

Augusta Margaret River

**CONNECTIONS
WEEK**

REPORT

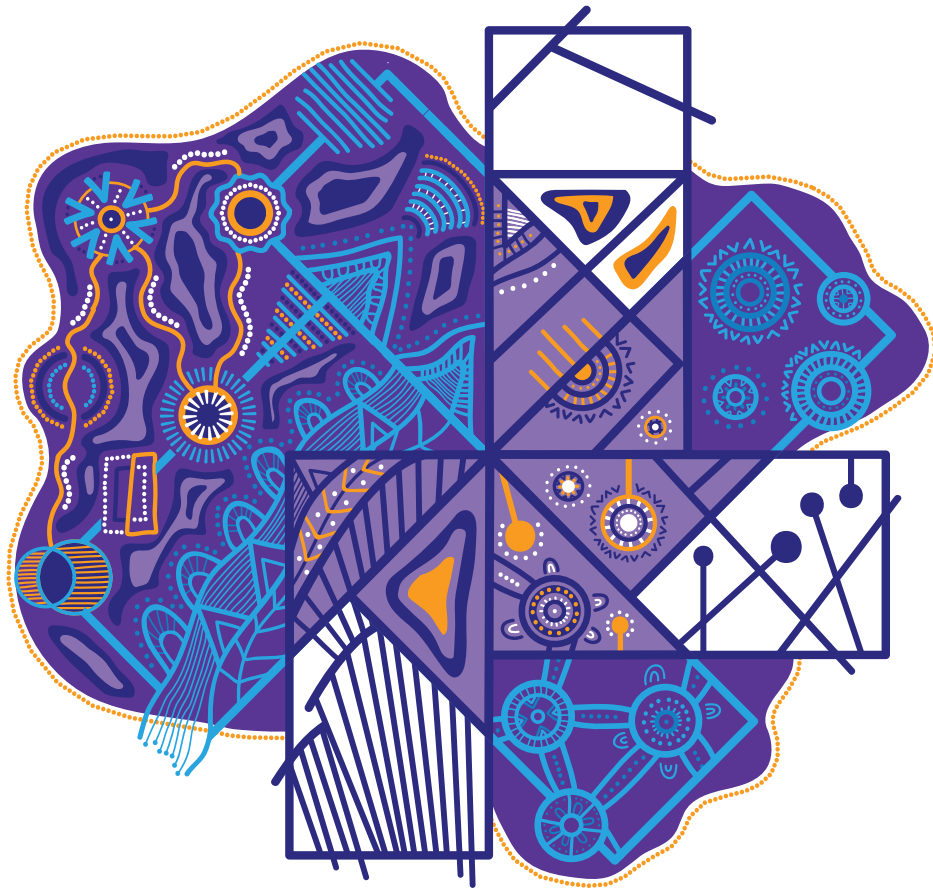
**March
2026**



Acknowledgement of Country

Arup acknowledges the Traditional Owners across all lands, waters and skies our firm may reach; we acknowledge their wisdom, resilience, and rich cultural heritage. We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Arup acknowledges the Wadandi and Pibelman as they hold the memories, traditions and cultures of Wadandi Pibelman Boodja. We recognise the ongoing journey of healing and reconciliation, and Arup commits to walking alongside First Nations peoples, to acknowledge their teachings and foster a future of unity and respect.



Continuing to Shift to shape an even better world - Original artwork by Tarni O'Shea of Gilimbaa and updated by David Williams of Gilimbaa.



The Margaret River Connections Week team.

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Funding and project partners:



ARUP

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Executive Summary

Between Tuesday 3 and Friday 6 March 2026, the Shire of Augusta Margaret River (AMR) hosted its first Connections Week¹ – a coordinated, place-based effort to better understand and respond to homelessness in the region.

Connections Week in AMR was initiated locally in response to a recognised gap in evidence demonstrating the extent of homelessness in the region. While homelessness has been consistently observed by local community, there has been limited data available to substantiate the scale and complexity of need.

In response, Just Home Margaret River (Just Home), with funding support from the Shire of AMR, led the coordination and delivery of Connections Week in partnership with local agencies. As a result, Connections Week brought together 16 partners in a collaborative effort including Just Home, the Shire of AMR, Arup, Lamp Inc., Lamp Lights Band, Centrelink, Accordwest, Relationships Australia, Jobs South West, Margaret River Community Centre, Headspace, Greg Boland Lawyer and Citizens Advice Bureau, Salvation Army, Oseca, Resident Coffee Roasters and Lions International. This collaborative, place-based effort enabled the collection of baseline data and provided a clearer, evidence-informed picture of homelessness in the region.

The AMR Connections Week identified 43 people experiencing homelessness through completing Australian Homeless Vulnerability Triage Tool² (AHVTT)

surveys. This included 34 individual surveys and 9 family surveys (comprising of 6 families with 1 child and 3 families with 2 children).

An additional 25 people were also identified as visitors, travellers or seasonal workers, through a targeted snapshot (developed in collaboration with the Shire) highlighting broader housing pressure and population movement within the region.



The Just Home team and volunteers assembling care packs for survey participants and folks sleeping rough

¹ Connections Week: A focused, community-led event to: identify by name every person in the community who is sleeping rough and/or experiencing long-term homelessness; understand their health, housing and support needs by using a standardised tool called the AHVTT and; share findings with the community and decision-makers to build momentum for housing solutions. Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH)(2025) 'Connections Week Toolkit' (2nd ed.). Available at: <https://aaeh.org.au/assets/docs/20251119-Connections-Week-toolkit-Final-Version-Nov-25-Formatted.pdf>. (Accessed 24 March 2026).

² Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH)(2025) 'Connections Week Toolkit' (2nd ed.). Available at: <https://aaeh.org.au/assets/docs/20251119-Connections-Week-toolkit-Final-Version-Nov-25-Formatted.pdf>. (Accessed 24 March 2026).

Key findings

The key findings from the data collated during Connections Week from people experiencing homelessness, are summarised below:

- **Homelessness in Augusta Margaret River is primarily affecting middle-aged men.** Two-thirds of people surveyed were male, with a median age of 45 years.
- **Rough sleeping is widespread and often unsafe.** More than half of respondents were sleeping rough, and nearly one-third reported feeling unsafe where they slept.
- **People experiencing homelessness face significant financial hardship** beyond housing, with 58% unable to meet day to day needs.
- **Discrimination is a common barrier to accessing housing and services.** More than half of respondents reported experiencing discrimination when seeking housing or support.
- **Health challenges, substance use, and exposure to violence frequently overlap.** Many respondents reported serious health conditions, regular substance use, and elevated levels of violence or threats of violence.
- **Complex needs are common among people experiencing homelessness.** One in four respondents reported living with multiple health conditions.
- **Income insecurity affects both unemployed and employed people.** Jobseeker was the most common income source, closely followed by income from work, indicating employment alone does not guarantee housing stability.
- **Families and children are part of the local homelessness picture.**

Next steps

Connections Week has provided an initial, point-in-time snapshot of people experiencing homelessness in AMR. While this data offers important insight into the scale and complexity of homelessness in the region, it is not exhaustive. A number of individuals were either unable or unwilling to participate in the survey, including some people known to be sleeping rough in the community.

Despite this, the findings present a credible and meaningful evidence base, highlighting both the presence and depth of homelessness in AMR. In the absence of dedicated place-based services, this data provides a critical foundation to support the community, local organisations, and the Shire to advocate for the services, resources, and investment required to respond effectively to local need.

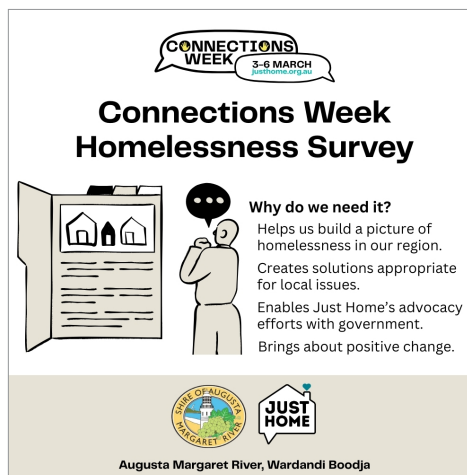
Over time, and with appropriate resourcing, this may support the development of more coordinated, place-based approaches - including the ability to maintain a By Name List (BNL), to strengthen coordinated responses and improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

1. Introduction

What is Connections Week?

Connections Week is a proven, evidence-based methodology developed through the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) and partners. It enables communities to work collaboratively to identify, by name, individuals and families experiencing homelessness and understand their needs and vulnerabilities, and use this information to inform targeted local action, advocacy and systems change. Importantly, Connections Week is community-led and community-owned, creating a shared foundation of data and insight that can be used responsibly and ethically to support better outcomes.

In the AMR region, Connections Week is particularly relevant because it responds directly to a recognised local evidence gap about the scale and complexity of homelessness, providing a practical way to translate community observations into a shared dataset that can inform service coordination and advocacy. It also supports a more coordinated local response by bringing the local government and service providers together around a common understanding of need, and by establishing a baseline snapshot that can guide service planning, resourcing and future monitoring over time.



