



## **Demand for homelessness assistance doubles over the past 10 years**

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Increases in income support, more social housing and a boost to mental health funding are necessary to address the 'out of control' demand for homelessness assistance according to the Catholic Church's peak social services group, Catholic Social Services Australia.

According to data released this week by Homelessness Australia the number of Australians with mental health issues seeking homelessness assistance has doubled over the past 10 years.

Data shows that between 2019-2020, more than 88,300 people with mental health issues sought homelessness assistance across Australia. This is up from 44,700 in 2011-12.

Francis Sullivan, Chair of the Catholic Church's peak social services group, Catholic Social Services Australia, said today that the figures were dreadful and called on federal and state governments for increased income support, more social housing and a boost to mental health funding.

"These figures show just how dire the situation is for some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens," Mr Sullivan said.

"Thousands of people across Australia either can't afford or can't access mental health care privately or through Medicare or hospitals. Layered on top of this is the acute shortage of long-term affordable housing and easily accessible mental health support.

"Together, these two major community failings, destine thousands of Australians to miss out on the very basic expectation of a safe and secure roof over their heads," Mr Sullivan said.

Mr Sullivan said the doubling of demand for homelessness services is indicative of the way in which the disadvantaged and marginalised in the community are forced to live.

"We have seen it just in the past months, people living with disabilities and indigenous communities are pushed to the back of the vaccination queue, the rolling back of COVID financial support for struggling families, tardiness in allocating domestic violence funding.

"We all welcome the relaxation of COVID restrictions and talk about 'a return to normal'.

"Sadly what normal looks like for so many in our community is being left behind," Mr Sullivan said.

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