

Women of  
Gippsland

Homelessness Inquiry  
December 2019

**GIPPSLAND  
WOMEN'S  
HEALTH**

Women of  
Gippsland

- Gippsland covers five local government areas including: Baw Baw Shire, Latrobe City Shire, Bass Coast Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Wellington Shire and East Gippsland shire.
- Gippsland is a diverse area, with populations living in regional, rural and remote communities (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, 2004).
- Gippsland spans 41,556 km<sup>2</sup> and has a total population of 271,271. The gender break down is 138,177 women and 130,096 men (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). There are approximately 8,081 more women than men, this can be explained by the average life expectancy which is higher for women than men.

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## Women of Gippsland

- According to the 2016 census there are 1805 aboriginal women living in Gippsland with the majority in Latrobe, Wellington and East Gippsland Shires. Aboriginal women have the life expectancy of 73 years, which is significantly lower than their non aboriginal counterparts, of 84 years (Australian Government, 2018).
- Aboriginal women are also 35 times more likely to be victims of family violence (ANROWS 2014, p 5) and are seven times more likely to have their children removed than their non aboriginal counterparts (Australian Government 2018).

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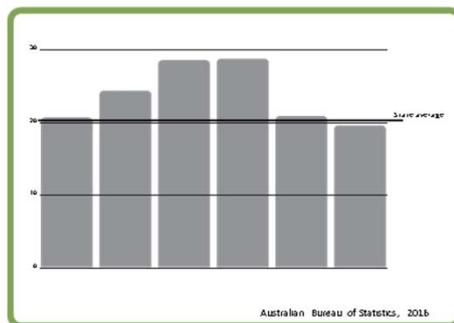
## Women of Gippsland

- Women with a disability make up of approximately 6.4% of the Gippsland's population which is higher than the state average of 5.8% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). However, these numbers reflect the minimum number of women living with a disability, the actual numbers are likely to be higher.
- Obtaining clear data which explores how many Gippsland women live with a disability is difficult as census data only tracks the number of women who need assistance with a core activity (such as personal hygiene, feeding) whereas many people who live with a disability do not need daily assistance

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## Women of Gippsland

- Overall, Gippsland's population is aging faster than the rest of Victoria. The cause for this is multifaceted, but can be attributed to younger people leaving Gippsland to pursue education and employment opportunities.



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## Women in Gippsland

- Gippsland has an expanding multicultural community. Women from diverse cultures are making Gippsland their home and experience the same vulnerabilities as all Gippsland women and more.
- The barriers and risk for these women include - VISA status, employment, language and communications, social isolation, trauma.

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## Women & Homelessness

- 61% of people supported by specialist homelessness services are women.
- Women aged 25-34 are the most likely age group to experience homelessness.
- Women over 55 years are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.
- Every day Australian specialist homelessness services turn away 155 women because of a lack of resources and affordable housing.
- 69,237 women received assistance from specialist homelessness services. That's 63% of people supported for homelessness issues in 2016 – 2017.
- 40% of primary homeless people sleeping rough are women.
- 48% of secondary homeless people staying with family and friends are women.
- 28% of tertiary homeless people living in insecure accommodation are women.
- Women are more likely to fit the description of "invisible homelessness".

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## Women & Homelessness

- Family violence is the number one reason women become homeless in Australia. 40% of female clients raise it as the main reason for seeking homelessness assistance.
- One in two women who approach services with homelessness issues, are facing family violence.
- Due to threats for the safety of themselves and children, women are more likely to leave their family home seeking safety.
- Some women are more likely to experience homelessness than others. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, women who are culturally and linguistically diverse and women with a mental illness.
- There has been no increase in housing supports and options in response to the long term demand identified in the Royal Commission into Family Violence nor the resulting impact of the increased demand on services due to women and children actively seeking safety.

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## Homelessness in Gippsland

- 6220 people across Gippsland presented to specialist homelessness services from 2015-16, 38 per cent of which were homeless and 62 per cent at risk of homelessness.
- Latrobe had the highest rate of homelessness in Gippsland. In the 2016 census there were 226 people identified as homeless in Latrobe, up from the 2011 census where there was 183
- Women in rural and remote areas have less access to assistance from services, family, friends and police. Placing them more at risk of homelessness or insecure housing.

