

Shelter WA and WACOSS joint Media Release

13 October 2014

Close to 10% of West Australians are living below the Poverty Line – Help Us!

Living below the poverty line means being unable to meet the costs of basic needs. Approximately 233,603 people (9.2% of the total population) in Western Australia live in poverty – an increase of more than 20,000 people from 2012¹.

During Anti-Poverty Week, 12 - 18 October 2014, Shelter WA and WACOSS will be highlighting how access to affordable housing, homelessness programs and other essential supports provide significant assistance to Western Australia's most vulnerable people, including those in poverty.

"A significant number of Western Australian households are doing it tough, including many who are experiencing poverty and homelessness," says WACOSS CEO, Irina Cattalini.

Poverty and homelessness are intrinsically linked – with poverty being an underlying cause of homelessness. The circumstances of poverty often lead a person to become homeless, circumstances can include having insufficient income; excessive debt; a lack of education; poor mental and physical health; disability; living in sub-standard accommodation and social exclusion.

"One of the most critical human needs is shelter, which is also one of the highest costs impacting on low to moderate income households," says Shelter WA Executive Officer, Chantal Roberts.

In WA, 9,592 people² are experiencing homelessness on any given night. Of these, a significant proportion, 27 per cent³, are children. In WA, 36 per cent of clients accessing specialist homeless services were escaping domestic violence, which is the primary reason for seeking support. A significant number across Australia, 47 per cent, accessed supports for financial reasons⁴. Homelessness also costs the WA community through increased government expenditure in health, welfare and justice services at an average \$29,450 per annum per person experiencing homelessness⁵.

Shelter WA and WACOSS are inviting you to be part of the solution to ensure the critical issues of homelessness and poverty are not overlooked. Visit our website [.homelessinwa.com](http://homelessinwa.com). or get in touch on twitter @ShelterWA and @WACOSS or through #homelessAPW to be part of the conversation.

WACOSS media contact: Irina Cattalini, Chief Executive Officer, 0422 422 438

Shelter WA media contact: Chantal Roberts, Executive Officer, 0400 070 082

¹ Australian Council of Social Service (2014) 'Poverty in Australia' Strawberry Hills, NSW.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 'Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homeless, 2011' Canberra, ACT.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 'Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homeless, 2011' Canberra, ACT.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013) 'Specialist homelessness services 2012-13 – supplementary tables' Canberra, ACT.

⁵ Jewish House (2014) 'Jewish House Project Plan' Sydney, NSW.