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What about Us: A response to Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless. 2006

NATIONAL ETHNIC DISABILITY ALLIANCE

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NEDA

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Summary of Recommendations

- That the concept of homelessness be reviewed so that a broader understanding from a range of perspectives is included especially those from NESB and indigenous are included.
- That the approaches developed in "***Counting The Homeless***" be enhanced so that they are compatible spatially and demographically with other collections to ensure questions of ethnicity and disability are included.
- That ABS review the current bio-medical approach to disabilities to include the social model of disability.
- That dwelling information is included in the Place of Usual Residence table.
- That ABS staff responsible for homelessness data review all current debates nationally and internationally on definitional issues to ensure the current definitions adopted are appropriate to the current situation.
- That ABS staff involved with homelessness/houselessness data develop the necessary expertise for data and statistical analysis of such data.
- That ABS develops effective indicators of ethnicity for the reporting of homeless data similar to those of New Zealand, Canada, United States and the UK.
- That the definition of houselessness and overcrowding is adopted in accordance with European, Canadian, UK and New Zealand practices.
- That ABS undertakes research to establish the cultural and social context of disability, homelessness and overcrowding with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and NESB communities.
- That the Australian statistical frameworks include definitions for homelessness, houselessness and overcrowding.
- If various surveys are to be used to inform public policy concerning homelessness, the sample framework and size is sufficiently robust to ensure an adequate representation of a broad Australian community is captured which includes NESB and Indigenous communities.

What NEDA is:

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from the non-English speaking background (NESB) with a disability, their families and carers throughout Australia.

A community based non-government organisation funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. NEDA has a small secretariat and is governed by a Council of state and territory representatives. The majority of Councillors are people from NESB with disabilities, their families and carers.

What NEDA believes:

People from NESB with disability, their families and carers are individuals who have the right to be respected for their human worth and dignity, and to be free from all forms of discrimination.

People from NESB with disability, their families and carers are experts in knowing how they want to receive services and supports.

All our activities must take into account the views and experiences of people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

The interests of all people in society are best served by establishing equal rights and opportunities for people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

We are accountable to people from NESB with disability, their families and carers and to the agencies who provide our funds.

We are open, honest and transparent in our relationships.

What NEDA does:

NEDA advocates at the federal level for the rights and interests of people from NESB with a disability, their families and carers so that they can participate fully in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

NEDA provides policy advice to the federal government and other agencies to secure equitable outcomes for people from NESB with disability, their families and carers. NEDA undertakes projects relating to the NESB and disability communities.

NEDA works closely with its state and territory member organisations to ensure that its policy advice reflect the experiences of people from NESB with disabilities, their families and carers. In states and territories where no NESB-disability advocacy agency exists, NEDA undertakes development work to try to establish a structure that can support and represent people from NESB with disabilities, their families and carers.

Introduction

Whilst there is a need to have a consistency in how one does an activity, there are some concerns that have not been addressed in the paper. Whilst there are reporting standards for ethnicity endorsed by ABS (ABS, 1999), yet they do not appear to be used. NEDA represents a constituency consistently ignored in the reporting of homelessness; those from NESB backgrounds and those with a disability.

When applying a reporting framework to the homeless, one gathers the impression is the homelessness has the following characteristics:

- Ageless (unless discussing those under 25)
- Genderless unless discussing domestic violence
- Do not have any disability (unless mental health issues are discussed)
- Have no ethnicity (unless Indigenous persons are involved).

In the document, the authors lack an apparent awareness of the contexts in which homelessness exists. One cannot collect information in a vacuum, which is implied in the paper. The context of data collection has equal importance when examining the results. There are distinct settings in which the experiences of homelessness occur. There are multiple dimensions to each setting. To argue for appropriate services, one must be able to have the necessary evidence to support those arguments. In counting the homeless, the domain of ethnicity was not included, as the methodology did not allow for this to occur. Even in the most recent publication on ethnicity, mental health and homelessness it was argued that there was not the adequacy of data available to define the key issues involved (Lewis, 2011; MMHA, 2011).

The concept of homelessness

The time has arisen to review the concept of homelessness. Australian discourse on this subject matter has been limited to a narrow definition, which has not changed since the late 1980's. In the Australian context, the development of ideas about homelessness arose initially from the work of Cecily Neale and Rodney Fopp; then through Terry Bourke to Chris Chamberlin and David Mackenzie (Burke, 1994; Chamberlin & Mackenzie, 1991; Neil, Fopp, McNamara, & Pelling, 1994).

The expression "homelessness" invokes often an emotional response about a class or persons who are viewed as not having the requirements of shelter. In their most visible state, they live on the streets with few belongings and limited social ties with the wider community. This form of definition takes its form from a small group of persons who are very visible but also is description of the nature of their material and social deprivation.

A simplistic approach to a definition of homelessness to a class of persons restricts the range and level of analysis and therefore the response to the questions asked and answers given. This paper emphasises that the way in which the definition of an issue determines the conceptual framework, that is, how the understanding of an issue and responses to it. A definition that limits analysis, also limits the range of possible responses.

Before suggesting a range of definitions of "homelessness," this paper looks again at what is meant by "home." In defining "home," we can gain a clearer sense of what it might mean to be without a "home." What do we mean by "homeless"?

To have a home implies a sense of relationship between the person and a location in which the person is able to have some sense of safety and security of tenure. In this location, a person is able to have a standard of accommodation that meets minimum standards. The definition of these minimum standards shifts over time depending on what is acceptable to the wider society. One way of defining those minimum standards could relate to accommodation affordability. The greater the proportion of the person's income expended on accommodation, the greater the impact on other aspects of the person's lifestyle; for example, there will be less income available to spend on other items such as food.

"Home" occurs where a person is able to identify the space as their own. They are able to define its form and shape. It is a matter of the person defining their privacy in terms of access to their space. When the person defines their space they give it a sense of their identity and the space becomes associated with that person. The person has made a "home".

Whatever definition of "home" is adopted, whatever the physical location and form that the accommodation unit takes, it must also be acceptable to the wider community. However, what is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable another, and therefore someone may be seen as having a home by one observer, but considered "homeless" by another. How then can

"homelessness" be defined?

If one were to define home by relationships between persons rather than to a particular location, the question arises what is meant by being at home and what is meant by being homeless. To be at home, it is a sense of being and personal choice. It is not necessarily a specific location but a series of locations defined by cultural association (Murdoch, 2011). For many indigenous persons their understanding of home is determined cultural obligations to members of their community, which in many ways does not have an equivalent in western culture.

One approach is to take a dictionary definition of homelessness, such as the Oxford dictionary, which defines homelessness as " (of a person) without a home, and therefore typically living on the streets " (Oxford, 2011).