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## Housing in Gippsland

- There are insufficient affordable housing options for people in Gippsland.
- There are insufficient social housing options for the number of people needing to access these supports.
- Systems and processes make accessing some housing options as challenge for women and children in crisis situations.
- Financial supports like Rent Assistance and Newstart are not sufficient for women and children to access secure housing options in their local areas and affordability of private rental properties is out of reach for those receiving pensions/benefits
- Crisis accommodation options are not sufficient for the need of the communities.
- Secure housing options in rural and remote area are almost difficult to find.

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## Inequality for women and homelessness

- In Australia, women's superannuation balances at retirement are 47 percent lower than men's
- In 2015-2016, Australian women are reaching retirement with an average of \$113,660 less superannuation than the average male. As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension
- Australia's current gender pay for full-time work is 15.3 percent. Women earn on average \$253.70 a week less than men
- Employees in female-dominated industries such as health care and social assistance are paid significantly less than employees in male-dominated industries
- Women are more likely to be in casual employment than men: 25.5 percent of all female employees in Australia are casual compared to 19.7 percent of male employees
- Victorian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work, and continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors
- Women spend 64.4 percent of their average weekly working time on unpaid care work compared to 36.1 percent for men

<https://www.genvic.org.au/resources/gender-equity-statistics/>

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## Inequality for women and homelessness

- Raising children accounts for a 17 percent loss in lifetime wages for women.
- For migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities and LGBTI women, gender-based discrimination is intensified and inequality is compounded by racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia. For instance,
  - For migrant and refugee women, underemployment is much higher
  - Women with disabilities and men with disabilities have different economic opportunities, with disabled women less likely to be in the paid workforce than disabled men
  - According to the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, LGBTI people experiencing family violence are regularly rendered invisible.

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## Women of Gippsland & Family Violence

- Gippsland has some of the highest incidents of family violence in the state.
- Gippsland LGA's are listed as 1, 2, 6, 25, 29 and 30. This is out of 79 LGA's in total. Statistics show an increase in reported incidents.
- Rurality is a risk factor for women and children experiencing family violence.
- There is insufficient safe housing options for women and children experiencing family violence in Gippsland. This places women and children at ongoing risk either from choosing to remain in the violent home or unsafe housing options.
- Women and children are often faced with having to leave their local communities to access housing services or housing options.
- Rural women leaving family violence are often leaving their source of income as well their accommodation.



## Gippsland Family Violence Data

Family Incident Rate per 100,000 population by Police Region and Local Government Area  
July 2014-June 2019 Data extracted from Crime Statistics Agency, Family Violence Incidents Table 4.





## Ending Homelessness

- Ending Homelessness in general requires a significant financial investment by Victoria, not only in housing options but in housing supports – crisis and early intervention.
- Financial investment in peoples ability to secure stable housing without the need for housing supports and services ie. rent assistance and relevant payments.
- Housing stock needs to be safe and meet a minimum standard.
- Investment in the many support structures that link with homelessness – mental health, D&A, youth.

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## Ending Homelessness in Gippsland

- All funding for housing stock and support services needs to go through a rural and remote lens. Generic approaches do not fit many parts of Gippsland placing it more at risk of homelessness.

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## Ending Homelessness for Women and women in Gippsland

- Financial investment by Victoria into a secure and stable housing support structure for women and children experiencing family violence. This needs to be crisis and long term. Women need to be able to transition between the two without risk or insecurity.
- Removal of "red tape" that places barriers in front of women accessing safe and secure accommodation.
- Acknowledgement of the challenges for rural and remote women and investing in support structures that support them to remain safely in their local communities.
- Learnings from the Royal Commission into Family Violence and resulting recommendations be connected to the work being undertaken by the inquiry. It has been established that homelessness for women and children is directly linked to family violence. We are telling women to leave and we will help, we have to provide the support structure to go with this or else risk women again having no confidence in the system.

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