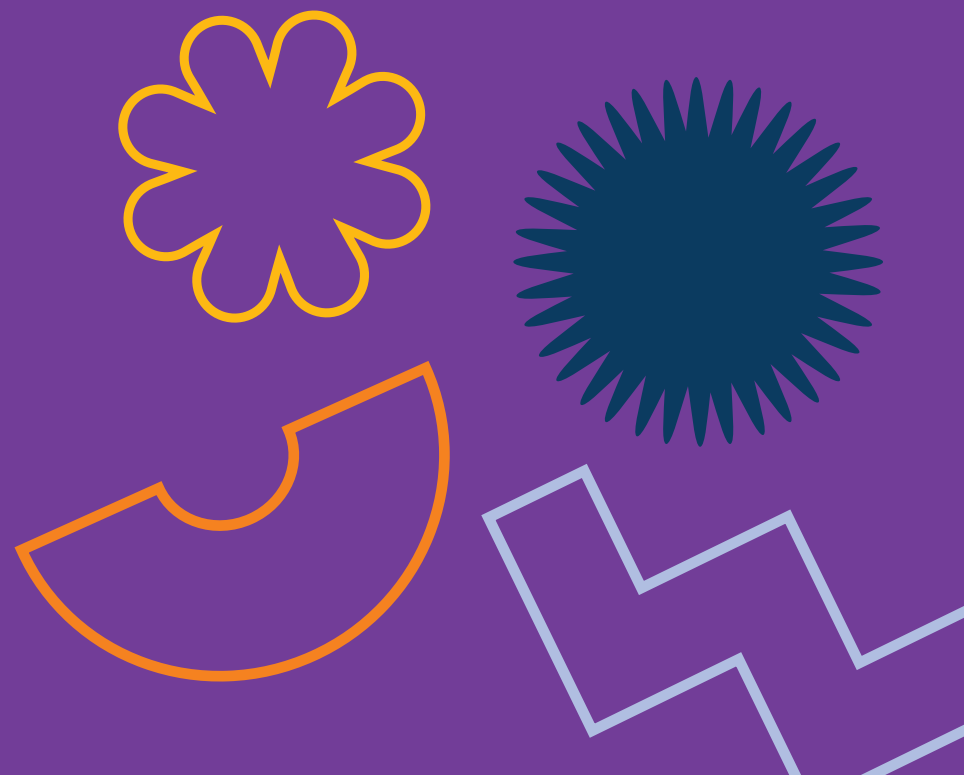


# ***HOMELESSNESS:*** ***A RESOURCE AND EDUCATION GUIDE***





# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
DEFINITIONS	4
ABOUT HOMELESSNESS	5
What is homelessness?	7
Breaking stereotypes	8
Case study	9
HOMELESSNESS IN BOROONDARA	10
Trends in homelessness	11
Rough sleeping	12
FACTS AND DATA	13
The extent of homelessness	14
Who is most at risk	15
SUPPORTING ROUGH SLEEPERS	16
Referring rough sleepers to Council for support	17
What does Council do with your report?	18
WHAT CAN I DO?	19
Volunteering	20
Organise an event	21
EVENTS	22
RESOURCES	23
ORGANISATIONS	24
SUPPORT	25





# FOREWORD

## SUMMARY

City of Boroondara aims to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in many ways. 'Homelessness: A Resource and Education Guide' has been created to help young people better understand the causes and complexities of homelessness to reduce stereotypes and stigma.

This guide also provides useful information about local services and resources where you can find support or get involved to combat homelessness.

For further information about support services and to learn more about Council's response to homelessness, contact Council's Safer Communities Planner (Homelessness) at

✉ [homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au)

☎ 9278 4326

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*City of Boroondara acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land and we pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities.*

City of Boroondara acknowledges the support and generosity of the organisations, staff and volunteers included in this kit who help support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We would also like to acknowledge Youth Voice, in particular, Ben Chesler, Max Gin, Rhea Werner and Tom Saxton for their valuable feedback and contributions to the guide during its development.





