



HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Meeting Segment Guide

Produced by the Policy and Advocacy Team
as part of the *Social Justice Stocktake*



Today, we're going to take some time to look at the issues of homelessness and housing affordability within our community and throughout Australia. We're going to spend some time praying about these issues and what we can do about them.

The following resources have been created to assist you to run a 5-8 minute segment in your Corps' or mission expression Meeting, Team Meeting, ALT Meeting or any space where you gather with other people.

These resources are ready to print and use in your Meeting. Below you'll find:



TALKING POINTS



**A PRAYER TIME GUIDE
(INCLUDING THREE WRITTEN PRAYERS)**



EXTENDED SEGMENT OPTIONS



LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES

For further support in connecting with issues in your local community, contact us at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au



INTRODUCTION

- » **Many of us here today enjoy being in our homes, and over the past year we've certainly had ample opportunity to spend time there!**

Whether you own your own home, or rent your home, there is something special about your own space. You can set it up as you like, you can move things around as you like, and it provides you with a sense of safety and security. This is your space! It makes it difficult to imagine, then, what it must be like to not have a place to call your own living space – something thousands of Australians experience each day. Or, perhaps they do, but that space is not safe, or not affordable long-term.

- » **Today, we're going to take some time to look at the issues of homelessness and housing affordability** within our community and throughout Australia. We're going to spend some time praying about these issues and what we can do about them.

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- » **You may have an image of 'homelessness' in your head.** Perhaps it's an image of someone who sleeps on the street – and looks like they have been doing so for a while. Although this may be true in some cases, homelessness can take many different forms. It may mean sleeping on the street for some, but it can also look like staying in temporary accommodation, or 'couch surfing' – staying at friends' or acquaintances' houses night after night because you don't have a consistent place of your own.
- » **Homelessness is a widespread and serious issue in Australia.** According to the 2016 Census, 116,427 people were counted as being homeless on Census night. This means that 1 in 200 people in Australia are homeless on any given nightⁱ.

- » **The cost of homelessness to individuals, our community and economy is enormous, and that cost increases the longer a person remains homeless.** Access to appropriate, affordable and secure housing is the foundation of any family or individual's engagement in work, education and social relations. The experience of being homeless leads to increased impact and complexity of existing trauma, and can lead to substance use and mental ill health.

- » **Homelessness is a result of systemic and structural issues** such as poverty, low income, and a lack of safe, affordable housing. Some reasons that a person may find themselves experiencing homelessness may be:

- Domestic or family violence
- Financial difficulties
- Inadequate or inappropriate housing
- Transition from custodial arrangements, or
- A housing crisis – or in other words, having been evicted.

- » **While anyone can find themselves experiencing homelessness,** the risk of becoming homeless is higher for some groups of people, such as people who have experienced family and domestic violence, young people, Indigenous Australians, people leaving health or social care arrangements, and Australians aged 55 or older – particularly women.

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, Cat. no. 2049.0, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>



Talking Points



» **On top of homelessness, housing affordability is also a serious issue in Australia**, and in our community. Housing affordability is the relationship between how much a person spends on housing (mortgage payments or rents) and the amount of their household income. Housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of household income. People who are spending more than 30% of their income on housing are considered to be under 'housing stress'.

» **Housing prices in Australia have been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s**, while incomes and support payments have not been keeping up.ⁱⁱ Despite the fact that providing social housing is the most effective means to get people out of homelessness, Australia has a significant lack of social housing – that is, affordable housing provided by the government or community sector to assist people who are unable to afford or access suitable accommodation in the private rental market. In 2019, there were 148,500 households on the waiting list for public housing.ⁱⁱⁱ

» **There are many misconceptions about homelessness.** However perhaps our greatest misconception is that the people who experience it somehow deserve it and should be defined by it. As we know, God cares deeply about even the smallest details of every single person's life. We believe that God created each and every person in God's image and therefore every person holds inherent dignity and worth. For this reason, we don't label a person as 'a homeless person', as we believe that they are much more than their current experiences. We use the phrase 'a person experiencing homelessness', to emphasise the fact that we believe that not only are they more than their circumstances, but that this is only part of their story.

