

# Research Bulletin

August 2013



## Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count

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The fourteenth Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Count was conducted on 6 August 2013. The Count located 73 people who were unsheltered or 'sleeping rough', of whom three had a house elsewhere.

### Background

The Rough Sleeper Street Counts aim to monitor levels of rough sleeping in the Adelaide inner city area as well as provide information about the circumstances and profile of the population. While the Counts and Census data cannot be compared, estimates released by the Australia Bureau of Statistics show South Australia recorded a 41% drop in the number of people sleeping rough, down from 436 in 2006 to 258 in 2011. This is in comparison to a 6% decrease across Australia.

Previous Counts were conducted on:

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The information in this publication can be provided in an alternative format or another language on request.

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- 2013 – 12 February and 7 May
- 2012 – 7 August
- 2011 – 10 May and 13 September
- 2010 – 4 May and 10 August
- 2009 – 5 May and 11 August
- 2008 – 13 May and 12 August
- 2007 – 19 June and 21 August



The Counts are a partnership between the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) and eleven key inner city homeless services from eight different organisations. Prior to February 2013, the Counts involved four participating homelessness services: Street to Home, New ROADS (formerly Byron Place), Hutt Street Centre and WestCare Centre. Additional inner city homelessness services have been participating since the February 2013 Count. These services are: Fred's Van (St Vincent de Paul), St Vincent de Paul Men's Shelter, Magdalene Centre (Anglicare), Helping Young People Achieve (HYPA), Streetlink (Uniting Communities), Community Support Services (Salvation Army) and Towards Independence (Salvation Army), which incorporates the Sobering Up Unit, Supported Accommodation and Recovery Services EAST and Supported Accommodation and Recovery Services WEST.

In the early morning of the day of the Count, Street to Home visited the parklands and other areas around the city in order to locate people sleeping 'out'. Workers at the other homelessness services approached people attending their service that day. Staff from DCSI and the Salvation Army visited Fred's Van in the evening and approached people attending. If the people approached had slept rough the previous night, workers invited their participation in completing a short survey (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire). This replicated the basic methodology in the previous Counts.

### Review of methodology

Since the inception of the Counts, there have been two significant changes to the methodology. With the advice and assistance of the inner city homelessness services, the questionnaire was revised in May 2011 to focus definitively upon those who were rough sleeping the previous night.

In June 2012 a forum was held with a wide range of stakeholders, to review the methodology of the Count and provide advice on future directions. This forum was highly supportive of the Count, and proposed a number of additional strategies to improve the robustness of information collected. A working group was established to progress these recommendations.

The working group recommended two enhancements to improve the reliability and accuracy of the data and the participation of young people and women. These recommendations were:

**Increase the frequency** – an additional Count to be conducted in the summer months.

**Increase collection points** – additional inner city homelessness services should be involved in the Count to collect data.

As a consequence of these recommendations, a Count in February 2013 was implemented and an additional seven homelessness services agreed to participate (giving a total of eleven services).

# August 2013 Count

The data reported in this Bulletin were collected on the 6 August 2013 at the eleven homelessness services listed above.

## Participation in Count

One hundred and seventy-four questionnaires were received.<sup>1</sup> Of the people approached by collectors and invited to participate: 5 (3%) declined to participate and where they had slept the previous night was not known; 14 (8%) had already completed the survey with another service and one person completed the survey twice. This leaves 154 people who participated in the Count. Just over a quarter of people who were sleeping rough declined to answer a number of questions on their circumstances. This should be considered when interpreting the results, particularly when comparisons are made with previous Counts.