This is expanded by Neil to be a condition or state in which a person or group of persons has no access to safe and secure accommodation of a standard that does not negatively impact on their health, threaten their personal safety, or further marginalise them by the non-provision of facilities such as for cooking or for personal hygiene (Neil, et al., 1994).

This form of the definition has the capacity to cover those who live on the streets but also cover those living in sub-standard accommodation.

Burke established some categories for the definition of homelessness - the ideas of relative and absolute homelessness. Absolute homelessness occurs when there is neither access to shelter nor the elements of home. A person may be in relative homelessness that is they may have a shelter but not have a home. The notion of a home, however, is determined by the cultural conditions in which the question is being asked (Burke, 1994).

Defining homelessness is a political act rather than a semantic exercise. It is through a definition that certain values, concepts and approaches are synthesised. Chamberlain and Mackenzie have discussed the politics of defining the homeless and outline three successive definitions over time (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992; Chamberlin & Mackenzie, 1991);

In the 1960's the homeless were defined as those who lived on the streets, skid row shelters and cheap single rooms. This definition emphasised the behaviour of this population especially their lack of primary relationships and abuse of alcohol. The main response was the charitable response of trying to alleviate the worst aspects of homelessness through basic shelter from the elements and basic nutrition.

During the 1970s a definition was adopted which emphasised a subjective view, or self-identification of homelessness. It argued that if people felt their living arrangements to be unsatisfactory because of poor conditions, overcrowding and lack of security they could consider themselves homeless. This definition introduced a subjective viewpoint, and allowed the link between housing stress and homelessness to be considered.

By the 1980's it was being argued that policy formation could only rest on a quantifiable definition. Homelessness was defined as people who were without conventional shelter and in emergency or short-term accommodation. These definitions have been considered "accommodation oriented" in that the criteria of homelessness rested on the individuals lack of conventional shelter. These definitions have restricted the issue of homelessness to "houselessness"(Cooper, 1998; Cooper & Jarques, 1995).

Burke established some categories for the definition of homelessness that are borrowed from poverty analysis techniques. These are the ideas of relative and absolute homelessness. The condition of absolute homelessness occurs when a person does not have the elements of home. A person may be in relative homelessness, which is they may have a shelter but not have a home (Burke, 1994).

Absolute homelessness has the same basic meaning in most societies that is sleeping in the streets because of the lack of shelter. Cultural conditions create the notion of a home is determined by the in which the question is being asked.

It is essential in establishing a basis for data collection that the various categories of homelessness are stated. It is helpful to acknowledge the relationship between inadequate housing and homelessness. When there is an increase in inadequate housing, there is also an increase in homelessness. The creation of a data definition must acknowledge the various dimensions of homelessness as data elements.

Table 1 Categories of Homelessness (After Chamberlain and Mackenzie 1992)

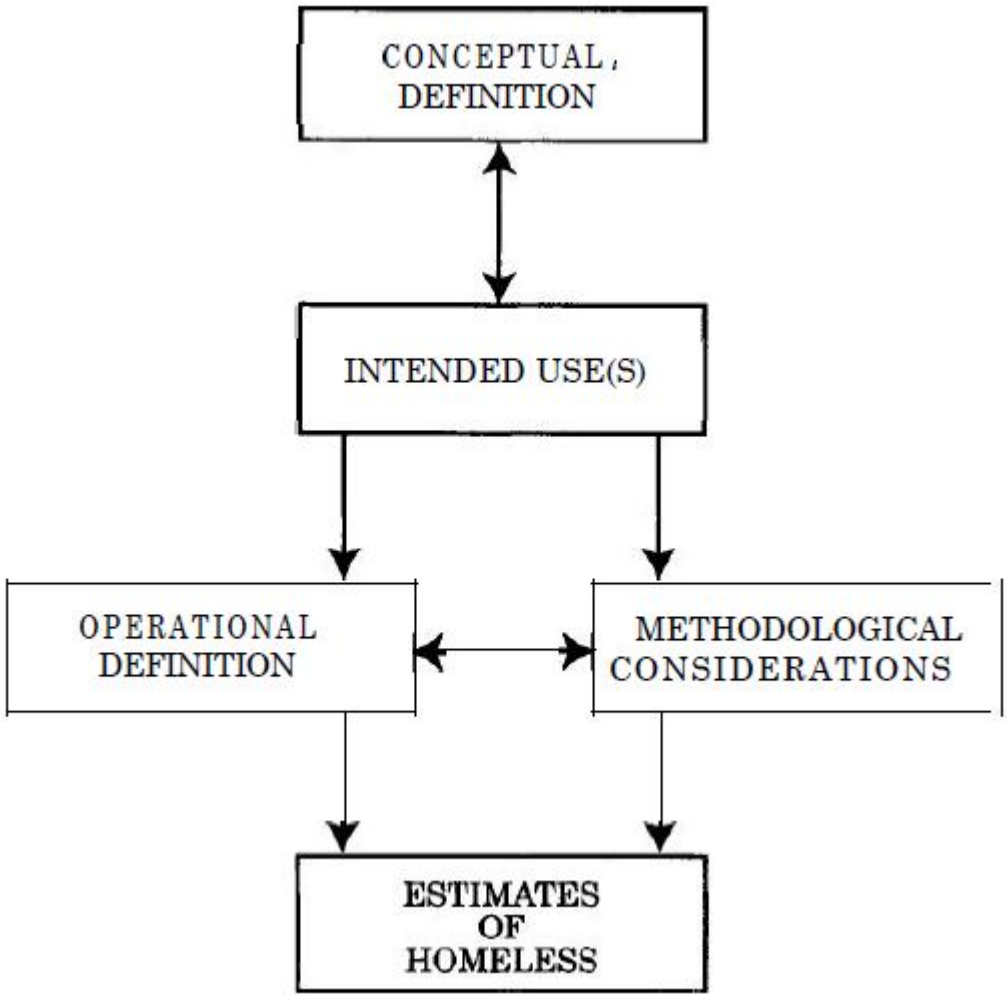
Housed but without conditions of "home", e.g., security, safety, or adequate standards.	Third degree relative homelessness inadequate housing incipient homelessness
People constrained to live permanently in single rooms in private boarding houses.	Second degree relative homelessness
People moving between various forms of temporary or medium term shelter such as refuges, boarding houses, hostels or friends.	First degree relative homelessness
People without an acceptable roof over their heads, living on the streets, under bridges and deserted buildings.	Absolute homelessness.

Source (Burke, 1994, p. 10)

What is in the numbers?

