

Southern Homelessness Services Network

Advocacy Survey Report

2022



Contents

1. About the SHSN 2022 Advocacy Survey.....	2
2. Summary of Survey Results.....	2
3. Priority Groups.....	5
3.1 New/Emerging Client Groups	5
3.2 Large Client Groups.....	7
3.3 Priority Client Groups.....	9
3.4 Commentary	11
4. Priority Issues.....	12
4.1 New /Emerging Issues.....	12
4.2 High Impact Issues	14
4.3 Priority Issues.....	16
4.4 Commentary	18
5. Priority Areas.....	19
6. Additional Comments	20
6.1 Homelessness Service System	20
6.2 Increasing Complexity of Client Need.....	20
6.3 Housing Options.....	21

1. About the SHSN 2022 Advocacy Survey

The Southern Homelessness Services Network (SHSN) Homelessness Week Advocacy Survey ran from 29 July – 12 August 2022. The Survey was sent to the SHSN email list of approximately 500 subscribers across the Southern region of Melbourne and to SHSN member agencies and could also be forwarded on to colleagues.

This report presents the results of the survey across the whole Southern region, and divided between respondents who work in the Inner/Middle South and Outer South. The report presents the priority, groups, issues and areas as nominated by the survey respondents. These priorities will inform the advocacy work of the SHSN and our members, particularly in the lead up to the 2022 Victorian election.

The survey received 90 responses and the respondents were anonymous. 82% of respondents work in the Specialist Homelessness Service Sector (SHS), including entry points, crisis support and accommodation, youth, transitional support and Tenancy Plus services.

10% of respondents work in local government and the remainder work in a variety of community services including health, mental health and housing.

The Southern Region comprises the following ten local government areas (LGAs) divided into Inner/Middle South and Outer South:

<u>Inner/Middle South LGAs</u>	<u>Outer South LGAs</u>
• Bayside	• Cardinia
• Glen Eira	• Casey
• Kingston	• Frankston
• Port Phillip	• Greater Dandenong
• Stonnington	• Mornington Peninsula

This report examines the survey results across the South and divides responses between Inner/Middle and Outer South to assess if there are any significant differences across parts of the Southern region. Survey respondents worked across the Southern region, with a fairly even spread across Southern region LGAs. A total of 43 respondents worked across the Inner/Middle South LGAs and 52 respondents worked across the Outer South LGAs (note these figures add up to more than 90, as some respondents worked across both areas of the region).

2. Summary of Survey Results

In summary, the SHSN 2022 Advocacy Survey found:

- People with NDIS packages/NDIS eligible, refugees/asylum seekers and people with no income and newly homeless were identified as new/emerging groups across the South
- Singles (both single men and single women) were most commonly identified as the largest groups across the South
- Older women were more commonly identified as a new emerging group in the Outer South
- Singles (both single men and single women) were most commonly identified as the largest groups across the whole South
- Rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness also more commonly identified as a larger group in the Outer South
- Groups identified as the highest priority groups across the South represented some of the most vulnerable groups, particularly those groups including children – women and children escaping family violence and families with children
- Rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also seen as priority groups across the South

- Access to housing through the NDIS, risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) and increasing demand for homelessness assistance were identified as new/emerging issues.
- The most commonly identified high impact issues across the South were increasing complexity of client need, increasing demand for homelessness assistance and access to affordable private rental housing
- Respondents from the Outer South more commonly identified access to emergency accommodation including HEF (brokerage) resourcing as a high impact issue than respondents in the Inner/Middle South.
- The highest overall priority issues relate to access to long term housing options with access to public and community housing and access to affordable private rental the highest priority issues
- The most commonly identified areas with service gaps were the outer metropolitan LGAs of Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Greater Dandenong and Casey. Out of the inner/middle South LGAs, Bayside was the most commonly identified area with service gaps.

