

**COMMUNITY SERVICES — REPORT ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

4953. Mr K.M. O'Donnell to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the Annual Report on Government Services (RoGS) released between 22 January and 1 February 2019, and note that:

- (a) Western Australia has the second highest representation (42%) of Aboriginal people in specialist homelessness services, despite only representing approximately 3.7% of the Western Australia population, and ask:
- (i) What is the explanation for this over representation;
- (ii) Across WA by electorate (including regional WA) what is the breakdown of Aboriginal homelessness and how are homelessness services being utilised; and
- (iii) What is the number of Aboriginal people across WA who utilise homelessness services on an ongoing or repetitive basis?

**Ms S.F. McGurk replied:**

- (a) (i) Of people who access Specialist Homelessness Services in Western Australia, Aboriginal people have a higher representation than their representation in the general population. This over representation partly reflects the various targeted specialist programs and services supporting vulnerable Aboriginal people who are experiencing, or who are at risk of, homelessness.

The 2018 *Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence* Report, prepared by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia for the Department of Communities (Communities), describes the complex reasons why Aboriginal people are more likely to experience homelessness than non-Aboriginal people. These reasons include:

a higher prevalence within Aboriginal communities of the individual and structural antecedents to homelessness (e.g. higher levels of poverty, health concerns, family and domestic violence, and interactions with the justice system)

the need to travel to attend cultural gatherings and sorry business which can lead to severe overcrowding

issues accessing suitable housing, including a shortage of larger, culturally appropriate houses that can accommodate extended family, and

loss of culture and positive self-identity and displacement due to historic injustices.

- (ii) Information giving a breakdown on Aboriginal homelessness and how homelessness services are being utilised is not available by electorate.

A table showing a breakdown of the estimated number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness on census night, by statistical area level 4 is below:

Statistical area level 4 region	Number of homeless* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
Bunbury	72
Mandurah	44
Perth – Inner	23
Perth – North East	122
Perth – North West	44
Perth – South East	172
Perth – South West	65
Western Australia – Wheatbelt	70
Western Australia – Outback (North)	1198
Western Australia – Outback (South)	483
<b>Total</b>	<b>2298</b>

*Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census of Population and Housing*

\*Under the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the definition of homeless people who fall into the following categories are counted as being homeless:

people living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out

people in supported accommodation for the homeless  
people staying temporarily with other households  
people living in boarding houses  
people in other temporary lodgings, or  
people living in severely crowded dwellings.

A table showing the number of Specialist Homelessness Services Aboriginal clients (classified by statistical area level 4) address in the week prior to seeking support by homelessness status at first presentation in 2017–18 is below:

Statistical area level 4 region	Homeless	At Risk	Not Stated	Total
Bunbury	175	137	23	<b>335</b>
Mandurah	69	147	15	<b>231</b>
Perth – Inner	332	96	21	<b>449</b>
Perth – North East	279	210	45	<b>534</b>
Perth – North West	232	183	18	<b>433</b>
Perth – South East	437	367	67	<b>871</b>
Perth – South West	367	424	53	<b>844</b>
Western Australia – Wheat Belt	235	213	13	<b>461</b>
Western Australia – Outback (North)	609	2,386	132	<b>3,127</b>
Western Australia – Outback (South)	908	686	144	<b>1,738</b>

*Data source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness, supplementary table S6.16.*

Note: This table excludes the housing categories, 'Homeless – Other' and 'At Risk – Other', therefore totals may not match other published tables.

- (iii) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2017–18 shows that 9,580 Aboriginal people were provided with 15,596 periods of support (a length of time that clients are provided support) by Specialist Homelessness Services funded by Communities in 2017–18.