# DEFINITIONS

## HOMELESSNESS

A person is considered to be homeless when they don't have accommodation that is safe, secure and appropriate.

➔ [boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness](https://boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness)

## ROUGH SLEEPING

Sleeping rough can refer to anyone who is living on the streets, sleeping in parks, or squatting in derelict buildings for temporary shelter.

➔ [launchhousing.org.au/explainer-rough-sleeping](https://launchhousing.org.au/explainer-rough-sleeping)

## COUCH SURFING

Staying overnight with different people who provide basic accommodation such as a couch to sleep on.

## SOCIAL HOUSING

Housing provided by government agencies or non-profit organisations for people on low incomes with housing needs.

## CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation provided to alleviate a crisis situation, such as homelessness, domestic or family violence.

## SPECIALIST HOMELESS SERVICES (SHS)

Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness.

➔ [aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/glossary](https://aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/glossary)

## AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS) CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

Every five years, the ABS counts every person and household in Australia.

The Census is the most comprehensive snapshot of the country and tells the story of how we are changing. The data also tells us about the economic, social and cultural make-up of the country. The Census provides an estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.

➔ [abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census](https://abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census)





# ***ABOUT HOMELESS- NESS***



***‘ON ANY GIVEN  
NIGHT IN AUSTRALIA,  
1 IN 200 PEOPLE  
ARE HOMELESS.  
IN FACT, YOU MIGHT  
KNOW SOMEONE  
WHO IS STRUGGLING  
RIGHT NOW.’***



# WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

Homelessness means more than not having a roof over your head. People are considered homeless when they do not have accommodation that is safe, secure and appropriate.

This can include:

**ROUGH SLEEPING (SLEEPING ON THE STREET)**

**LIVING IN AN ABANDONED BUILDING**

**SLEEPING IN A CAR**

**LIVING IN SEVERELY OVERCROWDED HOUSING**

**COUCH SURFING (SLEEPING TEMPORARILY IN A SERIES OF OTHER PEOPLE'S HOMES).**

Many people, especially young people, think that because they aren't on the street, they aren't homeless.<sup>1</sup>

For example, often people who couch surf don't see themselves as homeless and so don't reach out to get the support they need. You can find information about support services on page 24.



➔ 1. [mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf](https://mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf)



# ***BREAKING STEREOTYPES***

The causes of homelessness are often misunderstood. A shortage of housing that is increasingly unaffordable, and inadequate income for many Australians, means that thousands of people struggle to find a secure and affordable place to live.<sup>2</sup>

Homelessness can happen to anyone and can be caused by:

**FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**A SHORTAGE OF HOUSING**

**PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL  
HEALTH ISSUES**

**UNEMPLOYMENT OR JOB LOSS**

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE  
AND ADDICTION**

**FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP  
BREAKDOWN**

**NOT FEELING SAFE AT HOME.**

All of these factors, or a combination of them, can contribute to homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

In Victoria, the top three reasons for people seeking homelessness and housing assistance during 2020-21 were financial difficulties, family and domestic violence, and the housing crisis.<sup>4</sup>

The most common reason young people are forced into homelessness is because of family breakdown<sup>2</sup>. Causes for family breakdown include financial pressure, parental conflict, poor mental health and wellbeing, and peer influence.