CONNECTIONS WEEK 3-6 MARCH justhome.org.au

Connections Week Homelessness Survey

Why do we need it?

- Helps us build a picture of homelessness in our region.
- Creates solutions appropriate for local issues.
- Enables Just Home's advocacy efforts with government.
- Brings about positive change.

Augusta Margaret River, Wardandi Boodja



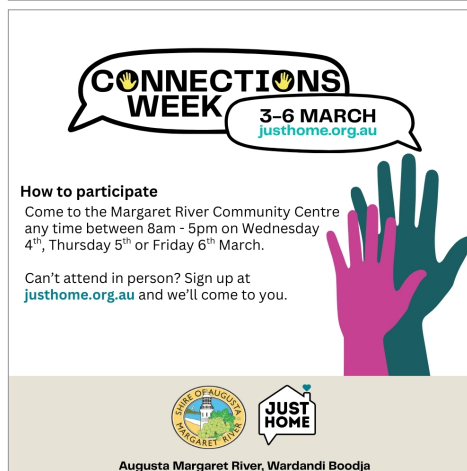
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BE COUNTED

Join your voice with ours

- 1D clinic
- 15-minute survey
- Breakfast and lunch provided
- Food vouchers
- Housing support advice
- Centrelink assistance
- Free legal advice
- Care packages
- A safe, supportive space for all

Augusta Margaret River, Wardandi Boodja



CONNECTIONS WEEK 3-6 MARCH justhome.org.au

How to participate

Come to the Margaret River Community Centre any time between 8am - 5pm on Wednesday 4th, Thursday 5th or Friday 6th March.

Can't attend in person? Sign up at justhome.org.au and we'll come to you.

Augusta Margaret River, Wardandi Boodja

Marketing collateral promoting Augusta Margaret River Connections Week

About Augusta Margaret River

Location

The Shire of AMR is located approximately 280km south of Perth in Western Australia (WA). This Local Government Area (LGA) covers a total land area of 2,240km² and includes several major features³, such as:

- National parks, e.g. Blackwood, Leeuwin-Naturaliste, Scott and Wooditjup.
- Beaches and caves, e.g. Gnarabup Beach, Yallingup Beach and Jewel Cave.
- Wineries and vineyards, e.g. Leeuwin Estate, Voyager Estate and Burnside Organic Farm.
- Educational facilities, e.g. TAFE WA South Regional (Margaret River Campus), primary and secondary schools and Margaret River Independent School.



Team huddle to kick off Connections Week

Community Profile

In 2024, the Shire of AMR had an estimated residential population (ERP) of 19,410 people⁴, comprising an even distribution of males (8,388) and females (8,400). Of this population, around 1.4% were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Based on the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census data⁵, a high prevalence of people in AMR were born in Australia, accounting for 68.7% of its population. English was also the main language spoken at home by 84.3% of AMR residents.

In 2021, the median weekly personal income in AMR was \$785. Around 17.5% of households in AMR earned a weekly income of less than \$650, higher than that recorded in the Perth LGA, which accounted for 15.7% of its population. The unemployment rate in AMR was 2.8%, much less than the 6.1% reported in Perth.

Housing Affordability

Over the last 12 months, the median rental price in AMR has increased significantly by 14.3%, reaching a substantial \$800 per week for houses and \$650 per week for units and apartments⁶. This reflects a significant and ongoing trend towards unaffordable housing for many residents, which can be closely linked to broader demographic changes in the region. AMR has experienced rapid population growth, with migration from metropolitan areas contributing to a 170% increase in residents over recent years. This influx has placed further strain on the local rental market, as demand for housing outpaces the available supply. The implications of this population surge are significant, leading to greater competition for rentals and exacerbating affordability challenges for established residents and newcomers alike.

³ .idcommunity (2024) 'Shire of Augusta-Margaret River: About the Area', Shire of Augusta-Margaret River: Economic Profile'. Available at: <https://economy.id.com.au/augusta-margaret-river/about> (Accessed 12 March 2026).

⁴ .idcommunity (2024) 'Shire of Augusta-Margaret River: Estimated Resident Population (ERP)', Shire of Augusta-Margaret River Community Profile. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/augusta-margaret-river/population-estimate> (Accessed 11 March 2026).

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2021) 'August Margaret River: 2021 Census All Persons Quickstats'. Available at: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA50280>. (Accessed 11 March 2026).

⁶ Loney, G. (2026) 'Margaret River to Survey Homeless Population as Housing Crisis Bites Holiday Hotspot'. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-10/homeless-survey-margaret-river-housing-crisis/106421674> (Accessed 12 March 2026); REA Group Ltd. (n.d.) 'Property Market Insights for Margaret River: Median Sale Price and Rental Income of Properties in Margaret River WA', Margaret River, WA 6285. Available at: <https://www.property.com.au/wa/margaret-river-6285/> (Accessed 11 March 2026).

Tourism and seasonal employment are major drivers of housing pressure in the AMR region. The town's popularity as a tourist destination sees a substantial proportion of housing stock diverted to short-term holiday accommodation, particularly during peak seasons. International workers and fly-in fly-out employees further add to the demand, while caravan parks - once a more accessible option - are now largely unaffordable or inaccessible to many seeking long-term accommodation. These factors contribute to an environment where housing for permanent residents is both scarce and costly.

The prevalence of unoccupied dwellings, commonly used as holiday homes, has a direct impact on the availability of affordable rental stock. The current ratio of short-term accommodation to long-term rentals stands at 58:1, underscoring the lack of options for those seeking permanent housing. This imbalance limits the supply of affordable rentals and contributes to ongoing housing insecurity for the local population. The combined effects of market pressures, rapid growth, tourism-driven demand, and limited rental stock make addressing housing affordability a critical priority for local government stakeholders.

Service Gaps and Limitations

Service provision for people experiencing homelessness and family and domestic violence (FDV) in the AMR region is shaped by an acute lack of permanent, local support. Most assistance relies on visiting providers, whose outreach is irregular and often unable to respond quickly to urgent needs. The absence of crisis accommodation means vulnerable residents are left without safe, accessible options in times of crisis, and the limited nature of outreach further exacerbates their isolation. This service context leaves many seeking help facing significant challenges, especially when the nearest available support is located in surrounding towns.

The situation is intensified by the lack of regular public transport in AMR, which severely restricts mobility for those needing support. Without reliable transport links, individuals are often unable to travel to Busselton (which is an approximately 40-minute drive away) or other neighbouring towns where crisis accommodation and essential services are available, although still limited. This not only limits access to help for those experiencing homelessness or FDV but also means that practical pathways to assistance are effectively out of reach for many.

Given these circumstances, it is crucial to acknowledge not only the urgent need for improved transport connections, but also the absence of fundamental services within the region. The lack of crisis accommodation and regular outreach means the community is unable to meet the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness. Without safe, accessible places to stay or timely support, vulnerable residents are left isolated and at greater risk. This gap in essential services raises a pressing question: "How can we properly support people as a community if we cannot provide the most basic resources for those facing homelessness?"

Mary's story

Mary is a single mother with one toddler; she has managed to secure a rental - so her circumstances are not reflected in the Report data. However, Mary is forced to rent out two bedrooms to transient workers she does not know well, in order to afford her rent for herself and her child. These tenants have access to shared facilities, including the kitchen, bathroom and furniture, and their rent contributions cover utility bills and the shortfall Mary cannot pay herself. As a result, Mary does not regard her living situation as secure or stable. If her tenants move out, she must quickly find replacements to avoid financial hardship.

Local Leadership and Partnership

The Shire and Just Home have been working in partnership to address homelessness and housing unaffordability in the region since July 2017. Just Home have consistently been at the forefront of efforts to provide compassionate, practical solutions that have a profound impact on those who are most vulnerable in the AMR community. They engage with peak bodies, government and local services to move new social and affordable housing initiatives forward. Their advocacy efforts extend to enhancing community consciousness about homelessness in AMR through targeted events, actions and communications and advocating for place-based social services to support people experiencing homelessness.



The Arup team assembling more care packs for survey participants and folks sleeping rough

Just Home played a pivotal role in guiding the Connections Week initiative, demonstrating the value of community-driven leadership in the AMR region. The team was comprised of local community members and individuals with lived experience, whose commitment to meaningful change ensured the project reflected local priorities and perspectives. Their leadership was instrumental in fostering trust, encouraging participation in the survey process, and establishing a strong foundation for baseline data collection.

The team took a deliberate approach in partnering with organisations such as Arup and AAEH, that shared their commitment to informed place-based responses. By collaborating with groups that prioritised local knowledge and context, Just Home ensured strategies were tailored specifically to the unique needs, strengths and aspirations of the AMR community. This focus on meaningful partnerships not only strengthened the collective impact but also aims to foster long-term solutions that are responsive, sustainable and relevant for those most affected. With direct support from Arup and the various other partner organisations, this collaborative approach highlighted the importance of locally led action and reinforced the region's capacity to effectively address community needs.