» **Homelessness was something that Jesus identified with in his itinerant ministry.**

Along with the disciples, he travelled from place to place, staying with anyone he could. In Matthew 8:20, we read that Jesus said, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (NIV). While Jesus may have been speaking figuratively, we can see that he empathised greatly with those for whom a safe, private space to rest was not a given.

» **Throughout Scripture, God gives practical instructions about how we are to care for others**, and shows a special concern for those who are experiencing hardship and lack of safety. In Matthew 25, we read:

- *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:31-40, NIV).*

ii. Raynor, K., Dosen, I. & Otter, C., Housing affordability in Victoria (2017). Available at <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/send/36-research-papers/13840-housing-affordability-in-victoria>
iii. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Housing Assistance in Australia (2020)



Talking Points



- » **God makes it clear that we – as followers of God – are expected to follow the example set for us** by empathising with, and caring for those, who have found themselves without a home or struggling to keep one.
- » **God's loving concern for people experiencing homelessness or struggling to afford their homes is evident**, and God's instructions on how to meet people in their need is practical. This is why, as followers of Christ today, we care for people who are experiencing homelessness, and why we strive to alleviate conditions that lead to those struggles. God's concern for those experiencing homelessness has not ended, so neither has our responsibility to care and do something about homelessness. We believe that a world without homelessness is possible, and it is that world that we work towards.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- » **The Salvation Army, in the outworking of our belief that God cares for those experiencing homelessness**, is Australia's largest provider of homelessness services in the country. Our services include accommodation, case management and support, assertive outreach, and financial assistance, together with connection and referral to other specialist services. In addition to this, we have a community housing organisation, Salvation Army Housing, that provides affordable homes to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- » **The Salvation Army also engages in regular advocacy to the Government in this area**, working to see more affordable housing, and to address the structural drivers of homelessness as well.

- » **As individuals, we also have an important role to play in recognising the dignity and worth of each person.** Experiencing homelessness has the capacity to change how society views you as a person, and how you view yourself. As people who recognise the inherent dignity of each person, including those who are experiencing homelessness, our actions towards others shift. As we treat each person with the value they deserve by being created in God's image, we work to reduce the stigma of homelessness, and create a world that is safer for all. This can be as simple as smiling and saying "hello" when we see someone who is experiencing homelessness, or stopping to have a conversation. When we join with others in the community who also recognise this worth, we see the beginnings of change through the provision of the basic human right of a safe place to sleep.



Video

Show the following video – 'Meaning of Home Animation' (1:16). You can access it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p2ZR2WeLUE>

(You can also find a selection of alternative videos in the 'For an extended segment' section of this Resource)



Prayer Time



Play one of the following songs, and ask people to spend some time in silent, individual prayer while the song plays. Ask them to pray for people experiencing homelessness or struggling with housing affordability in your community.

[For the One](#) – Bethel Music

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 944 – What Can I Say To Cheer a World of Sorrow ([lyrics](#))

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 938 – We Have Caught The Vision Splendid ([lyrics](#))

[God of this City](#) – Chris Tomlin

Following this time of individual prayer, you may like to have three people read the prayers below. These prayers are printed on separate pages for ease of distribution to your readers.





Prayer Time



Prayer for our community

Dear Lord,

Today we bring before you all people in our community who are struggling because they are finding it hard to afford their home, or are experiencing homelessness.

For those sleeping under bridges, in abandoned buildings, in doorways or in cars.

For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime.

For families broken because they could not afford to pay the rent.

For those who are overstaying their welcome among friends.

For those who have no relatives or friends who can take them in.

For those waiting for permanent housing.

For those who have no place to keep possessions that remind them of who they are.

For those who are cold, afraid and hopeless.

For all these people, we pray that you will provide shelter, security and hope.