Policy makers need to determine what makes up the numbers for homelessness in Australia. There will be some requirement to count the population of homeless. The question is *"what is to be counted?"*

Figure 1: What is behind the numbers - defining the client



Source: (Cordray & Pion, 1997, p. 59)

Figure 1 shows a way of estimating the number of homeless persons. The estimate begins with a definition of the homeless. This definition will use a conceptual understanding of the particular population, with an orientation that excludes other possible explanations.

Defining of the population will establish the basis upon which assessments are made. The clarification of these definitions includes approaches to counting the homeless. Without a firm understanding of what we intend to measure, it is difficult to make a meaningful decision about who should be counted as being homeless.

It is important to note that current data collections only deal with a subset of the total population of the homeless. Not all agencies dealing with homeless people receive funding; therefore, any

claim based on official data only applies to those clients that used a funded agency.
It is not appropriate to generalise the whole population of homeless persons using official data. Any definition of homelessness expands or contracts depending of the requirements of the situation. What is more important is how these figures have been reported and where they fit into a continuum of included and excluded persons. Homelessness is thus defined through a series of sub-constructs, each with its own meaning. The differences between those adequate living conditions and those not having adequate living conditions may blur at times. The question that arises is where on the continuum one stops counting?
The reasons why the count is made will determine the procedures for counting that will be adopted. An example of this would be if the main reason for counting the number of persons were to establish current and future service requirements. Then a broad definition is essential. This definition will include various sub-populations who are homeless or at the risk of being homeless. On the other hand, long term planning would have little value to those whose needs are immediate. In this case, the information requirements are more concrete, such as how many beds are required for the next night.
In homelessness, the prevalence is defined as the total number of persons of experiencing homelessness in the population at a given time, or the total number of cases in the population, divided by the number of individuals in the population (Gerstman, 2003). It is used as an estimate of how frequent homelessness occurs within a population over a certain period.
Point prevalence in homelessness is a measure of the proportion of people in a population who are homeless at a particular time, such as the census night. It is a snap shot of homelessness at a particular time. This is in contrast to period prevalence, which is a measure of the proportion of people in a population who are homeless over a period.
The formula for point prevalence is:

$$point\ prevlance\ (rate) = \frac{number\ of\ recorded\ homeless\ persons\ on\ date\ X}{number\ of\ persons\ in\ the\ population\ on\ date\ X}$$

Period prevalence in homelessness is the proportion of the population experiencing homelessness over a specific period. It is a percentage of the population and can be described by the following formula:

$$period\ prevlance\ (ratio) = \frac{number\ of\ recorded\ homeless\ persons\ during\ period\ X}{number\ of\ persons\ in\ the\ population\ during\ period\ X}$$

Incidence is a measure of the risk of becoming homeless within a specified period. Although sometimes loosely expressed simply as the number of new cases during some time period, it is better expressed as a proportion or a rate with a denominator.

$$incident\,rate = \frac{number\ of\ newly\ recorded\ homeless\ persons}{number\ of\ persons\ in\ the\ population} \times multiplier\ for\ period\ X$$

Incidence proportion (also known as cumulative incidence) is the number of new homeless within a specified time period divided by the size of the population initially at risk. For example, if a population initially contains 1,000 persons and 50 become over two years of observation, the incidence proportion is 50 cases per 1,000 persons, i.e. 5.0%.

The relationship between incidence (rate), point prevalence (ratio) and period prevalence (ratio) is easily explained with a photography analogy. Point prevalence is similar to a flashlight photograph: what is happening at this instant frozen in time. Period prevalence is analogous to a long exposure (seconds, rather than an instant) photograph: the number of events recorded in the photo whilst the camera shutter was open. In a movie, each frame records an instant (point prevalence); by looking from frame to frame one notice new events (incident events) and can relate the number of such events to a period (number of frames) -> incidence rate (Last, 2001).

The ABS discussion paper indicated that the author was not familiar with the basic statistical concepts one should be using when discussing homeless numbers. An issue which is not addressed is the problems of Simpson's Paradox. Common issues with the human service planning and space are the problem of sub-population contribution to a particular score. These will not be normally acknowledged often it is a form of Simpson's Paradox (Weisstein, 2009).That is the mean of the parts may not be the mean of the whole. The problems that are common with the type of information used in homelessness planning are the Ecological Fallacy, which assumes that individual behaviour can be determined from group analysis (Bahk, 1985; Openshaw, 1984a, 1984b; Piantadosi, Byar, & Green, 1988). The second issue relates to aggregated data. The 'problem' consists of two interrelated parts. First, there is uncertainty about what constitutes the *objects* of study—identified as the scale and aggregation effects. Second, there are the implications this uncertainty presents when *interpreting* the results the analyses (Ratcliffe & McCullagh, 1999) . To ensure that this problem is addressed any subpopulation needs to be included in the final analysis.

Homelessness as Unseen Populations

Unseen populations such as the homeless are difficult to identify as often people will not easily identify with the particular population especially if there is a stigma attached to the group. This will create a problem of accurately estimating the size of the problem for policy makers. Any estimate of such populations will not be accurate. Therefore, any statement about the size of the population will create a controversy that will have an impact on the capacity of the government to develop effective policies.

There will be many sources of bias that will have an impact on data collection with unseen

populations. The U.S. General Accounting Office found, through a review of various approaches of identifying the homeless, that each approach had its problems (Chelimsky, 1997).
Some problems came from the sampling frame adopted. Some important areas of service delivery were left out or the seasonal variation of usage was not considered.
There would be either under reporting or over reporting of the number of clients depending on the interpretation of simple definitions.
Policy makers have difficulty with dealing with unseen populations. As the population is not defined adequately, it is not possible to establish the population variation over time. An unseen population, by definition, cannot be fully counted. There will always be a proportion hidden from view. Therefore, a count of persons using a recognised homeless service will only represent a proportion of the total population of homeless people. There will be persons whom the homeless are using services not associated with the current data collection requirements.
Even if there were regular counts of service users, and a change in this population found, it would not be possible to make a generalisation about the number of homeless persons. It would not be practicable to determine if there was a change in the number of homeless persons resulting in a change in client numbers. It is not possible with using generalisations about unseen populations to have reliable national estimates of trend data.
The defining of homelessness shows that there are some difficulties with the establishment of a universal definition. Whilst this has been attempted in an Australian context, the definitional basis of homelessness will change as a response to the policy context of the particular definition. The policy context will be politically driven. It will be designed to meet objectives that conform to a political agenda. This will result in whole populations being excluded from the official definition of homelessness.
For those whose cultural identity has not been stated or excluded or those seeking to plan for services for minority communities the reporting of the homeless as being a mono-cultural phenomenon ensures that culturally appropriate service planning does not arise.
A weakness in the Chamberlain and Mackenzie approach is that it uses several data sources, which are collected using different approaches. Hence, questions of ethnicity are excluded.