If you need support (which includes talking to someone about family breakdown), contact headspace on **9006 6500** or at **headspace.org.au**

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➔ 2. [chp.org.au/about-homelessness/causes-of-homelessness](https://chp.org.au/about-homelessness/causes-of-homelessness)

➔ 3. [salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/homelessness-services/why-are-people-homeless](https://salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/homelessness-services/why-are-people-homeless)

➔ 4. [mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf](https://mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf)



# ***CASE STUDY***

**“I SLEPT IN PARKS; I SLEPT ON TRAIN STATIONS. IT ACTUALLY IS PRETTY SCARY AT TIMES...”**

## **MARK\*, 17, HOMELESS DUE TO FAMILY BREAKDOWN**

Mark's home life was “pretty good” until his mother remarried. “I had stepfather issues,” he says. “It was going well until he turned on me. I just gave up and ended up on the streets. I slept in parks; I slept on train stations. It actually is pretty scary at times. You don't know if you are going to wake up the next morning – whether you'll be dead or alive.”

Although he spent some time on the streets, Mark has survived largely by ‘couch surfing’ at mates' places. “Sometimes there are no dramas,” he says, but, “if it is a close mate you have known for years, you don't want to lose a mate because you've worn out your welcome.”

At just 22, Mark has been homeless for much of the past five years and is on the waiting list for public housing. He accesses support and advocacy through a number of services including The Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service (YOS). He and his partner also use the YOS drop-in facilities for showers and food, and for general support and referrals.

Despite conjuring images of a warm house, comfy couch and the company of friends, according to a youth worker for YOS, young people who ‘couch surf’ face some very real dangers and challenges. “There is the constant stress of waiting to be tossed out on the street any time. They feel very vulnerable and it is extra hard for those trying to stay engaged in schooling. Plus, there is a lack of privacy and a disturbed lifestyle.”

While huge transformations often occur, it can be a long road. Some have been experiencing homelessness for many years, so there is a lot of damage and unhealthy mindsets to unravel. Every case is different, but every case is equally important. Sticking with them and not giving up is vital.<sup>5</sup>

If you need support due to family violence or breakdown or are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Victoria, see page 24 for support services. YOS does not operate in Victoria.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities*

**“I JUST GAVE UP AND ENDED UP ON THE STREETS...”**

**“THERE IS THE CONSTANT STRESS OF WAITING TO BE TOSSED OUT ON THE STREET...”**



***HOMELESSNESS***

***IN***

***BOROONDARA***



# TRENDS IN HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a growing national problem, as housing affordability, availability, and other forces such as the cost of living and the COVID-19 pandemic, impact on the ability of people to access housing. This impact can be seen in Boroondara.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates the number of people who were homeless on Census night increased from 383 people in 2011 to 426 people in 2016 in Boroondara. The latest Census data on homelessness will be available next year.<sup>6</sup>

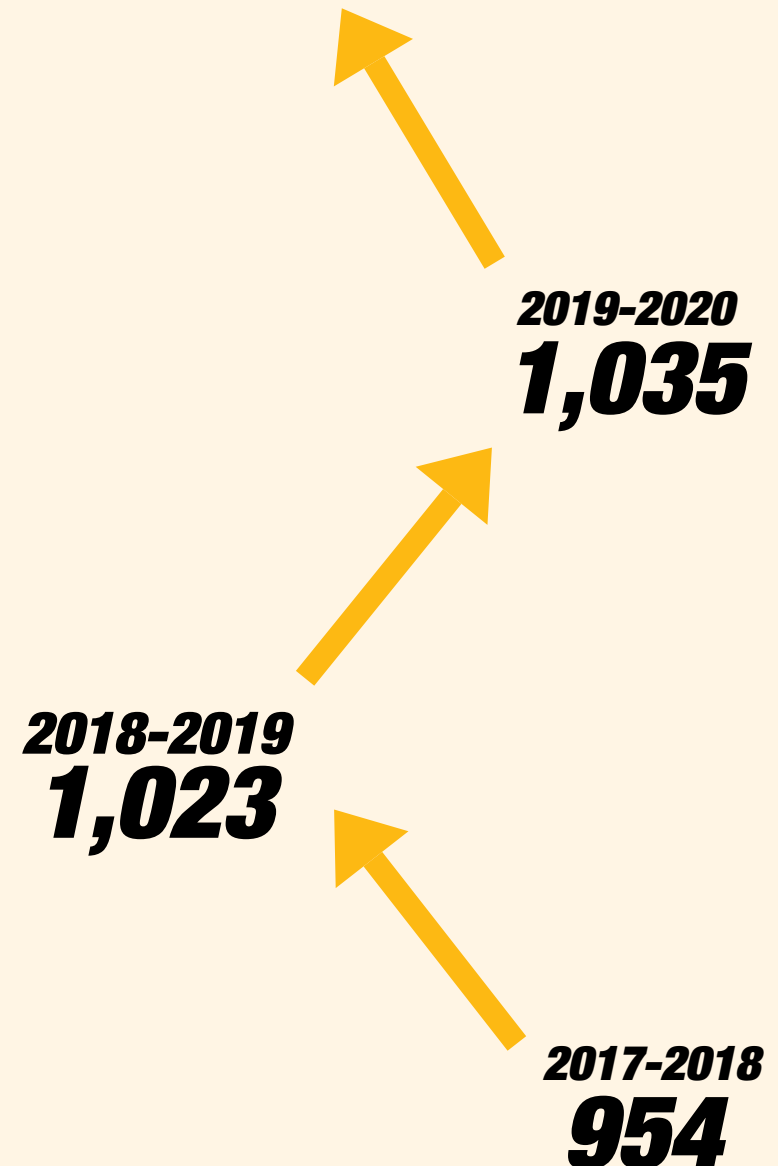
Due to the dynamic and often hidden nature of homelessness, it is difficult to obtain accurate data, and