Approach and Data Collection

This Connections Week Report ('Report') presents the data obtained during the AMR Connections Week. This was held between Tuesday, 3 March 2026 to Friday, 6 March 2026, at the Margaret Community Centre in Margaret River, WA. During this week, individuals and families experiencing homelessness in AMR were surveyed using the AHVTT.

In total, 43 AHVTT surveys were completed, comprising 34 individual and 9 family surveys. This Report presents a profile of homelessness within AMR, exploring the themes of health, risk and vulnerability including justice and legal issues, adverse life experiences and co-morbidities.

Additionally, 25 Visitor, Traveller and Seasonal Worker Snapshots were also completed. Key themes explored in this Report regarding visitors, travellers and seasonal workers include employment and issues with finding accommodation.

AHVTT

The AHVTT was developed by AAEH, in collaboration with partners, frontline services, First Nations representatives and people with lived experience. This was guided by a process of feedback and consultation (including surveys, and in-person and virtual discussions) to ensure the tool reflects the experience of homelessness, combined with identifying the immediate and associated services required.



A trained team member conducting an AHVTT survey

The AHVTT is designed to be used as part of the national Advance to Zero (AtoZ) initiative, which supports local collaborative efforts to end homelessness. This tool helps recognise the appropriate housing, healthcare and community services required for individuals and families based on their current needs.

Visitor, Traveller and Seasonal Worker Snapshot

The Visitor, Traveller & Seasonal Worker Snapshot was developed in consultation with the Shire to better understand accommodation pressures in the region. This was aimed at gathering insights about visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in AMR as a separate, parallel study. Individuals actively seeking accommodation and intending to stay in AMR long-term were invited to complete the AHVTT survey, while those planning to remain for less than 12 months participated in the Visitor, Traveller & Seasonal Worker Snapshot. This approach ensured the needs and experiences of both groups were accurately captured for future planning and support initiatives.



Preparing breakfast for the community

Lived Experience Methodology

Several stories of lived experience are provided throughout this Report. These have been compiled by presenting average trends within an observed experience (e.g. the experience of those who sleep roughly). This approach protects the confidentiality of individuals and families surveyed. Pseudonyms have been used to replace the true names of survey participants. Notably, each story is unique and does not represent the experience of all those who are currently facing homelessness in AMR.

Project Limitations

Limitations have been identified as part of developing this Report, which include:

- The existing demographic profile of AMR (outlined above) is based on information available at the time of writing, such as the ABS 2021 Census data release, Google Maps Imagery 2026 and Real Estate Australia (REA) Group. As a result, more recent population or housing trends that are yet to be made available may not be reflected within this Report.
- The AHVTT provides survey respondents the option to either skip a question or change their answer, which indicates that some data presented may not capture all responses.
- As stated earlier, each personal story of lived experience represents a unique experience and should not be interpreted as a reflection of the circumstances faced by all people experiencing homelessness in AMR.

2. Homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Who is experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River?

During the AMR Connections Week, 43 surveys were completed from those currently experiencing homelessness, including 34 individuals and 9 families. These 9 families were made up of:

- 6 families with 1 child
- 3 families with 2 children.

This Report reflects the perspectives shared by the 43 participants who completed the AHVTT.

Of the 43 survey participants, 63% were male and 37% were female (as shown in Figure 1). Approximately 14% of survey respondents were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The oldest survey respondent was 75 years and the youngest was 20 years. The median age was 45 years, slightly higher than the wider AMR median age, of 42 years.

Figure 2 presents the age distribution of people experiencing homelessness in AMR, identifying that those aged 35-44 years, made up the highest proportion of respondents, at 26%.

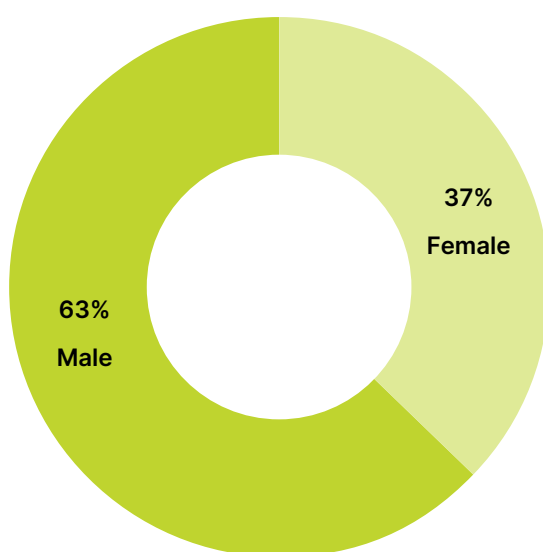


FIGURE 1. Gender breakdown of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

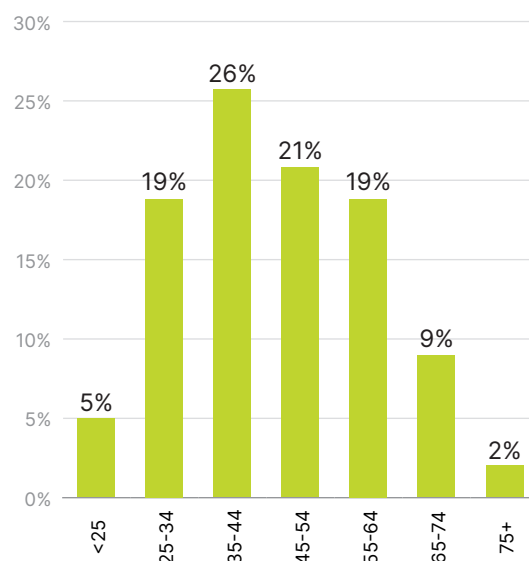
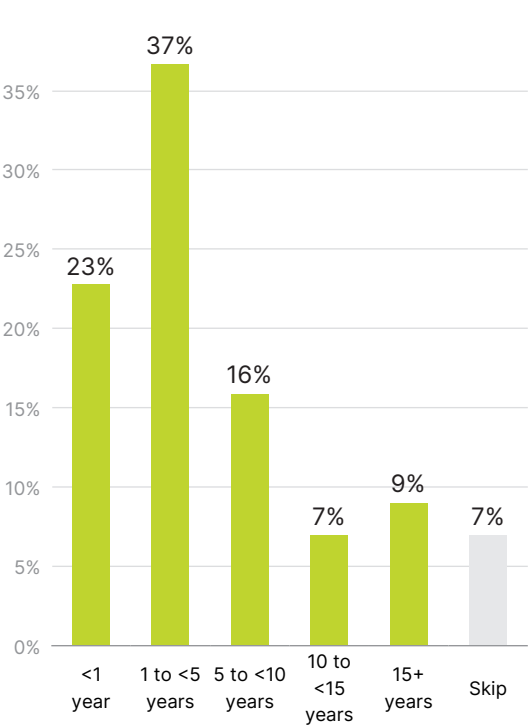


FIGURE 2. Age breakdown of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Jean’s story

Jean is a 46-year-old Australian female who can be found by the river on a typical day. She has been experiencing homelessness for the past six years, spending this entire period sleeping rough and never feeling safe. Fostered at a young age, she continues to face discrimination when attempting to access housing or social programs. Jean left home due to violence and now has no reliable access to essential amenities when she needs them. She is unable to meet her day-to-day financial needs and relies on the disability pension as her sole source of income. She experiences tri-morbidities, being diagnosed with multiple mental health conditions (including PTSD and anxiety disorder), tobacco use and experiences several chronic health issues (including liver and respiratory diseases). To be safe and well, Jean requires stable, safe and affordable housing that does not trigger sensory issues, as well as access to bulk billing services (including GP and occupational therapist), personal hygiene facilities (including a toilet, shower and laundry) and relief and emergency support.



Length of time spent homeless

As a combined total, people had been experiencing homelessness in AMR for 188 years and 7 months. As shown in Figure 3, the highest proportion of time spent being homeless was within the 1-to-<5 years range, accounting for 37% of respondents. On average, people had gone 5 years since last having a permanent place to live. 3 people chose not to respond to this question.