The definition of homelessness

There is a need to revisit the definition of homelessness. The paper current shows limited scholarship in this area. The debate needs to centre on several key issues as perhaps the cultural definition of homelessness has lost its relevance in the current environment.
Various typologies could be used to define homelessness. In Australia, there has been only a single typology used. In the international literature, there is a wider acceptance of various definitions that could be used. There are four possible typologies that could be used when describing homelessness in Australia (Tipple, 2007).

The typologies are as follows:

.. Based on quality – FEANTSA's typology and Cooper's typology

.. Based on risk –BAWO's typology and Daly's typology

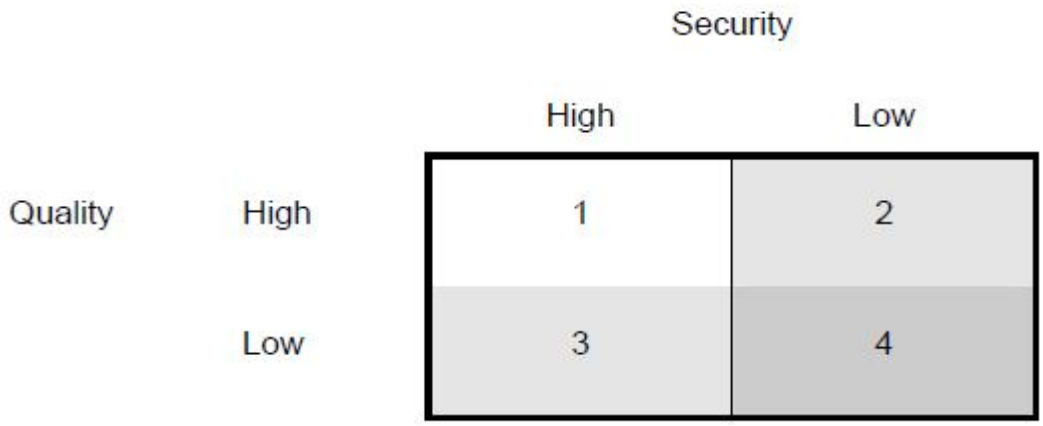
.. Based on time in homelessness – Hertzberg's typology

.. Based on responsibility for alleviation

FEANTSA's typology

The European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) posits a quality-oriented definition of homelessness beginning with a four-fold sub-division of housing adequacy.

Figure 1 FEANTSA's model of housing adequacy



Source (FEANTSA, 1999)

An adequate home (square 1) is one that provides a sense of security where available space and amenities provide a good environment for the satisfaction of physical, social, psychological and cultural needs. The UN Global Shelter Strategy from 1987 referred to aspects of home as a site for adequate privacy, space, security, lighting and ventilation, basic infrastructure and location with regard to work and basic facilities–"all at a reasonable cost" (UNCHS, 1987) Broad definitions of homelessness (including FEANTSA's) would include all squares except this one. Low quality (squares 3 and 4) in Europe would be manifest by overcrowding, high levels of noise, and pollution or infestation. These are at odds with the need for and right to personal privacy, health, and comfort. Low security, for instance, temporary lodgings, a lack of community belonging or family exclusion and/or poor tenure rights and risk of evictions, are signs of households at risk of homelessness in a narrow sense (squares 2 and 4) (FEANTSA, 1999, p. 10).

Cooper's typology

Cooper offers a quality-based typology dividing homelessness and potential homelessness into four categories as summarised in Table 1. In them, quality is not based solely on tenure and

physical conditions, but includes the more socially-constructed concept of home (Cooper & Jarques, 1995).
Home is a very rich concept. It embodies many ideas such as comfort, belonging, identity and security. Somerville attempts to unearth the meaning of home and its converse, homelessness. He presents seven key signifiers of home – “shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and paradise”.

To these, are added the meanings they have for dwellers (warmth, love, etc.), the nature of the security they give (physiological, emotional, etc.), and how these affect them in relation to themselves (relaxation, happiness, etc.) and others (homeliness, stability, etc.). Homelessness is the condition that represents the opposite of these, expressed in connotations of coldness, indifference, etc., presenting stress, misery, alienation, instability, etc (Sommerville, 1992, p. 532 to 534).
Thus, "home" is a place where a person is able to establish meaningful social relations with others through entertaining them in his/her own space, or where the person is able to withdraw from such relationships. "Home" should be a place where a person is able to define the space as their own, where they are able to control its form and shape. This may be through control of activities and of defining their privacy in terms of access to their space. When this is done, they have made a home with a sense of their identity (Cooper, 1998; Cooper & Jarques, 1995).

BAWO’s typology

In Austria, the definition of homelessness used by BAWO (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe) focuses on risk. The situation of being “houseless” (the term used there) can be acute, imminent or potential, as follows:
“‘Potential houselessness’ includes those where the housing loss is not imminent but may be approaching because of inadequate housing or income. People in this category would include those with very low incomes, those overstretched in debt, and some pensioners, single parents, handicapped persons and foreigners.
‘Imminent houselessness’ concerns those who are threatened with the loss of their current abode, who are incapable of keeping it, or who cannot provide a replacement for themselves. They would include those losing tied housing at the end of their employment, those to be released from institutions or prisons, some involved in divorce or separation, those threatened with eviction, and those coming to the end of a fixed term lease.
‘Acute houselessness’ includes living in the streets; in buildings meant for demolition, subway tunnels, railway wagons; in asylums, emergency shelters, institutions, inns and pensions; and people evicted from their former residence, staying with friends or relatives because of

inadequate housing of their own, and living in housing that is an “acute health hazard “and (BAWO website http://www.bawo.at).

Tracy Peressini use similar ideas in a Canadian study; ‘literally homeless’; ‘moving in and out of homelessness’; and ‘marginally housed and at risk of homelessness’ (Peressini, McDonald, & Hulchanski, 1995).

Where potentially or actually homeless people are neither counted nor considered, they are sometimes called the hidden homeless. They may include people living in insecure accommodation and those who are regarded as either a concealed or a potential household (Burrows, Pleace, & Quilgars, 1998).

Hidden refugees and asylum-seekers are generally excluded from national counts (FEANTSA, 1999).

Daly’s typology

From work in Britain, USA and Canada, Gerald Daly drew up a five-point classification based on the risks run by people who are, or are potentially, homeless:

“People who are at risk or vulnerable to homelessness soon, perhaps within the next month, who need short term assistance to keep them off the streets.

People whose primary, or sole need is housing. They are usually working people who may be temporarily or episodically without homes and really need some financial or other assistance but do not have serious problems otherwise.

People who can become quasi-independent but need help with life skills so that they can manage on their own.

