	4.7
Hume City	346	1.7
Northern Outer Melb	448	2.2
Booroondara City	495	2.4
Eastern Middle Melb	1440	7.0
Eastern Outer Melbourne	692	3.4
Yarra Ranges Shire Part A	451	2.2
Southern Melbourne	1271	6.2
Greater Dandenong City	764	3.7
South Eastern Outer Melb	713	3.5
Frankston City	495	2.4
Mornington Penin. Shire	271	1.3
Barwon	**790**	**3.9**
Greater Geelong Part A	465	2.3
East Barwon	111	0.6
West Barwon	214	1.0
Western District	**378**	**1.8**
Warrnambool City	111	0.5
Hopkins	115	0.6
Glenelg	152	0.7
Central Highlands	**647**	**3.2**
Ballarat City	399	2.0
East Central highlands	186	0.9
West Central Highlands	62	0.3

	Number	Percentage
Wimmera	**165**	**0.8**
South Wimmera	137	0.7
North Wimmera	28	0.1
Mallee	**600**	**3.0**
Mildura Rural City Pt A	300	1.5
West Mallee	55	0.3
East Mallee	245	1.2
Loddon	**724**	**3.5**
Greater Bendigo City Pt A	315	1.5
North Loddon	289	1.4
South Loddon	120	0.6
Goulburn	**1027**	**5.0**
Shepparton City Pt A	255	1.2
North Goulburn	386	1.9
South Goulburn	159	0.8
South West Goulburn	227	1.1
Ovens-Murray	**650**	**3.1**
Wodonga	306	1.5
West Ovens-Murray	173	0.8
East Ovens-Murray	171	0.8
East Gippsland	**371**	**1.8**
East Gippsland Shire	260	1.3
Wellington Shire	111	0.5
Gippsland	**591**	**2.9**
La Trobe Valley	285	1.4
West Gippsland	122	0.6
South Gippsland	184	0.9
Missing data	0	0
Total	**20 511**	**100.00**

Appendix 4: Percentage of homeless people and marginal caravan park residents by statistical division and subdivision, 2006

	Number	Percentage
Melbourne	**15 815**	**67.9**
Inner Melbourne	3490	15.0
Western Melbourne	1843	7.9
Melton-Wyndham	496	2.1
Moreland City	536	2.3
Northern Middle Melb	971	4.2
Hume City	514	2.2
Northern Outer Melb	448	1.9
Booroondara City	495	2.1
Eastern Middle Melb	1440	6.2
Eastern Outer Melbourne	728	3.1
Yarra Ranges Shire Part A	509	2.2
Southern Melbourne	1404	6.0
Greater Dandenong City	925	4.0
South Eastern Outer Melb	794	3.4
Frankston City	775	3.3
Mornington Penin. Shire	447	1.9
Barwon	**949**	**4.1**
Greater Geelong Part A	586	2.5
East Barwon	131	0.6
West Barwon	232	1.0
Western District	**440**	**1.9**
Warrnambool City	130	0.6
Hopkins	122	0.5
Glenelg	188	0.8
Central Highlands	**707**	**3.0**
Ballarat City	421	1.8
East Central Highlands	210	0.9
West Central Highlands	76	0.3

	Number	Percentage
Wimmera	**215**	**0.9**
South Wimmera	178	0.8
North Wimmera	37	0.1
Mallee	**852**	**3.7**
Mildura Rural City Pt A	439	1.9
West Mallee	94	0.4
East Mallee	319	1.4
Loddon	**886**	**3.8**
Greater Bendigo City Pt A	381	1.6
North Loddon	360	1.6
South Loddon	145	0.6
Goulburn	**1388**	**6.0**
Shepparton City Pt A	351	1.5
North Goulburn	565	2.4
South Goulburn	179	0.8
South West Goulburn	293	1.3
Ovens-Murray	**746**	**3.2**
Wodonga	343	1.5
West Ovens-Murray	210	0.9
East Ovens-Murray	193	0.8
East Gippsland	**523**	**2.2**
East Gippsland Shire	373	1.6
Wellington Shire	150	0.6
Gippsland	**779**	**3.3**
La Trobe Valley	337	1.4
West Gippsland	169	0.7
South Gippsland	273	1.2
Missing data	0	0
Total	**23 300**	**100.00**