FIGURE 3. Number of years experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Rough sleepers in Augusta Margaret River

Of the 43 respondents, around 51% reported they were currently sleeping rough⁷ (as shown in Figure 4). More than two-thirds of rough sleepers in AMR were males, with 16 (73%) male rough sleepers, compared to 6 (27%) female rough sleepers. In addition, approximately 18% of rough sleepers were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

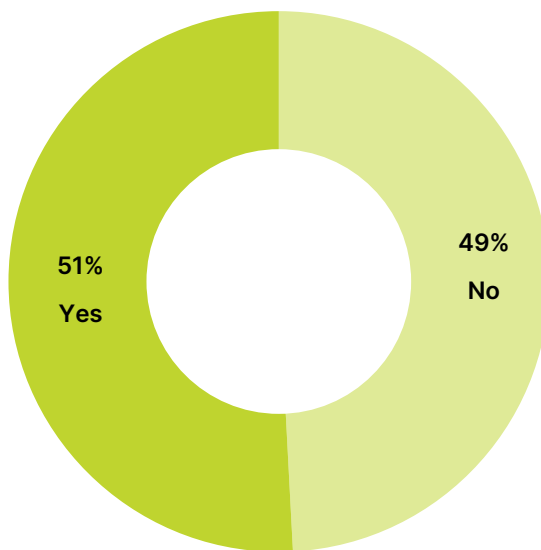


FIGURE 4. Rough sleepers of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

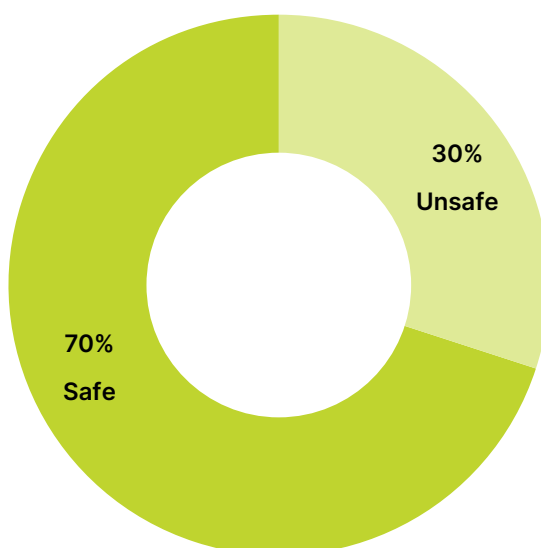


FIGURE 5. Safety of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Among this group, the median age was 52 years, significantly higher than the median age of the wider AMR population. The youngest rough sleeper recorded was 25 years, while the oldest was 75 years.

In addition, when asked if respondents felt safe where they were sleeping, 70% said yes, while 30% did not feel safe (as shown in Figure 5).

Alex's story

Alex is a 49-year-old Australian man who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and generally spends his days in the local bush. He has been experiencing homelessness for 33 years and continues to sleep rough, consistently feeling unsafe in his sleeping environments. He receives an income through JobSeeker Payment; however, this remains insufficient to meet his day-to-day financial needs. He is also coping with a serious shoulder injury and reports regular use of cannabis and methamphetamine to cope.

The only time Alex considered himself not homeless during those 33 years was when he drove trucks. Alex would sleep in the truck during long hauls – so this was his “home”. He enjoys driving trucks and would do so again. Alex hopes to secure work once his shoulder has healed, but admits it is hard to find employment with no stable address. His primary need to feel safe and well is an “affordable home”.

⁷ “Sleeping rough” refers to the sense of staying in any place not meant for permanent human habitation. This includes sleeping without any covering or protection, sleeping in a tent or sleeping in a vehicle.

Challenges to housing access and basic needs

Around 56% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination when attempting to access housing or social programs in AMR (as shown in Figure 6). One person opted to not provide a response.

Approximately 58% of respondents reported being unable to financially meet their day-to-day needs beyond housing (as presented in Figure 7). Of this proportion, 32% were females and 68% were males. In addition, 84% were individuals and 16% were families. Among these families, 3 families had 1 child, and 1 family included 2 children.

Notably, when asked whether they ever struggle to afford essentials due to gambling, no respondents answered “Yes”.

When essential amenities were needed, 33% (14 people) were unable to access a toilet, 40% (17 people) could not access a shower, and 12% (5 people) were unable to access food and water when they were hungry or thirsty (as shown in Figure 8). In addition, 30% (13 people) of respondents were also unable to access a laundry or replacement clothes when it was needed. One person chose not to respond when asked if they had access to food and water when needed, and 2 people declined to comment when asked if they had access to laundry or replacement clothes when needed.

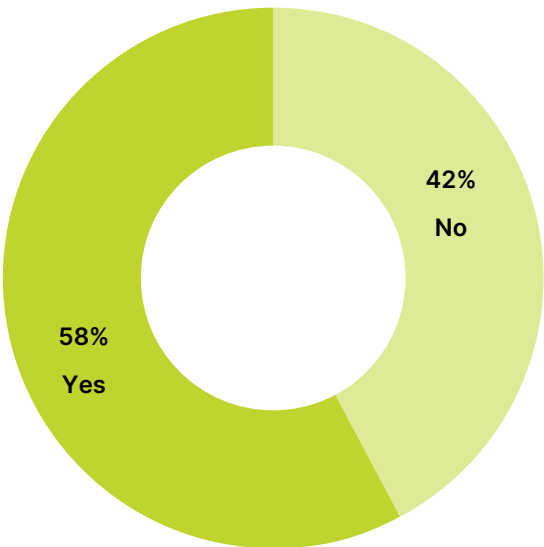


FIGURE 7. Financial stability of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

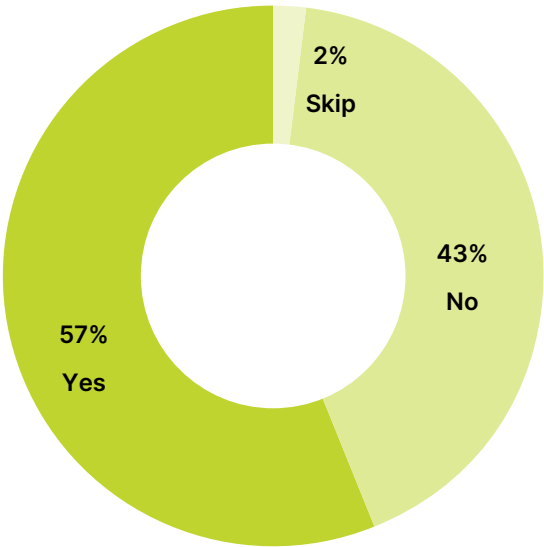


FIGURE 6. Discrimination of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

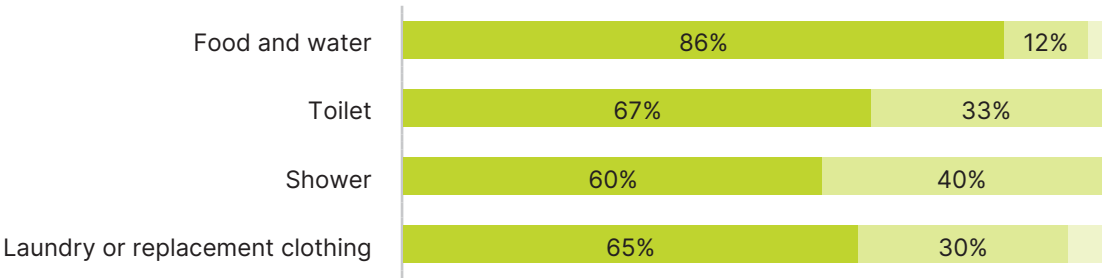


FIGURE 8. Access to amenities for people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Yes No Skip

3. The health of people experiencing homelessness

Prevalence of serious health conditions

Almost half (49%) of people experiencing homelessness that were interviewed indicated they had a serious health condition. These serious health conditions varied from neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g. autism) to musculoskeletal (e.g. shoulder and back injury, arthritis and fibromyalgia) and chronic (e.g. heart disease and immunodeficiency disease). Of this group, more than half (53%) reported having multiple serious health conditions. Figure 9 illustrates the range of serious health conditions of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River.

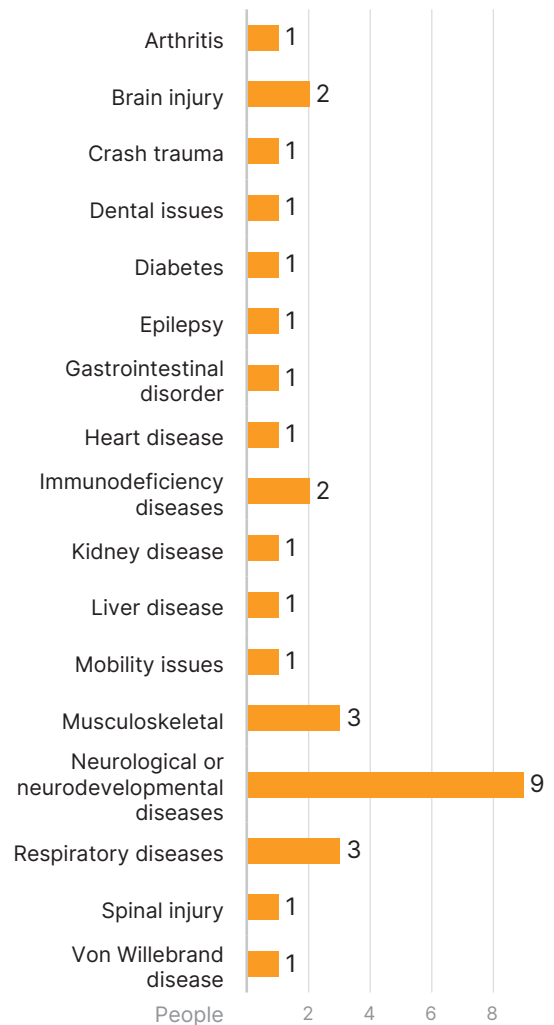


FIGURE 9. Serious health conditions of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Use of health care services

A small proportion of people experiencing homelessness accessed healthcare services over the last 12 months (as presented in Figure 10). About 2% (one person) had taken an ambulance to the hospital at least five times and 12% (five people) spent five or more nights in hospital. Emergency department use was the most prevalent, with 28% (12 people) presenting five or more times over the past year. One person chose not to respond when asked if they had taken an ambulance to the hospital five or more times in the last year.