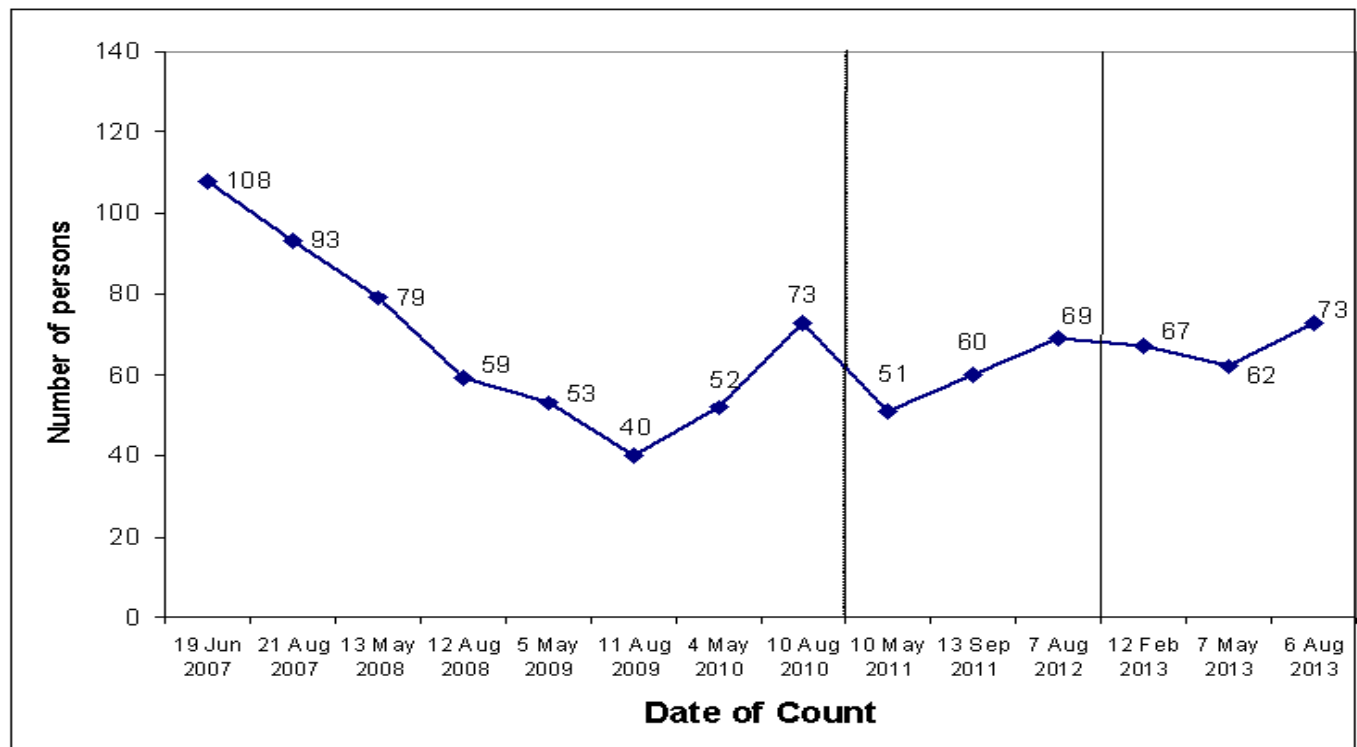
## Results

Seventy-three participants had slept rough the previous night. However, three of these reported having a house or home elsewhere.

## Trends

As seen in Figure 1 below, the August 2013 Count found an increase in the number of people sleeping rough, from 62 in May 2013 to 73.

**Figure 1: Total number of participants sleeping rough <sup>2</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> This figure should not be used to infer the number of clients attending at the inner city homelessness services.

<sup>2</sup> The line at the start of 2013 is to indicate the inclusion of additional collection points and the line at the start of 2011 is to indicate the change in the questionnaire to focus purely on people sleeping rough.

## Sleeping rough and having a house elsewhere

Three people indicated that, although they had slept rough the previous night, they had a home elsewhere. This represents 4% of all those who slept rough. All three had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or parklands.

When asked why they had not slept at their own home; one had private matters to address in the city; one had a home in the Northern Territory and is trying to get back home and one did not indicate a reason. One of the three had attempted to find alternative shelter (with family).

The three people reported to have spent a low amount of time sleeping rough in the last year. Two indicated they had slept rough 'some of the time' and one 'hardly ever'. Their reported length of time sleeping out varied. One person reported having slept rough for more than two years (despite also reporting having a home and sleeping rough some of the time in the last year), one for 3 to 6 months and one for 2 to 4 weeks.

Of this group, two identified themselves as Aboriginal women and one as a non-Indigenous male. One was aged 45 to 54 years, one was 35 to 44 years and one was 18 to 24 years. One had spent most of their time over the last year in the Northern Territory and two in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

## Sleeping rough without a house elsewhere <sup>3</sup>

Seventy people had slept rough the previous night, without having a home elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these had slept rough in the Adelaide inner city or parklands (64%, 45 people), 10 had slept in the Adelaide suburbs (14%) and 15 people (21%) did not report their location. The 10 people who slept rough in the Adelaide suburbs participated at various collection points.

Table 1 summarises the reasons given for sleeping rough. The most common reason reported by 32 people (46%) was that there was no other option ('*No where else to sleep*' #69 <sup>5</sup> and '*Because I have no where to go*' #18). Seven people reported a financial reason ('*I couldn't get out of town because I had no bus ticket and no money*' #58 and '*Can't afford to stay anywhere*' #145). A small number of other reasons were reported, including: recent eviction or loss of accommodation; personal preference; alcohol misuse or violence at previous accommodation. A reason was not provided by 23 (33%) people.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that throughout the remainder of the report all percentages are calculated based on the 70 people who slept rough and did not report having a house or home elsewhere.