People with substantial and/or multiple difficulties but who, with help, could live in group- or sheltered-housing. These include those who have been institutionalised or abused and who need time before setting up independently.

People who need permanent institutional care or who may graduate on to some supportive or sheltered housing” (Daly, 1996) (UNCHS, 2000).

The idea of homelessness classification based on risk of homeless has won general approval overseas but these categories identify those who are homeless for reasons other than lacking the money to find rudimentary fixed shelter.

Hertzberg’s typology

This classification of homeless people focuses on the potential short- term homeless people have of either moving back into settled accommodation or slipping into more permanent states of homelessness. They are placed on a scale based on the length of the homeless episode and their reaction to their state. They are divided into resistors, teeterers and accommodators (Hertzberg, 1998). Kuhn and Culhane similarly divide visitors to shelters into transitionally

homeless, episodically homeless, and chronically homeless (Kuhn & Culhane, 1998). Cooper and Hudd also had a similar classification of service users which identified hostel services users into three classes into Transients or rites of passage; those who were houseless and those with support issues (Cooper, 1998; Cooper & Hudd, 1992; Cooper & Jarques, 1995).

There is evidence that long term homelessness generates its own lifestyle. This condition of "homelessness as a lifestyle" as seen by Jeffery Grunberg combines impulsiveness, clusters of unsolved problems, and a lack of social and other supports, interacting and perpetuating the lifestyle. These conditions drag the person down (Grunberg, 1998).

"Resistors," are people who have had stable employment and have spent the least amount of time experiencing homelessness and that their homelessness will be short- lived.

Resistors are determined to find their own accommodation; they have strong beliefs that they will be successful in doing so and returning to their old life. They hold realistic hopes for the future, with expectations of upward mobility.

When their efforts finding employment meet with no success and affordable housing is not available; they become discouraged, their self-esteem declines; shame and guilt grow. Alienation, anger and frustration over such circumstances often turn inward, becoming depression. Alternatively, they may join the long-term homeless whose accepting subculture seems to welcome amid the rejection. Escape through drinking or substance abuse becomes a daily routine (Hertzberg, 1998, p. 155 to 156).

Table 2 Characteristics of persons on Hertzberg's continuum of homelessness

Characteristic	Resistors	Teeterers	Accommodators
Length of homelessness	Brief (2-4 years)	Longer (4-10 years)	Long-term (10+ years)
Attitude to condition	Fighting against	Ambivalent	Accepting
Staying where?	Inside	Most outside	Outside
Reason for homelessness	Not own decision	Not own decision	Some own decision
Desire for more education	Most want	Some want	Few want
Literate	National average	Most	Half
Severe family dysfunction	Some	Almost all	Most
View childhood positively	Almost all	Most	Almost none
Desire for own place	Almost all	Some	Few
Realistic hopes for the future	Most	Few	None

Source (Hertzberg, 1998)

The second group are 'teeterers'. They have been homeless for longer and tend to have significant personal barriers to stability; mental illness, alcoholism, severe family dysfunction. Although they hope to stabilize their lives, they tend to have accepted homelessness and hope is edged with despair (Hertzberg, 1998).

The 'accommodators' are the rough sleepers, the wandering street dwellers who tend to have been on the streets a long time. Even in severe climates, most stay outside, rarely using shelters. They

are proud of their ‘independence’. They are mostly illiterate, long unemployed, not upwardly mobile, and generally do not wish for a home of their own as many have dysfunctional family circumstances to look back on. They have accepted homelessness and claim to be content with their lives, some claiming to have ‘chosen’ it. Most believe that there is no place for them in society, nor do they wish to have a part in society, preferring instead their ‘freedom’. They have accommodated themselves to being homeless. These are the group often characterised as homeless people by the general public and the popular press (Hertzberg, 1998) .

Houselessness

Cooper and Jacques have argued there is a need to separate a state of being (homelessness) from the need for shelter(houselessness) (Cooper & Jarques, 1995). This theme has been emphasised by other authors such as Singer, Tipple and Summerville.

The need to separate the emotional state form the requirement for shelter is essential. The demand for shelter is easily quantifiable, but the estimations of those in a particular emotional state would be as easy counting the exact number grains of sand on a beach.

Our current programmes for homelessness will not reduce the demand for support. The emphasis of the current programmes is on the failure of the individual to maintain their housing.

As has been developed in the previously, homelessness is a complex subject, even more as the homeless population is not static. On the contrary, it is characterised by a high mobility in time and place, and from one housing situation to another. To understand the dynamics of this population its environment has to be studied. It must be understood where these people come from, where they go, under which circumstances, and which are the deeper causes for their situation.

As mentioned above the word "homeless" is not seen without controversy because it is not only restricted to the housing situation in the socio-economic sense. The notion "houseless" is therefore proposed as a substitute.

People sleeping rough, which means in the street, in public places or in any other place not meant for human habitation[8] are those forming the core population of the "homeless". Those sleeping in shelters provided by welfare or other institutions will be considered as a part of this population. Persons or households living under these circumstances will furthermore be defined as "houseless

As Springer notes, homelessness is a term burdened with many possible meanings. The U.N., in its data collection and research efforts, will start using the term “houselessness.” How do you collect data on ‘home’–lessness? Houselessness, in contrast, is a much clearer, straightforward term. Whatever other problems some people in society may have, some of which are often included under the term ‘homelessness,’ the term houselessness presents no such confusion. It refers to the one crucial factor all homeless people have in common. While homelessness is not just a housing problem, it is always a housing problem(Springer, 2000).

Houseless people fall into three very clear categories: the ‘absolute’ houseless, the ‘concealed’ houseless and those who are ‘at risk’ of houselessness. In addition, there are many more ‘inadequately housed’ people, some of whom are at imminent risk of houselessness(Hulchanski, 2000).

Absolute Houselessness. Houseless persons are people sleeping rough or using entry point services.

> "*People sleeping rough, which means in the street, in public places or in any other place not meant for human habitation are those forming the core population of the "homeless". Those sleeping in shelters provided by welfare or other institutions will be considered as a part of this population. Persons or households living under these circumstances will furthermore be defined as "houseless''."*

Concealed houselessness. People who are houseless but temporarily housed with friends or family is another category, referred to as "concealed houselessness."

> *"Under this category fall all people living with family members or friends because they cannot afford any shelter for themselves. Without this privately offered housing opportunity they would be living in the street or be sheltered by an institution of the welfare system. This phenomenon is extremely difficult to enumerate."*

At Risk of Houselessness. In addition to absolute and concealed houselessness, some people are at grave risk of losing their housing and can be categorised as people "at risk of houselessness."

> "Another group living under the threat of "houselessness" are those facing the risk of losing their shelter either by eviction or the expiry of the lease, with no other possibility of shelter in view. Prisoners or people living in other institutions facing their release and having no place to go to are considered as part of this population."