We pray for those of us with warm houses, comfortable beds, food to eat, clothes to wear – with the resources to more than satisfy our needs – that we may not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness.

Lord, help us to see your face in the eyes of every person who is experiencing homelessness so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through the political means we have, to bring justice and peace to this world.

In your name we pray,

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for Australia

Dear God,

As we take time to reflect on the effect of homelessness on people in our country, we ask for forgiveness for the times when we have turned a blind eye to the struggles being experienced by others.

Lord God, as a nation may we continually strive to do more to help individuals and families who are caught in cycles of poverty or financial difficulty. We pray for all those in our country who are trying to make a difference – from government officials, elders, community groups and policy makers, to support workers – grant them peace and strength for this challenging work.

We pray for the leaders of our country – that you would give them new ideas about how to address Australia's lack of affordable housing, and that you would give them the means to make the changes necessary. Give us wisdom and courage to have conversations with our community and our leaders to bring about structural and social change.

Help us, by your Spirit, to gain a vision for your kingdom. We ask for your grace and compassion to have conversations with those in our community who need to experience your love and grace. Help us to love kindness, do justice and walk humbly with you.

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for the world

Loving God,

We recognise in this moment that this world is not as you intended it to be. We acknowledge that you love all people equally, and that your intention is that we all experience the fullness of life that only you can bring.

We ask that you move within the hearts of those who have much. Help us to share graciously, to love more deeply, and to show compassion more freely.

Help us to work together as a global community to make this world more like you want it to be. Help us, as citizens of the world, to think globally and speak up for the oppressed wherever they may be, recognising that every single person is important to you.

In the name of the One who was sent to minister to all nations,

Amen.



For an extended segment



If you would like to present an extended segment (that goes for longer than 10 minutes), here are some ideas that may take people deeper:

- » Share information about how your Corps/Centre/mission expression/ALT is fighting against homelessness or housing stress, or assisting those experiencing it, within your community. Be sure to protect the privacy of specific people.
- » Share one of the below videos:
 - [‘National Homelessness Week National Update 2021’](#) (3:53)
 - [‘Red Shield Appeal Ad 2019’](#) (1:00)
 - [‘How Do You Sleep At Night?’](#) (1:08)
 - [‘Danni’s Story’](#) (2:14)
 - [‘Foster House’](#) (3:16)
- » Invite a local Social Worker/Community Worker who works in the area of homelessness/housing affordability to share their insight on what this issue looks like in your local community. Alternatively, you could do some research into the prevalence of this issue in your local community and share your insights.
- » Check out the Junior Soldiers’ Lesson for ideas of how to engage kids aged 12 and under on this issue: <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/junior-soldiers-unit-10—lesson-4-homelessness/18/>
- » Look into the ‘Homeless Jesus’ statues that are being installed, and the impact their presence is having on congregations around the world. You can find more information here: <https://theconversation.com/homeless-jesus-sculpture-goes-viral-after-911-call-148609>

USEFUL SONGS:

[The World for God](#) – Phil Laeger, Marty Mikles and Evangeline Booth

[God of this City](#) – Chris Tomlin

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 944 – What Can I Say To Cheer a World of Sorrow](#) [\(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 1003 – O Lord, Whose Human Hands Were Quick](#) [\(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 938 – We Have Caught The Vision Splendid](#) [\(lyrics\)](#)

[For the One](#) – Bethel Music

[The Salvation Army Songbook Hallelujah Chorus No. 43 – Just One](#) [\(lyrics\)](#)



Further Resources



For more information on this issue,
and for further resources:

The Salvation Army's [‘A Pathway to Social Justice’ Report](#)

[Homelessness Australia](#) for more information on homelessness

[Homelessness Fact Sheets](#) from the NSW Census (NSW specific)

To find assistance in your state or territory, visit The Salvation Army's [‘Find help now’ page](#)

If you'd like any further information on this resource please contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au

Every person can make a difference.

Together, we can make an even greater difference.