these figures likely under represent the true extent of homelessness in Boroondara.<sup>7</sup>

The scale of the issue is also measured by the number of people seeking homelessness support from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). This can range from accommodation to providing specialised services such as counselling and legal support.

In Boroondara, this number has been steadily increasing. In 2017-18, 954 people accessed SHS compared to 1,023 in 2018-19 and 1,035 in 2019-20. Women, children and young people are the most typical service users of SHS.<sup>8</sup>

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACCESSING SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES FROM 2017-20



→ 6. [abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census](https://abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census)

→ 7. DHHS, 2018 Victoria's homelessness and rough sleeping action plan: [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201802/Rough%20Sleeping%20Action%20Plan\\_20180207.pdf](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201802/Rough%20Sleeping%20Action%20Plan_20180207.pdf)

→ 8. AIHW, 2020 Specialist Homelessness Services Collection Data cubes 2011-12 to 2019-20



# ***ROUGH SLEEPING***

While rough sleeping is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to homelessness, in recent years Boroondara has seen a rise in the number of people sleeping rough (for example on the streets, in parks and in vehicles).

Each person who sleeps rough and the factors that lead them there are unique, but everyone who sleeps rough is in an extremely difficult situation and at an increased risk of physical and mental health problems (Launch Housing).<sup>9</sup>

Common rough sleeping locations in Boroondara include:

**PARKS, GARDENS AND SPORTSGROUNDS  
(OFTEN PAVILIONS)**

**PUBLIC TOILETS**

**AROUND LIBRARIES**

**AROUND COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND  
NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES**

**IN VEHICLES (PARKED ON THE STREET  
AND IN PUBLIC CAR PARKS)**

**IN SHOPPING CENTRE CAR PARKS.**



***FACTS***

***AND***

***DATA***



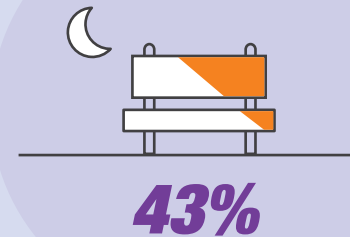
# THE EXTENT OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is increasing both in Boroondara and Australia-wide.