The Inadequately Housed. Not all people who have their own place to live are adequately housed. People have the human right to adequate housing. All societies have the obligation to make progress on the adequate housing of all people. Being inadequately housed, therefore, is not the same as being houseless, but it can lead to being at risk of houselessness.

> "Before becoming houseless many people have been living in "substandard housing'' situations. Their way out of houselessness is also likely to pass by this sort of housing unit. Households with a feeble and perhaps insecure income are likely to live in substandard housing units and might also experience houselessness because of economic difficulties. Their situation is somehow comparable with those without shelter, as they are all deprived of the human right of a housing situation without health hazards, allowing the full development of the individuals' capacities. Therefore, the population living in substandard houses should be included in the study of houselessness as the population which feeds mostly the group of houseless, but which is also likely to receive them when they attempt to escape the

situation."

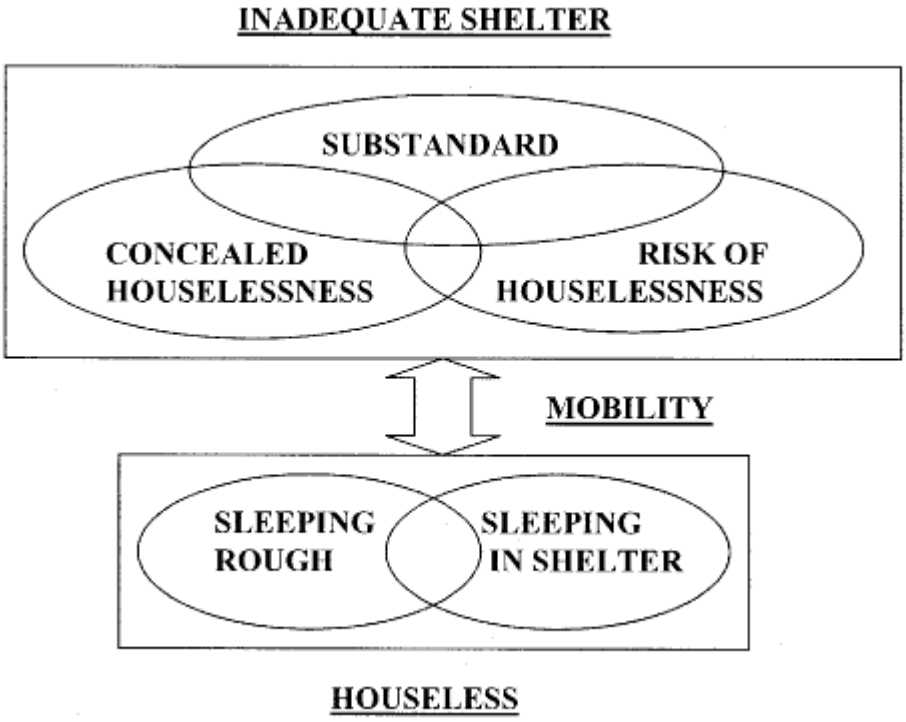


Figure 2: Singers Model of Houselessness

Fig. 2 tries to clarify the relations between the different classes concerning houselessness as identified above. Houselessness is in general part of the inadequate shelter situation, forming its bottom end.

This splitting into two main categories is supported by three more arguments: first, these groupings reflect the different forms of actions to be developed by policy makers." Emergency actions are needed by the houseless part of the population, while those in inadequate shelter situations must be targeted by actions preventing the worsening of their situation and to eventually stabilize their insecure form of residence.

The second fact supporting the splitting of the notion is based on data collection considerations. While the different forms of inadequate shelter can be enumerated, even if it is difficult, by census or surveys based on housing units, this is by definition not possible for the houseless population. To capture and enumerate this phenomenon new methods must be developed. The identification of concealed houseless situations for data collection is also challenging on the methodological level.

As a third argument for the splitting the fact can be advanced that for the statistical analysis the comparison between characteristics of the houseless population, the population living in inadequate housing situations and a general control group can be very useful. A deeper understanding of the causes of homelessness and inadequate shelter situations can be reached

and eventually adequate solutions developed.

Overcrowding

In Australia, there is no legal or statistical definition of overcrowding. In Scotland and England, there are definitions of overcrowding. If the Scottish definition is taken as an example of a legal framework, there are two aspects one is based on the number of rooms, gender of the person and the size of the rooms. If two persons of opposite sex (not in a recognised relationship) and both over ten years old who are required to share the same room it is considered overcrowded. The room has to be at least 110 sq ft (Shelter, 2011).

In New Zealand as in overseas, there appears to be a strong relationship between crowding, ethnicity and immigration especially among Pacific and some Asian groups. Research indicates that to some extent, crowding among immigrant groups is a self-correcting situation. Affordability limits families' ability to set up new households. Others may choose to stay together in order to provide mutual support and to manage migration by family members. It may be possible to speed up the transition by targeting housing assistance to recent immigrants, or more contentiously, by limiting immigration to those who can afford suitable accommodation.(Gray, 2001, p. 5)

"Crowding" and "overcrowding" should not be confused with density. *Density* is a measure that refers to the number of persons per a defined space - e.g. per square metre, per room, per dwelling or per hectare. The term has no positive or negative connotations. The distinction is important "*because the same objective density may or may not be uncomfortable depending on the situation. High density doesn't always lead to crowding*" ((Jazwinski, 1998).

Definitions of *crowding* used in statistical reporting and for administrative purposes use density measures and do not incorporate perceptions of crowding. C*rowding* refers to people's psychological response to their feelings of being crowded, having a lack of privacy or an increase in unwanted interactions or psychological distress (Jazwinski, 1998).

These definitions express a judgement about density levels, that is, they set a *standard* by which society declares crowding beyond a particular density to be unacceptable (Gray, 2001).There is a question as to whether so-called overcrowding is harmful to the people affected, or merely socially distasteful to outsiders who observe its presence".

It is possible to measure crowding using either a normative or a perceptual approach. The approach adopted by decision-makers is essentially paternalistic in that the standards set do not necessarily represent the views of many population groups and are likely to incorporate cultural biases. Measures that include consumer preferences would be more grounded in social values and "create socially relevant standards, not bureaucratically determined ones" (Gray, 2001). Crowding standards will change over time as economic conditions and social expectations change.

Issues and assumptions

As the place of usual residence data does not contain any dwelling information as this is associated with place of enumeration, one cannot make any assumptions about collector district population. Many of the assertions made by ABS are only assertions it is not possible to validate those statements especially when discussing Gray Nomads and Youth. When discussing youth numbers what has been stated is a hypothesis without the necessary evidence about family composition.

