

Homelessness reaches 'crisis point' in and around Melbourne

Major Brendan Nottle said a number of factors were driving the increasing homeless population including addiction and mental health issues.

"We are at a point now we have to do something really significant," he said.

Neil Mitchell drove up and down Flinders Street observing people camping out early this morning.

He observed people hanging their washing over the footpath.

"It is really really disturbing... This isn't right, it's disgraceful."

A youth homelessness service located within one of Melbourne's most iconic inner city tourist attractions says it is busier than it has ever been.

The City of Melbourne's recent StreetCount confirmed those concerns, recording 247 people sleeping rough in the municipality, compared to 142 at the previous count in 2014.

Eight truckloads of rubbish removed from Enterprize Park homeless camp

Eight truckloads of waste were removed from Enterprize Park when Melbourne City Council cleared out the homeless camp this week, including almost 200 syringes, a large numbers of shopping trolleys, mattresses, chairs, tents and other furniture.

The park's concrete pylons, regularly used as sleeping platforms, were blasted with high-pressure hoses.

"This is not an eviction, but you can't simply bring all this rubbish to one spot and build encampments with it," lord mayor Robert Doyle said.

A staggering increase in the number of people sleeping rough in the CBD has prompted the council to almost triple its annual homelessness budget in an attempt to stem the crisis.

"People are homeless earlier in life and for longer, most of our clients have been homeless for more than 12 months."

She said the young people who visit the service need complex care.

"Clients if they're lucky will eat two meals a day and exist on very poor nutrition which is affecting their health and their coping skills," she said.

In 2014 to 2015, more than 41,000 young people accessed youth homelessness services across Australia.

Victoria accounted for 76 per cent of the national increase in clients accessing services, many because of domestic violence.



Many young people accessing services often talk about being referred from one service to another with little or no communication between them.

But Youth Projects has recognised having all of these services in the one spot makes it less traumatic for people already feeling vulnerable.

"We do find that young people are often traumatised by the service system itself, it's quite fractured and difficult to navigate so that's the reason why we've got so many things in the one organisation," Ms Raymond said.

Pop-up rooming house plan to combat rising homelessness

One of Melbourne's biggest housing and support agencies is pushing to team with the private sector to create pop-up rooming houses.

The agency plans to convert vacant office buildings awaiting redevelopment into temporary accommodation for people struggling with homelessness.

Wintringham Specialist Aged Care chief executive Bryan Lipmann said he had concerns about the pop-up accommodation idea.

"Long-term solutions are needed," he said. "I don't think enough people understand how vulnerable the homeless are."

The homeless are often an easy target of vilification, cast as lazy, welfare bludgers or addicts. Certainly, attitude or drug dependency can play a part in personal circumstance, and as the old saying goes, no one is owed a living. But the reasons for homelessness are complex, including mental health and plain bad luck. A wealthy society such as Australia can afford a compassionate approach.

This will require political leaders to have the courage to stand up for those without material possessions. The availability and cost of rental markets must be examined. As another homeless man, John, who has lived on and off the streets for 27 years, reminded us recently: "It's time for the polities to fulfil promises and make affordable housing for all of us."

Property prices surged 6.8 percent in Sydney and 3.5 per cent in Melbourne, in the three months to June, according to CoreLogic's monthly house price index.

While it's good news for people involved in the speculative housing market, the unaffordability of housing is one of the main causes of homelessness for 105,000 people living on the streets.

In early June a report from the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, led by UNICEF Australia and the National Children's and Youth Law Centre, showed one in six children in Australia still live below the poverty line, while more than 70,000 received assistance from specialist homelessness services, with no view of a long-term solution.

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"There was no doubt it was confronting, but that was the intention of having it at Whitmore Square."

Last night's event, in which more than 120 CEOs took part, raised \$560,000 for St Vincent de Paul.

Mr Wark said the money would be used to invest in technology to better service the homeless, as well as being put towards programs aimed at women in crisis.

He said it was hard to measure the number of homeless people living in Adelaide, but demand for meal services had increased over the past year.