These statistics are consistent with the survey findings about how people

experiencing homelessness seek medical services. When asked if they would seek medical help when sick or unwell, 26% said they would not (as shown in Figure 11). A further 28% reported having been denied medical help while experiencing homelessness. One person did not provide an answer when asked if they sought medical assistance when they are sick or not feeling well.

These experiences and perceptions likely contribute to the low engagement with hospital and ambulance services and the increased reliance on emergency departments, where people may feel they can access care without the same barriers or the risk of being refused.

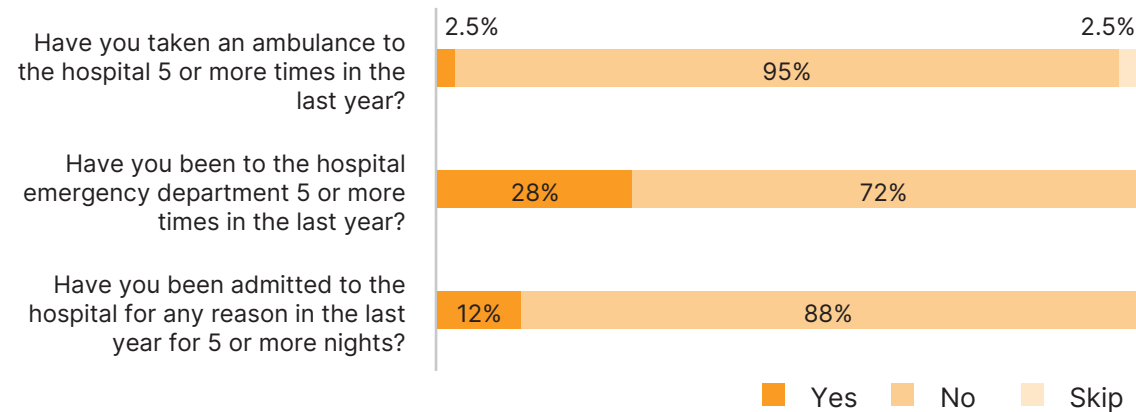


FIGURE 10. Access to medical services for people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

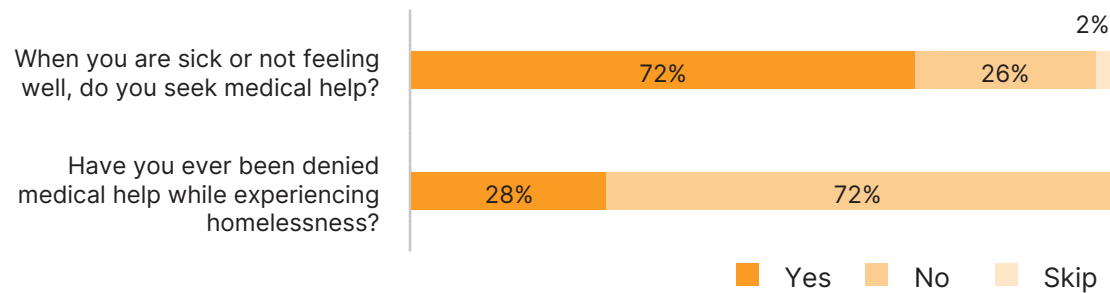


FIGURE 11. Seeking medical help for people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Social and emotional health and wellbeing

More than half (56%) of the people experiencing homelessness in AMR indicated they were diagnosed with a mental health condition (as shown in Figure 12). Of this group, 58% (14 people) were diagnosed with more than one mental health condition. It should be noted that one person chose not to respond when asked if they had a diagnosed mental health condition.

The most frequently reported included anxiety disorder (54%), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (38%), and clinical depression (42%). Other prevailing mental health conditions identified included (but not limited to) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), personality disorder, neurodevelopmental disorder, schizoaffective disorder and schizophrenia (as outlined in Figure 13).

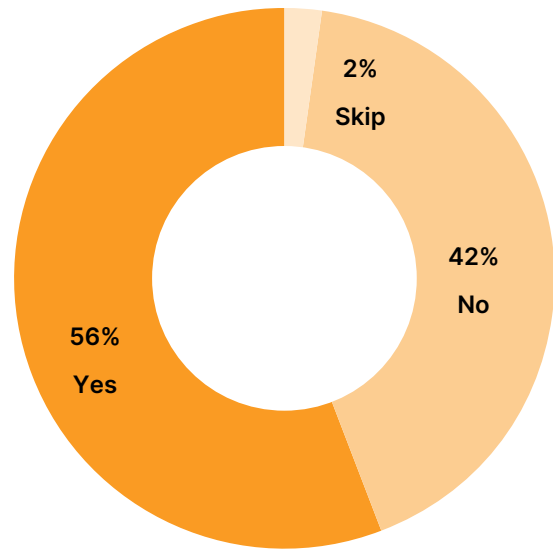


FIGURE 12. Diagnosed mental health of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

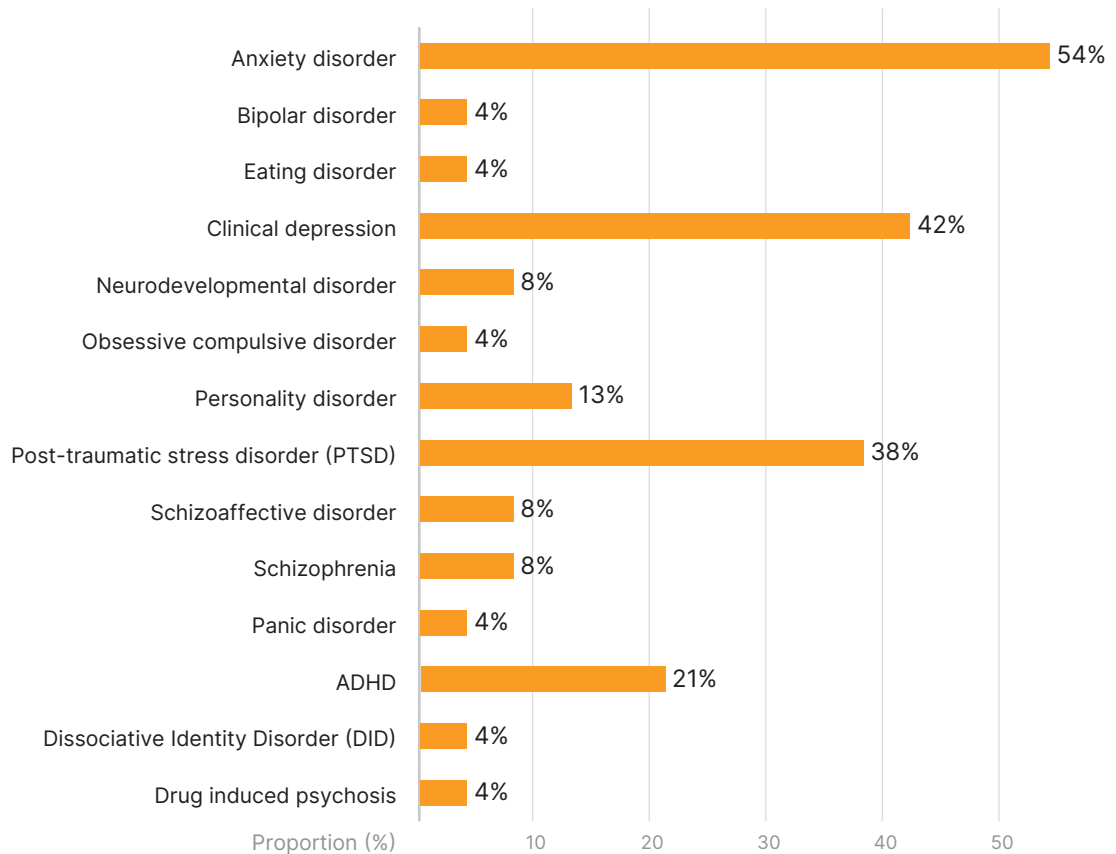


FIGURE 13. Diagnosed mental health conditions of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River



The kitchen team busy preparing free breakfast and lunch for the community

4. Risk and vulnerability among rough sleepers

Alcohol and drug use

Of those experiencing homelessness in AMR, 42% reported regularly using substances, including drugs or alcohol in the past. Among the substance users, the most common substances were cannabis (61%) and alcohol (39%), followed by methamphetamine being used by 11% of people. Benzodiazepines, cocaine, DMT, magic mushrooms and tobacco were each used by 6% of users (as shown in Figure 14).

