

Mental illness linked to extreme risk of homelessness

8 October 2014, by Kate Bourne

University of Adelaide researchers say the greatest level of accommodation assistance should be directed to those most likely to need it, with Australians suffering from psychiatric and intellectual disabilities found to be at the highest risk of homelessness.

Speaking in the lead up to World Homeless Day (10 October), Dr Emma Baker says up to 25% of people with an [intellectual disability](#) and 34% of people living with a mental illness are at risk of homelessness, compared to approximately 16% of people without a disability.

"Just over 22% of Australians have a disability or long-term health condition and the housing market experiences of those living with a disability are often very different to those of the general population," says Dr Baker, senior research fellow at the University of Adelaide's Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning.

"People with a disability and those with care responsibilities are at risk of homelessness because of low incomes, limited employment opportunities and restricted capacity within the private rental sector.

"Importantly, even low to moderate levels of an intellectual disability are associated with a high risk of homelessness and those that require help or supervision to assist with a mental illness are at extreme risk."

Dr Baker says policies and programs are needed to address the higher risk of homelessness amongst people with [disabilities](#).

"People with disabilities are often undiagnosed upon entry into homelessness-specific housing and support services and this means that assistance is either not provided or only offered after a considerable delay.

"The greatest level of help should be directed to those most exposed to the possibility of going without a safe and secure home.

"With more than 100,000 Australians sleeping rough on any given night, World Homeless Day is an ideal time to raise these important issues and look at how we can better help those in need," she says.

Dr Baker and Professor Andrew Beer are co-authors on a paper entitled Non-Psychiatric Disability and Homelessness: Understanding the Risks, which was published in the June 2014 edition of *Parity*.

More information: Beer, Andrew; Baker, Emma and Lester, Laurence. "Non-psychiatric disability and homelessness: Understanding the risks," [online]. *Parity*, Vol. 27, No. 5, Jun 2014: 17-18. ISSN: 1032-6170. [search.informit.com.au/document... 411816382;res=IELHSS](http://search.informit.com.au/document.aspx?d=411816382;res=IELHSS)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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