<sup>4</sup> This figure includes 19 people who did not answer the question as to whether they had a home elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> The # symbol identifies the unique client ID of the person who made the comment. Different client IDs indicate that comments were made by different people.

**Table 1: Reasons why people had slept rough**

	n	%
No other option	31	44.3
Financial reason	7	10.0
Evicted/ loss of accommodation	3	4.3
Personal preference	2	2.9
Other	4	5.7
Not stated	23	32.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Twelve people reported they had attempted to find accommodation elsewhere for the previous night (17%) (Table 2). Of these, six had sought assistance from support services, identified as Housing SA, Hutt Street Centre and St Vincent de Paul. Six also attempted to use their personal connections (friends or family). One also tried to source private accommodation (*'newspaper'* #23).

**Table 2: Where people attempted to find alternative shelter**

	n	%
Sought service support <sup>a</sup>	6	8.6
Personal connections <sup>a</sup>	6	8.6
Private accommodation <sup>a</sup>	1	1.4
Did not attempt to find	38	54.3
Not indicated if attempted to find	20	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> People could have attempted to find accommodation at multiple types of alternative shelter (eg service support and personal connections)

Over half of people indicated they had not attempted to find alternative shelter elsewhere (54%, 38 people) and a range of reasons were reported (Table 3). The most common reason was people had given up trying to find alternative accommodation (*'I didn't believe I could find any suitable accommodation'* #19 and *'too hard'* #144). Four reported they preferred sleeping rough (*'Want to be by myself'* #12). Four reported they do not like staying in boarding houses or other temporary accommodation (*'Wants own accommodation, not interested in boarding house'* #16). Three reported money issues. Another seven gave divergent responses (*'Going back to Vinnies next day'* #89 or *'Friends have no room'* #142).

**Table 3: Why people did not seek alternative shelter**

	n	%
Given up	7	10.0
Do not like staying in Boarding Houses or other temporary accommodation	4	5.7
Preferred sleeping rough	4	5.7
Financial reasons	3	4.3
Usually stay in temporary accommodation services	2	2.9
Alcohol / substance misuse	1	1.4
Lack of personal connections	1	1.4
Other	3	4.3
Not stated	13	18.6
Attempted to find alternative shelter	12	17.1
Not indicated if attempted to find	20	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in Table 4, 21% had been sleeping rough for a year or more and 39% reported sleeping rough for three months or more. In regards to the amount of time spent sleeping rough in the last year, 46% reported sleeping out most or almost all of the time (Table 5).

**Table 4: How long people have been sleeping rough**

	n	%
1 week or less	6	8.6
2 to 4 weeks	3	4.3
5 to 11 weeks	15	21.4
3 to 6 months	11	15.7
7 to 12 months	1	1.4
1 to 2 years	4	5.7
More than 2 years	11	15.7
Not stated	19	27.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5: Sleeping rough pattern over the last year**

	n	%
Almost all of the time	19	27.1
Most of the time	13	18.6
About half of the time	5	7.1
Some of the time	11	15.7
Hardly ever	3	4.3
Not stated	19	27.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

People were also asked to identify how long it has been since they last had stable housing. As shown in Table 6, 39 (56%) reported not having had stable housing for 3 months or more and of these, 21 had not had stable housing for over 2 years.

**Table 6: How long since people have had stable housing**

	n	%
1 week or less	4	5.7
2 to 4 weeks	2	2.9
5 to 11 weeks	5	7.1
3 to 6 months	9	12.9
7 to 12 months	3	4.3
1 to 2 years	6	8.6
More than 2 years	21	30.0
Not stated	20	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most people had been primarily based in the Adelaide metropolitan area over the last 12 months (Table 7). For people primarily based interstate, six different states or territories were reported.

**Table 7: Area spent the most time in over the last 12 months**

	n	%
Adelaide metropolitan area	41	58.6
Country South Australia	3	4.3
Interstate	8	11.4
Overseas	0	0.0
Not stated	18	25.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Demographic information is summarised in Table 8 and Table 9. Most people sleeping rough were male, 35 to 54 years old and non-indigenous. Seventeen (24%) identified themselves as Aboriginal. There were eight women and five people under 25 years (none were under 18 years).