Justice and legal issues

Justice and legal issues were relatively low among people experiencing homelessness in AMR (as shown in Figure 15). In the past six months, 26% had interacted with police, due to either committing an offence, witnessing an event or being told to move along. This proportion was consistent with those who reported having existing legal issues (26%) that may potentially result in paying fines they cannot afford or imprisonment.

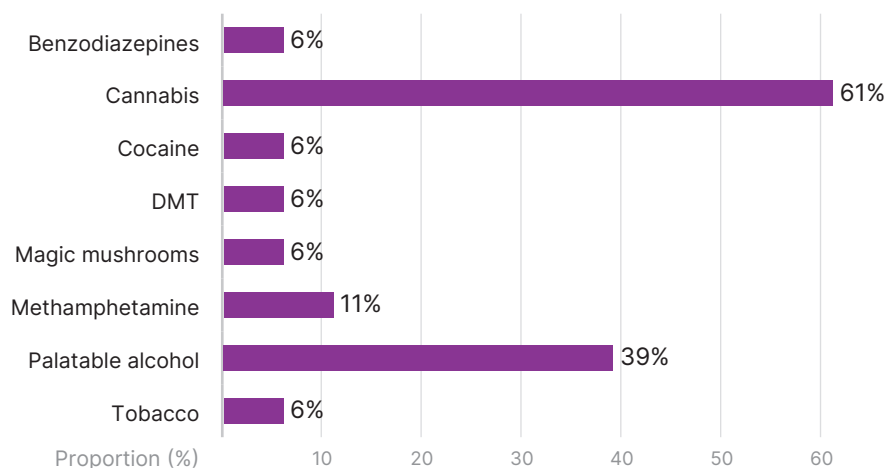


FIGURE 14. Alcohol and drug use for people experiencing homeless in Augusta Margaret River

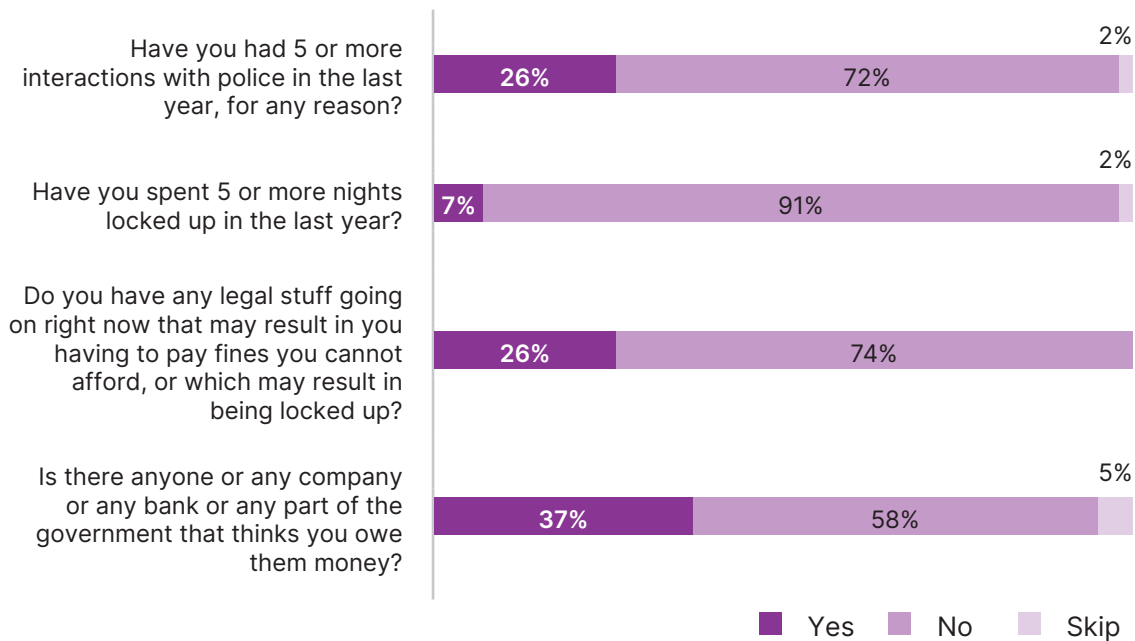
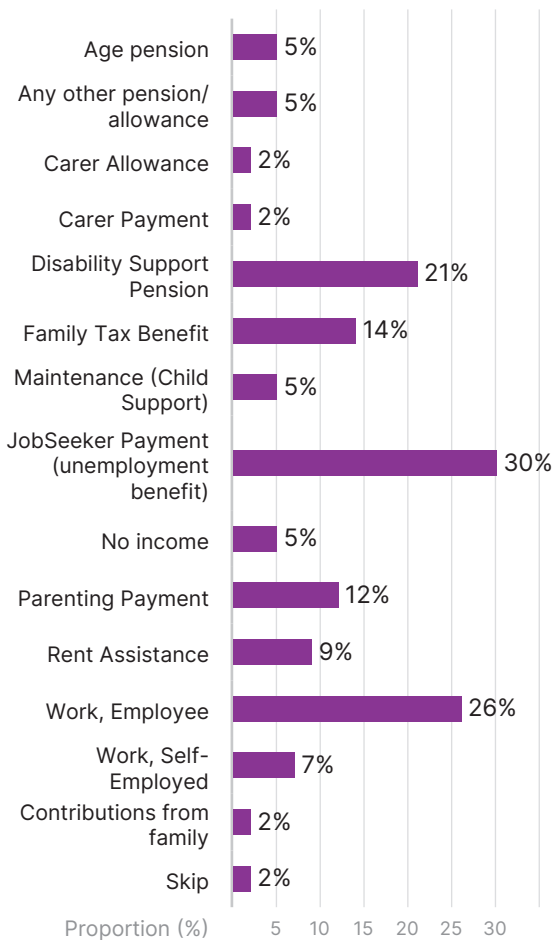


FIGURE 15. Justice and legal issues of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River



In the last year, 7% of people spent five or more nights locked up and more than one-third (37%) believe they owe money to either a company, bank or government.

Income and debt

Among the 43 survey respondents, 91% received at least one source of income. As shown in Figure 16, JobSeeker / other unemployment benefits were the most common, supporting 30% of people experiencing homelessness. Income from work as an employee was the second most prevalent source (26%), followed by the disability support pension (21%). Family tax benefit (14%) and parenting payments (12%) were also accessed by respondents. Additional income sources included rent assistance, child support and financial contributions from family.

Notably, 16% of people experiencing homelessness received an income through multiple sources. In addition, 5% stated they did not receive an income, and one respondent disclosed obtaining income through robbery, highlighting extreme circumstances some individuals face.

FIGURE 16. Income of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Adverse life experiences

As presented in Figure 17, people experiencing homelessness in AMR also reported experiencing various levels of adversity. Of all respondents, 40% (17 people) experienced violence or threats of violence, and 42% (18 people) had considered hurting someone or themselves in the last year. 21% (9 people) of respondents had been diagnosed with PTSD or had a serious brain injury / head trauma or development issue. These findings indicate a high exposure to violence and self/other-harm ideation, combined with existing trauma-related or neurological health conditions.

Experiences of early-life or institutional care were also prevalent, as 16% (7 people) spent time in foster or institutional care. Additionally, 14% (6 people) reported being stood over or forced to do things against their will.

Together, the above statistics show that people experiencing homelessness in AMR faced multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities, including safety, mental health and historical adversity, rather than individuals experiencing isolated issues. These interconnected issues shape their day-to-day experience of being homeless and are important to recognise when considering their needs and the support services required.

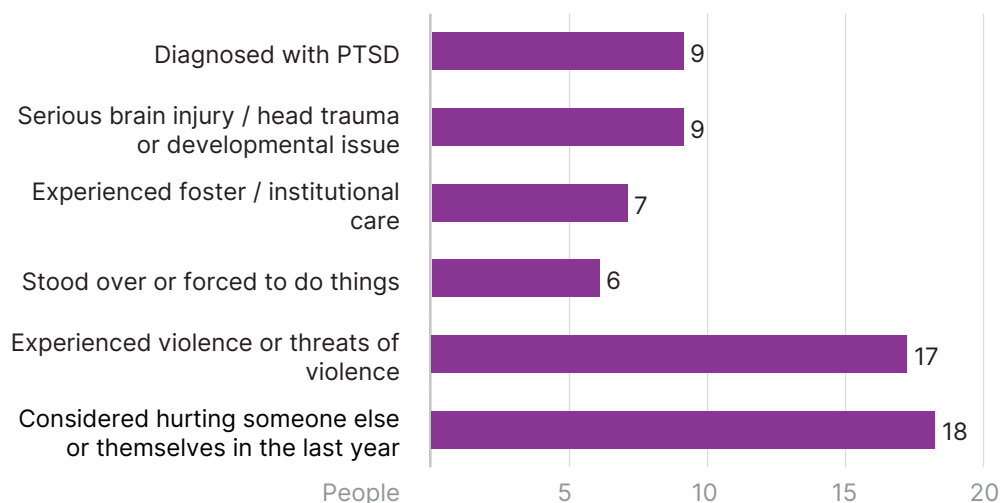


FIGURE 17. Adverse experiences of people experiencing homelessness in Augusta Margaret River

Tina’s story

Co-morbidities

People experiencing homelessness are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing multiple morbidities, such as mental health, alcohol and drug use and chronic health challenges.