While the latest ABS Census data on homelessness will be released next year, data from 2016 showed:



**people were homeless in Australia.**  
An increase from 102,439 in 2011.



**increase in homelessness in Victoria between 2006-16.**  
In 2016 24,817 people were reported as homeless, compared to 22,306 people in 2011 and 17,410 people in 2006



**39%**

**of people reported as homeless were under 25 years old.**



**21%**

**Victorians make up 21% of the homeless population in Australia.**



**426**

**people were counted as homeless in Boroondara on census night in 2016.**  
An increase from 383 people in 2011.



## WHO IS MOST AT RISK:

Older women are the fastest growing group to experience homelessness in Australia (ABS, 2016)<sup>10</sup>



A third of those at risk of homelessness have children in their care<sup>10</sup>



Compared to the national population, those at risk of homelessness are more likely to be:

Female



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



Living in a lone-person or lone-parent household



Low income



Unemployed or outside the labour force



In receipt of income support payments



## THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO: <sup>10</sup>

Identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual



Report fair or poor health



Have lower levels of education



→ 10. [swinburne.edu.au/news/2021/11/we-identified-whos-most-at-risk-of-homelessness-and-where-they-are-now-we-must-act-before-its-too-late](https://www.swinburne.edu.au/news/2021/11/we-identified-whos-most-at-risk-of-homelessness-and-where-they-are-now-we-must-act-before-its-too-late)





***SUPPORTING***

***ROUGH***

***SLEEPERS***



# ***REFERRING ROUGH SLEEPERS TO COUNCIL FOR SUPPORT***

If you see someone sleeping rough on the streets, in a car, in a park or abandoned building, follow the steps below so Council's Safer Communities Planner (Homelessness) can arrange support.

## **STEP 1: COLLECT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION**

- Location and detailed description of person and their belongings for example blue suitcase, red sleeping bag
- Time and date you saw them
- Any risks to staff (e.g. unpredictable behaviour)

## **STEP 2: EMAIL THE INFORMATION**

Email the information to **[homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au)**

You do not need to approach someone who is sleeping rough to collect the above information.

If, for any reason, it is not safe to collect the above information, do not do so.  
If there is an immediate safety concern call **000**





# ***WHAT DOES COUNCIL DO WITH YOUR REPORT?***

Council partners with The Salvation Army – Homelessness East who visit rough sleepers to offer support services such as information about crisis accommodation. The Salvation Army team also attend with a nurse from Bolton Clarke's Homeless Person's Program to conduct health checks. You can read more about these services on page 24.

When you report someone sleeping rough to Council, the Safer Communities Planner (Homelessness) will refer them to The Salvation Army – Homelessness East to complete an outreach service or explore other options, such as referring them to Victoria Police for a welfare check.

Council collects data on homelessness and uses it to advocate for more and better housing and support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Visit Council's Housing and Homelessness page to find out more:

➔ **[boroondara.vic.gov.au/  
homelessness](https://boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness)**





***WHAT***

***CAN***

***I DO?***



# VOLUNTEERING

If you have time, volunteering can be a wonderful way to give back to your community. A number of opportunities are available supporting people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness such as serving food, organising emergency relief, organising art and craft activities, events and more!

Our Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre (BVRC) promotes volunteer opportunities on behalf of local community organisations.

The BVRC advertises all current volunteer opportunities on the volunteering portal where you can express interest in roles and create a volunteer account.

You can view current volunteer opportunities at **[volunteer.boroondara.vic.gov.au](https://volunteer.boroondara.vic.gov.au)** by searching 'homelessness'.

You can also volunteer locally at:

## THE SALVATION ARMY

→ [salvationarmy.org.au](https://salvationarmy.org.au)

## BOROONDARA COMMUNITY OUTREACH

→ [bcokew.org/volunteer](https://bcokew.org/volunteer)

## CAMCARE

→ [camcare.org.au](https://camcare.org.au)

## SERVANTS COMMUNITY HOUSING

→ [servants.org.au/volunteers](https://servants.org.au/volunteers)





# ***ORGANISE AN EVENT***

## **MOVIE SCREENING**

Organise a movie screening at your school with a film to educate your peers about homelessness. See page 24 for some films to choose from.