**Table 8: Indigenous status by gender**

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Aboriginal	11	18.3	6	75.0	0	0.0	17	24.3
Non-Indigenous	46	76.7	2	25.0	0	0.0	48	68.6
Not Stated	3	5.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	5	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 9: Age by gender**

	Males		Females		Gender not specified		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 18	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
18-24	4	6.7	1	12.5	0	0.0	5	7.1
25-34	12	20.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	13	18.6
35-44	17	28.3	4	50.0	0	0.0	21	30.0
45-54	16	26.7	2	25.0	0	0.0	18	25.7
55-64	10	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	14.3
65 and over	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.4
Not Stated	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Presence in previous Counts

Forty-seven (67%) people who were sleeping rough (without a home elsewhere) provided identifier information. Table 10 shows how many times people had been identified as sleeping rough in previous Counts.

According to the information available from previous rough sleeper Counts, most of these 47 people who provided identifier information could not be identified in any of the previous thirteen Counts as sleeping rough (41 people).

Six of those who had slept rough (without a home elsewhere) could be traced to sleeping rough in at least one previous Count. None of these six could be identified in the previous Count (May 2013) as sleeping rough.

**Table 10: Repeat presentations of those sleeping rough (without a home elsewhere) in previous Counts**

	Total Counts	
	n	%
Participants sleeping rough and no home elsewhere	70	100.0
Participants with identifier	47	67.1
In August 2013 and sleeping rough in no previous Counts	41	58.6
In August 2013 and sleeping rough in one previous Count	6	8.6

For more information about the Inner City Rough Sleeper Street Counts please visit the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Research Unit webpage at [www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/research](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/research)

# APPENDIX A

## August 2013 Rough sleeper questionnaire

### INNER CITY AGENCY COUNT

1. Have you already completed a survey today?  
(If Yes, do not ask any further questions or complete form)

Yes

No

Declined to participate in the survey

(If you feel reasonably confident that the person is a rough sleeper, please fill out all possible questions)

Not capable of participating in the survey

(If you feel reasonably confident that the person is a rough sleeper, please fill out all possible questions)

2. Where did you sleep last night?

Slept out

Includes:

Car                      Tent

Park/ street        Squat

Shed                  Verandah

Slept inside/sheltered

Includes:

Your own house or unit        Caravan Park                      Catherine House

Friend's or family's place        City Watchhouse                      Hospital

Hotel/motel                      Prison                                      Backpackers

Boarding house                      Remand Centre

St Vincent de Paul Shelter        Detox / Sobering up unit

If the client answered with any of the 'Sheltered' options above – Thank them for their participation and conclude the interview.

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'SLEPT OUT'

3. At what location did you sleep out last night?

- Adelaide city or parklands
- Adelaide Suburbs
- Other, please state.....

4. Why did you sleep out last night? (Please prompt for why they slept out)

.....

5. Did you try and find any other accommodation last night (eg homeless shelter, with friends or family)?

Yes

a) Where did you try to find other accommodation?.....

b) What happened when you approached this agency/person(s) for accommodation?

.....

No – why not

.....

6. Do you have a house or home somewhere else?

Yes

No

If yes: why didn't you stay there last night?.....

.....

7. How long have you been sleeping out?

1 week or less

2 to 4 weeks

5 to 11 weeks

3 to 6 months

7 to 12 months

- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years

8. Over the last year have you slept out (read out the following options):

- Almost all of the time
- Most of the time
- About half of the time
- Some of the time
- Hardly ever

9. How long has it been since you last had stable housing?

- Currently have stable housing
- 1 week or less
- 2 to 4 weeks
- 5 to 11 weeks
- 3 to 6 months
- 7 to 12 months
- 1 to 2 years
- More than 2 years

10. What area did you spend most of your time in the last 12 months? (Please tick one box only)

- |  |                                   |                              |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adelaide metro                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Victoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Tas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Country South Australia                   | <input type="checkbox"/> WA       | <input type="checkbox"/> NSW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interstate (please indicate which state?) | <input type="checkbox"/> Qld      | <input type="checkbox"/> NT  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> NSW      | <input type="checkbox"/> ACT |
- 
- Overseas

11. What is your age?

- |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 to 74 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 and over |

12. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- No                       Yes, Aboriginal                       Yes, Torres Strait Islander  
 Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

13. Do you have a child/children under 18 who **STAYED** with you last night?

- Yes    If yes: How old are they?.....  
 No

14. Gender of respondent?

- Male  
 Female

We will be doing this survey again this year. It would be very helpful for us to have some idea of how many people who were here today are also here when we do the next count, and if their circumstances and housing have changed. It's entirely up to you, but would you mind letting me write down your initials and months and year of birth? This information will be given to the Research Unit in the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion who will keep it confidential and safe and will be used for statistical purposes only.

- No    Survey completed.  
 Yes    Fill out boxes below

First Name Initial.....Last Name Initial.....

What is your month & year of birth?

MONTH.....YEAR.....

SURVEY COMPLETED. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

**Department for Communities and Social Inclusion**

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