Based on the survey responses, 26% of people experiencing homelessness reported living with multiple morbidities: co-occurring mental health, alcohol and drug use and chronic health issues (see Table 1).

These statistics show that many people experiencing homelessness also deal with several other serious challenges simultaneously. These combined pressures would make it even more difficult for them to access support services, maintain good health and build stability in their lives.

Tina is a 38-year-old Australian female who lives with her partner and one child. Her family has been without permanent housing for two years and two months, after previously losing their home to violence and eviction. She reports experiencing discrimination when trying to access housing or social programs, and over the past year, she has presented to the emergency department at least five times. Tina is currently managing tri-morbidities, including multiple mental health conditions (such as PTSD and anxiety disorder), substance use (such as benzodiazepines) and chronic health illnesses (such as heart and immunodeficiency diseases). She also has recent involvement with the justice system, spending time in the watch house within the last year. Although her family receives income from several sources, including carer allowance and payment, family tax benefit, rent assistance and work (self-employed), they continue to struggle to financially meet their day-to-day needs. To be safe and well, Tina’s family needs stable, affordable housing and improved access to local employment opportunities, particularly in hospitality and vineyard work.

Type	Number (%)
Co-morbidities (mental health and AOD)	4 (9%)
Tri-morbidities (mental health, AOD and chronic health)	3 (7%)
Mental health, AOD, chronic health and justice	4 (9%)

TABLE 1. Multiple morbidities among people experiencing homelessness in AMR

5. Visitors, travellers and seasonal workers

Who are the visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

During the AMR Connections Week, 25 surveys were completed from those identifying as a visitor, traveller or seasonal worker. This section reflects the perspectives shared by the 25 participants who completed the Visitor, Traveller & Seasonal Worker Snapshot.

Of the 25 survey participants, 80% were male and 20% were female (as shown in Figure 18). The oldest survey respondent was 39 years and the youngest was 23 years. The median age was 29 years, significantly lower than the wider AMR median age, of 42 years.

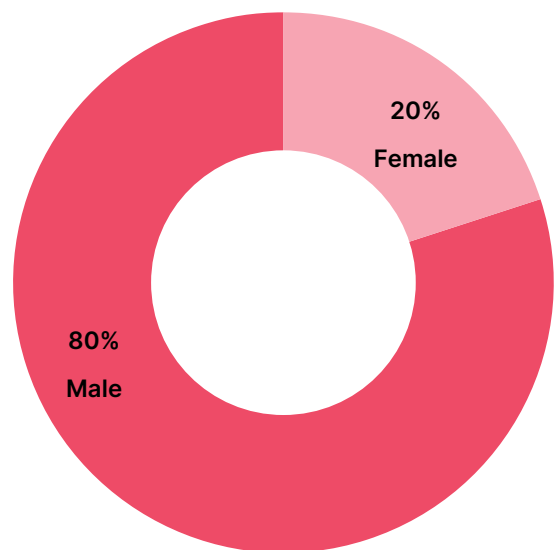


FIGURE 18. Gender breakdown of visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Brendan’s story

Brendan is a 27-year-old man who has travelled to the AMR region for a holiday. He is currently sleeping in his car and intends to move on in less than a month due to ongoing difficulties of securing available and affordable accommodation. To allow for an easier and more affordable stay, Brendan requires access to legal and regulated free-camping areas. He originally intended to stay longer but will now leave the region due to the lack of suitable housing options. Brendan does not want to break the law and feels guilty about doing so, reflecting that despite his good intentions, he feels unable to act on them due to his current circumstance and the limited options available to him.

Figure 19 presents the age distribution of visitors, workers and seasonal workers in AMR, identifying that those aged 25-34 years, made up the highest proportion of respondents, at 71%.

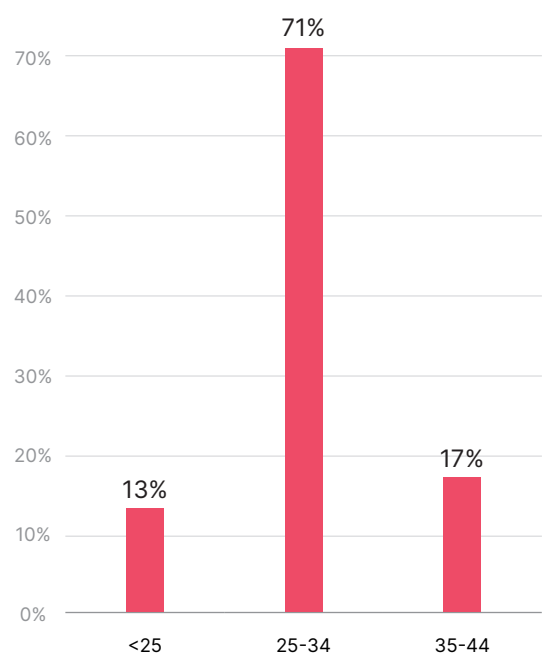


FIGURE 19. Age breakdown of visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Figure 20 illustrates the length of time survey participants expect to be in the region. Only 20% (5 people) of participants indicated that they expect to be in the region for longer than 6 months, and 16% (4 people) responded that they didn't know.

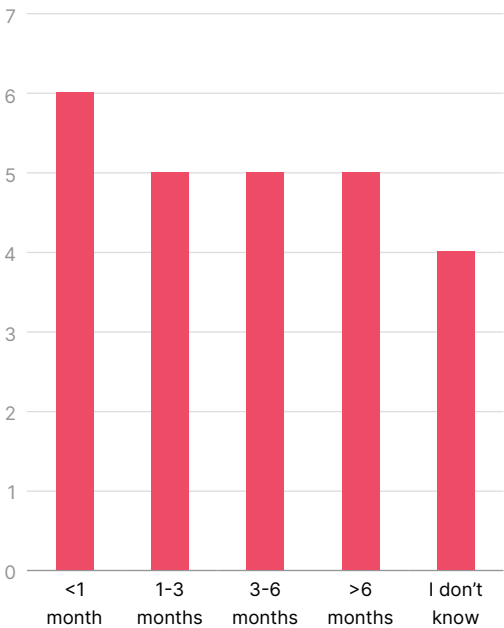


FIGURE 20. Length of stay for visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

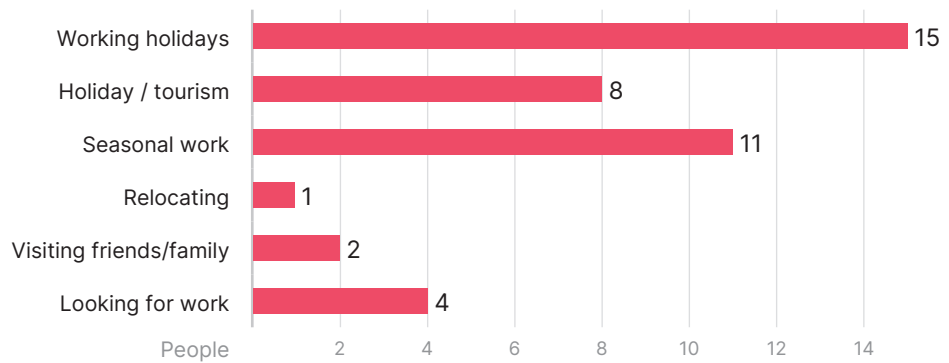


FIGURE 21. Reason for stay of visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Why visitors, travellers and seasonal workers come to Augusta Margaret River

Of the 25 respondents, 74% reported they were in the AMR region for employment reasons (as shown in Figure 21). Among this group, 15 (37%) were there for a working holiday, 11 (27%) were there for seasonal work and 4 (10%) were not yet employed but looking for work. The remaining respondents were brought to the region for holiday / tourism (20%) or to visit friends and family (10%). One respondent indicated they were relocating from another region.

Employment amongst visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Of the survey participants, more than half (52%) stated they had already secured work in a casual or seasonal capacity, with only one respondent securing full-time work. This left 8 (32%) respondents unemployed at the time of survey (as presented in Figure 22).

Of those who indicated they were currently working, respondents were given the opportunity to share which industry they had secured work in. For those that opted to respond, 4 (50%) people were working in the hospitality industry, with the remaining respondents indicating work in the wine industry (1 person), carpentry (1 person), fruit picking (1 person) or recreation (1 person), as presented in Figure 23.