## **PRESENT AT AN EVENT**

Present at your school or host a breakfast, dinner or BBQ or dedicate a sports day to awareness raising where you can hand out flyers and educate people about homelessness.

## **RAISE FUNDS AT AN EVENT**

Organise a fundraising event and donate the funds you raise to a local community organisation, through:

**A BAKE SALE**

**QUIZ NIGHT**

**SCHOOL SLEEPOVER**

**FREE DRESS DAY**

**WEAR A HAT TO WORK/SCHOOL DAY**





# EVENTS

## HOMELESSNESS WEEK

Homelessness Week is a national event that aims to raise awareness of the causes and impact of homelessness.

Homelessness Week is held annually from 1 – 7 August.

To find out more and get involved visit:

➔ [homelessnessaustralia.org.au](https://homelessnessaustralia.org.au)

## YOUTH HOMELESSNESS MATTERS DAY

Youth Homelessness Matters Day (YHMD) is the annual national awareness day for youth homelessness in Australia. It's a day of learning, understanding and advocacy.

YHMD is held on the third Wednesday of April each year.

Visit their Facebook page to find out more:

➔ [facebook.com/yhmday/about](https://facebook.com/yhmday/about)





# RESOURCES

## READING

**We Are Here: Stories of Home, Places & Belonging** edited by Meg Mundell

**Anthology: Stories of Respect, Dignity and Hope.** Authors Antoniadis, Anthony. Kong, Jeremy. Ling, Esther. Servants Community Housing (Vic.)

**The Guardian – Homelessness + housing**

→ [theguardian.com/society/homelessness+housing](https://theguardian.com/society/homelessness+housing)

Register for a membership at Boroondara Libraries and search 'homelessness' in Boroondara's Library catalogue.

You don't have to live in the City of Boroondara to become a member, but you do need a Victorian residential address. Temporary visitors to the area may join for a limited period.

If you are under 18, a parent or legal guardian must sign your membership card.



## WATCHING

**The Pursuit of Happyness** starring Will Smith and son, Jaden Smith in a moving tale about a struggling salesman trying to support his son.

**You Can't Ask That – Series 2: Homeless**

→ [iview.abc.net.au/video/LE1617H012S00](https://iview.abc.net.au/video/LE1617H012S00)

Watch Servants Community Housing residents, Jayden and Mikyla Battey, on Channel 10's The Project, talk about their experience working as in-house tenancy managers

→ [youtube.com/watch?v=W9d8vBX7t0w](https://youtube.com/watch?v=W9d8vBX7t0w)

See stories about homelessness on Vice

→ [video.vice.com/en\\_us/topic/homeless](https://video.vice.com/en_us/topic/homeless)

## LISTENING

Boroondara Youth's Solar Productions has produced a special episode for the podcast series 'Bloom' on Homelessness Week. Produced by Hayley Cheung and Nia McCatty with special guests Brea Dorsett and Belinda Battey.

→ [soundcloud.com/boroondarayouth](https://soundcloud.com/boroondarayouth)

Young and Homeless by Yfoundations

→ [rss.com/podcasts/youngandhomeless](https://rss.com/podcasts/youngandhomeless)

## REFERENCE LIST

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing

→ [abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census](https://abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census)

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

→ [aihw.gov.au](https://aihw.gov.au)

Frontyard resource booklet

→ [mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf](https://mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/documents/frontyard/frontyard-school-resource-booklet.pdf)

Council to Homeless Persons

→ [chp.org.au/about-homelessness/causes-of-homelessness](https://chp.org.au/about-homelessness/causes-of-homelessness)

Launch Housing, Explainer: The homelessness services system and demand for services

→ [launchhousing.org.au](https://launchhousing.org.au)

The Salvation Army

→ [salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/homelessness-services/homelessness-fact-sheet](https://salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/homelessness-services/homelessness-fact-sheet)

Boroondara Homelessness resource

→ [boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness](https://boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness)



# ORGANISATIONS

There are many organisations that support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Boroondara. Loneliness and social isolation are common experiences for people who are homeless, and these organisations provide a community where people can feel connected and supported.