It is assumed that groups of people living in the same small area and visiting together at the time of the Census are most likely to be travelling families. The following relationships are then assumed where there were multiple visitors on Census night:

- *if there is one male and one female adult visitor in the dwelling with the youth, the assumed relationship is visiting couple family;*
- *if there is either one male or female adult visitor in the dwelling with the youth, the assumed relationship is a visiting family with at least one parent; and*
- *if there are no adult visitors and at least one visiting child (under 12) in the dwelling with the youth, the category is called 'youth accompanied by children'. (ABS, 2011, p. 40)*

There is no empirical evidence to support the statements made. The only way to validate the assumption would be to geo-code the place of usual residence to the actual address not to a broader geography. Here we have an example of the ecological fallacy in action and having a serious policy impact (Openshaw, 1984b). The population of these so called small areas can range from 20 persons to several thousand persons, without other contextual data any statement made is pure conjecture by ABS staff, not factual.

The CTH methodology attempts to link period prevalence data with point prevalence data, but is at least a serious attempt to estimate a population. What the ABS critique does is to deny that the population exists. It does not improve the reliability of the estimate. A more appropriate action would be to ensure that there was greater consistency between the two collections. It is an approach at counting which has been undertaken over several years. The approach needs refinement, not wholesale rejection as proposed by ABS and the various critics. The areas of refinement would be in ethnicity and disability status (need for assistance) to ensure greater consistency with the census.

CTH uses the ABS Census counts of people enumerated in the 'improvised dwellings, tents, sleepers out' dwelling category, and who report no other usual residence (i.e. they are reported to be at their usual address, or are reported as not having any usual address) as being a measure of primary homelessness. While this classification will capture homeless people enumerated in this dwelling category, it is also very likely to capture a significant number of people who do not meet any generally accepted cultural definition of homelessness(ABS, 2011, p. 49).

There is sufficient empirical evidence from various studies of caravan parks and manufactured home estates that many of the residents would fall within the tertiary definition of homelessness. In many parks and estates, there are limitations on the duration of stay, which implies some degree of insecurity of tenure for those residents.
In rural regions, there are limited options for accommodation that is affordable and available. This shown in table three below.

Table 3 Dwelling Type by Remoteness Area

Remoteness Areas	Caravan, cabin, houseboat	Improvised home, tent, sleepers out	Total
Major Cities	42,627	4,447	47,074
Inner Regional	46,730	5,637	52,367
Outer Regional	38,618	5,718	44,336
Remote	21,359	3,986	25,345
Very Remote	17,761	4,820	22,581
Total	167,095	24,608	191,703

Data Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Table generated using ABS TableBuilder
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There was recorded in the 2006 Census an estimated 191,703 persons living in either forms of accommodation. What is shown is that there is a significant population dependent on caravan parks and similar accommodation. The majority of supply is outside the Major cities where there are not homeless services. Before one dismisses such accommodation, one needs to be able to understand the local dynamics of low cost and affordable housing.

There are two key characteristics that have not been acknowledged in the ABS paper. The first is the majority were on low incomes. 75% had weekly incomes below $600 per week and 51.3% male for those over 13.

Table 4 Age and Gender profile Caravan, cabin, houseboat Improvised home, tent, sleepers out

Age	Female		Male		Total
	Persons	Row N %	Persons	Row N %	Persons
13 to 17	1,166	46.9%	1,321	53.1%	2,487
18 to 24	3,176	44.0%	4,037	56.0%	7,213
25 to 44	11,460	40.2%	17,023	59.8%	28,483
45 to 54	10,750	43.9%	13,754	56.1%	24,504
55 to 64	20,811	47.4%	23,133	52.6%	43,944
65 to 74	14,326	41.6%	20,114	58.4%	34,440
75 to 84	4,093	39.0%	6,408	61.0%	10,501
85 plus	577	52.7%	517	47.3%	1,094
Total	66,359	43.5%	86,307	56.5%	152,666

Data Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Table generated using ABS TableBuilder

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There is a dominance of males in all age categories with the exception of those 85 plus. The dominant age groupings are those 55 to 74.

Table 5 Age and Income profile Caravan, cabin, houseboat Improvised home, tent, sleepers out

Age	Low Income $0 to $599		Middle Income $600 to $1299		High Income $1300 +		Total
	Persons	Column %	Persons	Column%	Persons	Column %	Persons
13 to 17	2,442	2.10%	45	0.20%	-	0.00%	2,487
18 to 24	5,495	4.80%	1,520	5.10%	198	2.40%	7,213
25 to 44	16,898	14.70%	8,734	29.50%	2,851	34.20%	28,483
45 to 54	15,408	13.40%	6,712	22.70%	2,384	28.60%	24,504
55 to 64	33,113	28.90%	8,671	29.30%	2,160	25.90%	43,944
65 to 74	30,697	26.80%	3,163	10.70%	580	7.00%	34,440

75 to 84	9,681	8.40%	688	2.30%	132	1.60%	10,501
85 plus	1,009	0.90%	64	0.20%	21	0.30%	1,094
Total	114,743	100.00%	29,597	100.00%	8,326	100.00%	152,666

Data Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Table generated using ABS TableBuilder,

© Commonwealth of Australia, 2009

Tables five and six show the majority income group are those whose annual income is below $31,000 PA (approximately). Only 25.6% live the Major Cities with the other 74.4% living outside the major cities which have the majority of the Australian population. It is obvious from a simple examination of the 2006 census that the comments made in the document need revision.

Table 6 Location and Income profile Caravan, cabin, houseboat Improvised home, tent, sleepers out

	Low Income $0 to $599		Middle Income $600 to $1299		High Income $1300 +		Total
	Persons	Column %	Persons	Column N %	Persons	Column %	Persons
Major Cities	29,373	78.1%	6,738	17.9%	1,513	4.0%	37,624
Inner Regional	32,839	79.3%	6,924	16.7%	1,666	4.0%	41,429
Outer Regional	27,089	73.9%	7,440	20.3%	2,105	5.7%	36,634
Remote	13,149	68.0%	4,611	23.8%	1,579	8.2%	19,339
Very Remote	12,293	69.7%	3,884	22.0%	1,463	8.3%	17,640
Total	114,743	75.2%	29,597	19.4%	8,326	5.5%	152,666

Data Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Table generated using ABS TableBuilder

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NEDA questions the reliance that will be placed by ABS on small sample surveys to inform on homelessness with limited populations such as the GSS 15,000 households or the mental health survey 2007. The 2007 mental health survey is based on the number of responses only achieved 60% response rate from a potential 14,805 households. Our experience from the SDAC 2003 and 2009 was that there is sample bias occurring which favours those who speak English and tends to exclude NESB communities from the surveys. The samples sizes are too small to be effective. The SDAC has increased from 40,000 to 67,000 whilst this is not sufficient at least it is an improvement upon previous efforts. The problem with the small numbers is that often they are used to develop public policy while whole populations are excluded because of the sampling frame.