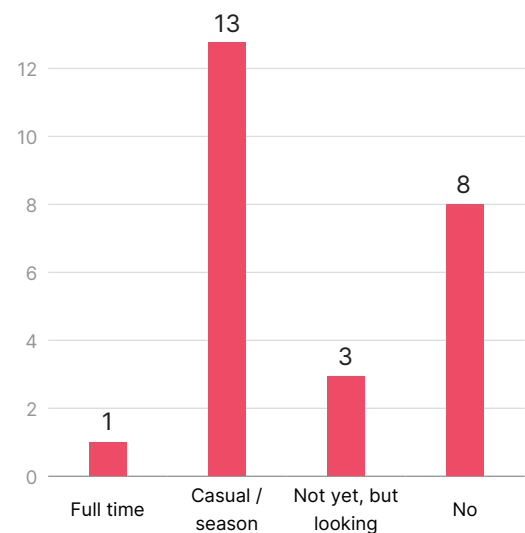


FIGURE 22. Employment for visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

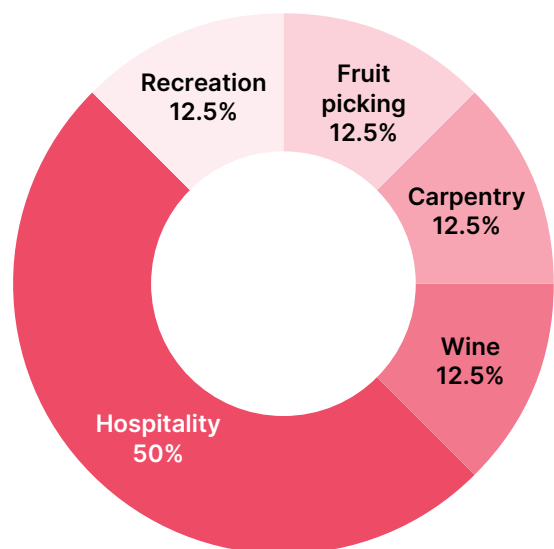


FIGURE 23. Employment industry for visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Rough sleepers amongst visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River

Of the 25 survey participants, 92% reported they were currently sleeping rough⁸. Of these people, 19 (76%) were sleeping in a car or van, 3 people (12%) were sleeping in a tent and one person responded that they were sleeping in the bush (as shown in Figure 24). Only one person responded that they were staying with friends, and one other person was staying in a hostel or backpackers at the time of survey.

As presented in Figure 25, all 25 respondents indicated that they have had at least some level of difficulty finding accommodation in the area, with the main issue being that they were either too expensive (63%) or there were no vacancies (37%). Notably, one respondent indicated that there was not enough work in the area and two people indicated that there was no employer accommodation available.

For those staying in a car, van, tent or informal area, when asked separately what the main issue was, only one person indicated that they were doing so by choice and one other gave flexibility as the reason for doing so.

When asked if respondents felt safe where they were sleeping, 52% (13 people) said yes, 28% (7 people) said sometimes, while 20% (5 people) did not feel safe (as shown in Figure 26).

In addition, when asked if they would use a low-cost, basic overflow camping option that was made available, 88% (22 people) said yes and 12% (3 people) said maybe.

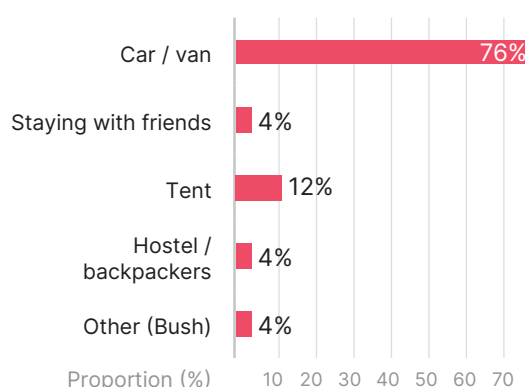


FIGURE 24. Where visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River slept in the week prior to Connections Week

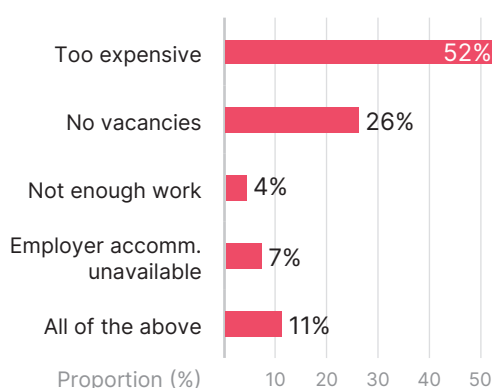


FIGURE 25. Where visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River slept in the week prior to Connections Week

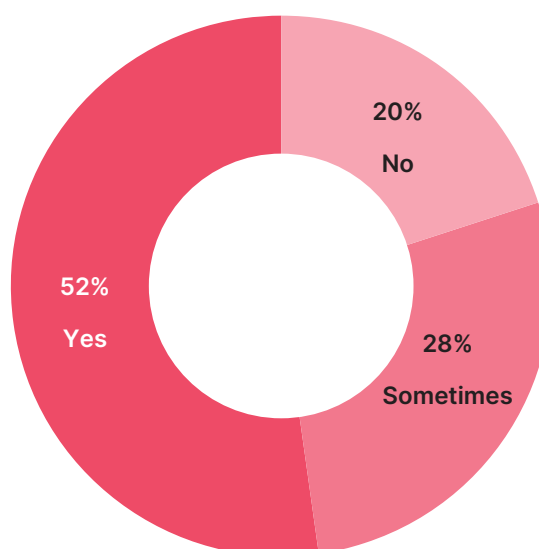


FIGURE 26. Safety of visitors, travellers and seasonal workers in Augusta Margaret River when asked if they felt safe

⁸ Sleeping rough refers to the sense of staying in any place not meant for permanent human habitation. This includes sleeping without any covering or protection, sleeping in a tent or sleeping in a vehicle.

6. Recommendations

This Report uncovers a complex and nuanced set of challenges unique to AMR. More information and consultation are required to ensure that the right solutions are implemented for the community. The data highlights significant levels of long-term homelessness in AMR, with survey respondents facing significant barriers to accessing basic needs and support. Many people were also found to be facing multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities, including combinations of mental health, alcohol and drug use and chronic health conditions.

Based on the information presented in this Report and the needs outlined above, two key recommendations have been developed to address the critical challenges identified and improve outcomes for those experiencing homelessness in AMR:

1. Establish a place-based multi-agency homelessness alliance (The Alliance) to:

- Deliberate on the key findings and place-based needs highlighted in this Report.
- Formulate strategies to address the identified needs.
- Engage decision makers in funding commitments, actions and policy changes.

2. Establish a dedicated community organiser

- A place-based role to drive coordination, engagement, connection and frontline response.

Opportunities for the Alliance

Various needs that were shared from the community and learned during this project have helped the AMR Connections Week team bring together the following list of opportunities for the Alliance to investigate and consider:

1. Investment in place-based social services, delivered locally.
2. A place-based service to manage an ongoing By Name List (BNL) and establish a housing first model for those most vulnerable.
3. A collective service model that is responsive, low-barrier, flexible, innovative, and genuinely person-centred.
4. An engagement hub that provides access to basic amenities, infrastructure and essentials, and provides a place to house an ongoing and regular service provision day/week in lieu of place based services being available ongoing.
5. Trauma-informed health, mental health, and AOD responses, alongside broader advocacy for best practice across essential services.
6. Cross-sector advocacy aligned with Shire priorities, community plans, and local service needs.
7. Crisis accommodation.
8. Review of the WA Government's "hub and spoke" funding model to ensure regional areas have sufficient access to services.

9. Mental Health Commissioning engagement and funding.
10. A community awareness and stigma reduction campaign.
11. Review and align the Social and Affordable Housing Taskforce⁹ to:
 - Re-establish its purpose, scope, mission and vision, and terms of reference in line with Connections Week findings.
 - Identify opportunities to broaden membership to include relevant stakeholders.
 - Consider alignment or integration with The Alliance to reduce duplication and strengthen collective impact.
12. A Social worker to:
 - Manage the BNL, continuing and strengthening data collection.
 - Provide an individualised, person-centred triage service.
 - Collaborate across services to provide referrals and feedback grassroots experiences into The Alliance.
13. The role of the community organiser could:
 - Convene and facilitate collaboration of The Alliance.
 - Drive responses to the key findings to the report.
 - Facilitate shared learning.



Ranger James picking up breakfast packs to offer folks sleeping rough in the bush

Where to from here?

The establishment of The Alliance and Community Organiser requires funding.

The stakeholders involved in Connections Week, including the local community and State Government are compelled to come together to drive funding efforts.

⁹ Established in 2022, the Social and Affordable Housing Taskforce provides a place-based focus for social and affordable housing in the AMR region, bringing stakeholders together to collaborate, share information and move housing initiatives forward. Objectives include supporting the development of social and affordable housing projects in the area; sharing knowledge and providing technical support to help steer projects and overcome barriers and; facilitating engagement with decision-makers.

The Taskforce includes representatives of local government, community housing providers, community organisations, people with lived experience of homelessness and housing stress, and other key stakeholders in the region. It is convened by Just Home and funded by the Shire of AMR.

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Volunteers serving lunch at the Margaret River Community Centre