## The Salvation Army

Homelessness East provides information and referral, crisis accommodation and ongoing support for people who are at risk or experiencing homelessness.

➔ [salvationarmy.org.au](https://salvationarmy.org.au)

## The Salvation Army Camberwell Corps

provides takeaway meals and emergency relief products such as non-perishable groceries and toiletries. They also run weekly exercise classes for people on low incomes.

➔ [salvationarmy.org.au](https://salvationarmy.org.au)

## Bolton Clarke's Homeless Persons Program

provides a primary healthcare response to people on the streets, in parks, at food programs, in low-cost hostels, boarding houses, caravan parks or living in crisis accommodation.

➔ [boltonclarke.com.au/additional-services/homeless-person-program](https://boltonclarke.com.au/additional-services/homeless-person-program)

## Boroondara Community Outreach (BCO)

is a mental health ministry where staff and volunteers support people who are socially isolated or living with a mental illness. They help people engage, belong and contribute to our community.

*“When I turned up here I discovered a community to belong to, not an organisation that provides a service, and they are two really different things. That’s what makes this place unique”*

➔ [Boroondara Community Outreach  
bcokew.org](https://bcokew.org)

## Camcare

is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation that assists people from Boroondara and neighbouring areas who are facing personal hardship or difficult life circumstances. This may be food relief in a crisis, connecting people to other services, or professional counselling for new parents, unsettled teenagers or vulnerable families.

➔ [camcare.org.au](https://camcare.org.au)

## Servants Community Housing

provides safe, affordable housing for people on low incomes. Servants is more than a social community housing provider – they aim to create communities where respect, dignity, hope and opportunity are nurtured.

➔ [servants.org.au](https://servants.org.au)

## Drop-in at Hawthorn Community House

is a safe space for people experiencing social exclusion to connect with others in their community. Every Wednesday, lunch is served. They also hold regular health screening sessions to connect attendees to vital health services, and support workers are available to assist participants to access services.

➔ [thewellresource.org.au/topics/mental-health/share/drop-in](https://thewellresource.org.au/topics/mental-health/share/drop-in)

You can find many more organisations that provide free and accessible services for people at risk or experiencing homelessness in Council’s ‘Help at Hand’ Homelessness Food and Support Guide.

➔ [boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness](https://boroondara.vic.gov.au/homelessness)



# SUPPORT

If you or someone you know needs support, you can contact:



## Frontyard

Located in Melbourne's CBD. Frontyard provides multidisciplinary holistic programs to meet the needs of young people aged 12 to 24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

☎ 03 9977 0077

🖱 [mcm.org.au/homelessness/frontyard](https://mcm.org.au/homelessness/frontyard)

📍 19 King Street, Melbourne



## Boroondara Youth

Provides one-on-one information, support and referrals for young people aged 10-25 years. We also offer drop-in support from 12pm to 6pm.

☎ 9278 4608

🖱 [boroondara.vic.gov.au/youth](https://boroondara.vic.gov.au/youth)

📍 Level 1, 360 Burwood Road, Hawthorn



## headspace Hawthorn

Support for young people aged 12 to 25, including doctors, general counselling, family therapy, housing, education and training for sexual health, mental health and alcohol and other drugs.

☎ 9006 6500

🖱 [headspace.org.au/headspace-centres](https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres)

📍 Level 1, 360 Burwood Road, Hawthorn





## QUESTIONS?

Contact Council's Safer Communities Planner (Homelessness)

 **9278 4326**

 **[homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:homelessness@boroondara.vic.gov.au)**