Table 7 Sampling frame SDAC 2003

	Australia		Main English-speaking countries		Other countries	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
New South Wales	7340	76.5%	769	8.0%	1485	15.5%
Victoria	6766	74.8%	673	7.4%	1601	17.7%

Queensland	5835	81.6%	706	9.9%	613	8.6%
South Australia	4167	79.0%	568	10.8%	538	10.2%
Western Australia	3804	70.3%	904	16.7%	706	13.0%
Tasmania	2433	90.0%	165	6.1%	106	3.9%
Northern Territory	302	81.4%	30	8.1%	39	10.5%
Australian Capital Territory	1265	75.2%	148	8.8%	270	16.0%
Total	31912	77.4%	3963	9.6%	5358	13.0%

Source: Survey of Disability and Carers 2003 CURF ABS

Table 8 Sampling frame SDAC 2009

	Australia		Main English-speaking countries		Other countries	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
New South Wales	12988	74.7%	1255	7.2%	3133	18.0%
Victoria	11249	74.5%	1095	7.3%	2752	18.2%
Queensland	9256	78.6%	1362	11.6%	1163	9.9%
South Australia	6752	76.6%	962	10.9%	1102	12.5%
Western Australia	5769	66.9%	1569	18.2%	1285	14.9%
Tasmania	4192	86.6%	352	7.3%	294	6.1%
Northern Territory	1496	76.4%	188	9.6%	274	14.0%
Australian Capital Territory	2767	77.1%	284	7.9%	536	14.9%
Total	54469	75.6%	7067	9.8%	10539	14.6%

Source: Survey of Disability and Carers 2009 CURF ABS

Table 9 2006 Census Place of Birth

	Australia	Main English-speaking countries	Other countries
New South Wales	69.40%	6.50%	24.10%
Victoria	69.90%	6.10%	24.00%
Queensland	75.60%	9.50%	14.80%
South Australia	74.20%	9.30%	16.50%
Western Australia	66.10%	14.20%	19.70%
Tasmania	83.40%	6.10%	10.40%
Northern Territory	77.00%	5.80%	17.20%
Australian Capital Territory	73.20%	7.30%	19.50%
Total	71.30%	8.00%	20.80%

Data Source: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Table generated using ABS TableBuilder

An examination of the sampling frames (tables seven and eight) used in the 2003 and 2009 SDAC shows that when compared to the 2006 census (table nine), there is a sampling bias towards those who speak English.

The 2003 sample indicates that there were some inconsistencies in the sample distribution with the ACT and Victoria receiving a proportional larger sample.

It is believed that the small samples that are used in the various surveys even if there are questions on homelessness and disability, the numbers for persons from a NESB background or an Indigenous will not be sufficient to inform on their issues to be meaningful.

NEDA's 2010 report on how ethnicity statistics were reported illustrated the issues associated with small samples for the development of public policy. The small numbers in the actual sample did not often reflect the actual comparative census population (Cooper, Kaczorek, & Wadiwel, 2010). Issues that were dominant for some ethnic communities were not apparent in the survey. Based on this, NEDA believes that any commentary based on small sample sizes such as those of the GSS and mental health will exclude persons from a NESB background with a disability.

Ethnicity in homelessness

In theory there is data collected on ethnicity in various collections. Unfortunately the recommendations encompassed in the 1999 Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (ABS, 1999) seemed to have been ignored by agencies as AIHW and ABS. The full Standard Set also includes Ancestry, Country of Birth of Father, Country of Birth of Mother, First Language Spoken, Languages Spoken at Home, Main Language Spoken at Home, Religious

Affiliation, and Year of Arrival in Australia. The Minimum Core Set consists of four variables: Country of Birth of Person, Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home, Proficiency in Spoken English, and Indigenous Status.

Currently it is not possible to have any information on homelessness, ethnicity and disability at sufficient detail to have any commentary on sub population behaviour. The AIHW has a reluctance to provide meaningful uncensored data that allows for independent analysis. It is possible to analysis the data from the census which identifies the no fixed address population using all variables through Tablebuilder or CDATA online.

It is the position of NEDA that greater attention needs to be given to the external collections to ensure they are compatible to those of ABS.

Special Homelessness Services (SHS) Data

There are serious reservations that the SHS data will be any improvement upon the previous collection for the identification of ethnicity and disability amongst service users. It has been pointed out that place of birth is not necessarily an indicator of ethnicity. There have not been any significant changes between the SHS and its predecessor SAAP collection. The changes that have been made would be only considered cosmetic such as the reduction in time for reporting. The reporting period in now monthly rather than three monthly as it was previously. It is still a period prevalence collection.

The difficulty with the SHS data collection is that it has the all faults and short comings of the SAAP collection under a different guise.

The various points of collection are tied to specific populations at specific locations. Whilst the statutory aspects of the SHS may have a broader population base, the funded agencies are tied by funding agreement to be specific to a class of persons for a specific period of time.

The comments made by ABS staff indicate they have limited understanding of how SHS data is collected and extracted. There is a date range in the data collected. The information forwarded to the AIHW represents closed support periods only. The open cases will be retained at the service. The cosmetic change in the SHS is that both closed and open support is forwarded.

The SHS by its very nature lacks the necessary data items to comprehensively deal either with disability (only mental health issues are addressed) or ethnicity; it is not possible to have a detailed picture of how funded services are used by NESB communities.

Disability in homelessness

The disability model that is associated with the various collections appears to be bio-medical model where disability is considered as an illness. The census data item on dealing with need for assistance does not identify the type or mode of disability, but only identifies that a person has a need for assistance for an extended period. Without greater clarification as to the nature of the

disability (mobility or some other need), it is not possible to distinguish age related disabilities from those which have arise from birth to those as result from employment or those as a result of lifecycle stage.

As disability advocates NEDA prefers the social model of disability, which moves away from the bio-medical approach that reinforces the association between disability and ill health. Whilst many with disabilities may have ill health, many have a disability but do not suffer from any major illness.

Conclusion

NEDA believes that until there are sufficient measures developed to ensure all aspects of ethnicity and disability are effectively recorded the method proposed by ABS will not reflect the diversity of the Australian community experiencing homelessness and houselessness.

Currently the understanding of homelessness and houselessness draws from an ethnocentric perspective that excludes other understandings.

If the objective of the exercise is to have a robust approach that has reproducible results over time, ABS staff will have to become familiar with the context and practices of homelessness or houselessness. The current methodology does not extrude any confidence the authors understand the complexity of the debates associated.

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