



RSL
Tasmania



27/03/2023

The Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place
HOBART TASMANIA 7000

Dear Minister,

Homelessness is a pressure most people will feel and fear in their lifetime, whether through housing stress in the rental market or the rapid increase in mortgage rates. This fear is a reality for an estimated 2350 people in Tasmania as indicated by the shocking ABS figures published in the Hobart Mercury (March 23 p3). These are statistics that none of us can be proud of, after all without the stability of a home, it's hard to do anything, and that's before we start talking about wellbeing.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute conducted a study on the ADF, and its findings are very concerning. The figure among our Veterans is disgraceful, 5.3% of recently transitioning ADF personnel experience homelessness. Without sounding alarmist, the ADF rate is 178% higher than that of the general population.

May I ask you to pause and think about that for a second.

178% higher in a group that has a 127% rate of suicide in females and 27% higher in males than the general population. If there was ever an example of compounding an issue, I do not believe you would need to look much further than this situation.

After much hard work and lobbying by RSL Tasmania, we are thankful that Veterans are now listed as a targeted action group within the Tasmania Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027. Homelessness is associated with elevated suicide risk, and both must be tackled head-on if we don't want people to become a statistic.

The Black Dog Institute of Australia's publication concludes that social determinants such as homelessness are risk factors for suicide. [What-Can-Be-Done-To-Decrease-Suicide Chapter-2-Social-Determinants.pdf \(blackdoginstitute.org.au\)](#). Furthermore, whilst it is US based, the following article provides the theory of homelessness and suicide go together for veterans. [Association between suicide attempts and homelessness in a population-based sample of US veterans and non-veterans - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

RSL Tasmania works very closely with the Salvation Army in this area, and we have 30 Veterans on our books for whom we are actively looking for homes. Over the last 14 months, we have housed or helped house 17 people.

Please do not consider the above success, we don't. We are trying, but it would be fair to say this does keep some staff and our members awake at night.

Homelessness is going to be one of the significant issues of our time. It is only fair to say the state government cannot do everything, but it needs to show stronger leadership in this area. We would ask the state government if it really wants to build, then we would applaud them to build houses and homes that our communities can thrive in.

We believe in a hand up, not a hand out, maybe the state government stretches its hand a little further. True leaders will always say "follow me".

Your humble servants



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