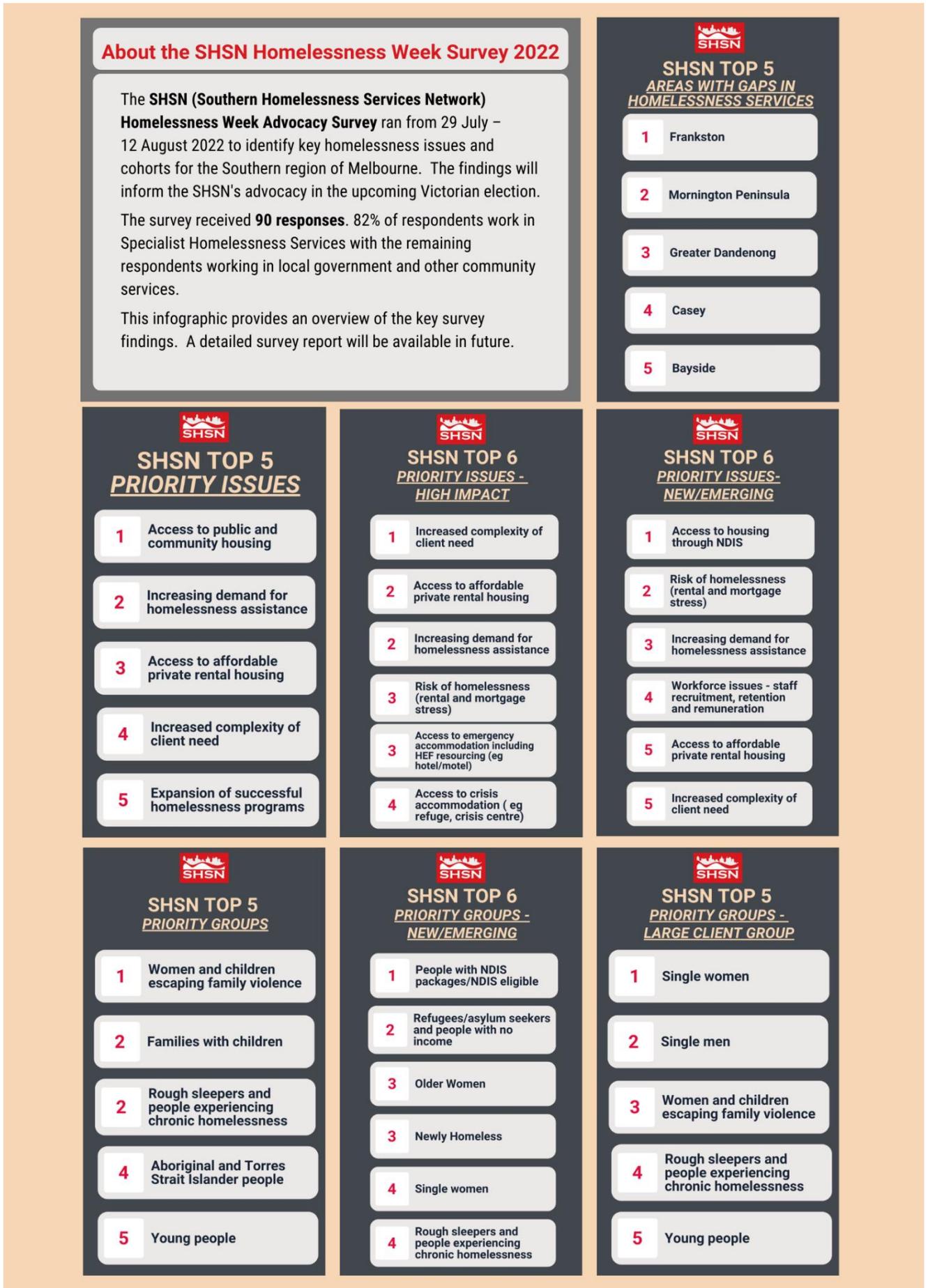
Survey respondents were asked to
*Rank these issues in order of priority, according to the
issues that you want politicians to know about*

Below are the **priority issues** as ranked by the survey respondents (with number 1 being the highest priority).

- SHSN Survey Priorities**
- 1 Access to public and community housing**
 - 2 Increasing demand for homelessness assistance**
 - 3 Access to affordable private rental housing**
 - 4 Increased complexity of client need**
 - 5 Expansion of successful homelessness programs**
 - 6 Risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress)**
 - 7 Access to crisis accommodation (youth and family violence refuges/crisis centres (eg Southbank and Bob’s Place - Launch Dandenong)**
 - 8 Access to emergency accommodation including HEF resourcing (hotels/motels/caravan parks)**
 - 9 Access to larger transitional and social housing properties (3+ bedrooms)**
 - 10 Access to foyer model for young people**
 - 11 Access to housing through NDIS**
 - 12 Workforce issues - staff recruitment, retention and remuneration**
 - 13 Access to rooming houses**
 - 14 Access to larger private rental properties (3+ bedrooms)**

Figure 1 is an infographic summarising the results of the SHSN 2022 Advocacy Survey.

Figure 1. SHSN Advocacy Survey 2022 Infographic – Top 5s



3. Priority Groups

The survey broke down the priority groups into three categories – new/emerging client groups, large clients groups and priority client groups - to see if there were differences or similarities. Respondents could select as many answers as applied.

3.1 New/Emerging Client Groups

Figure 2 shows the most common new/emerging groups identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- people with NDIS packages/NDIS eligible (28)
- refugees and asylum seekers (27)
- newly homeless (26)
- older women (26)

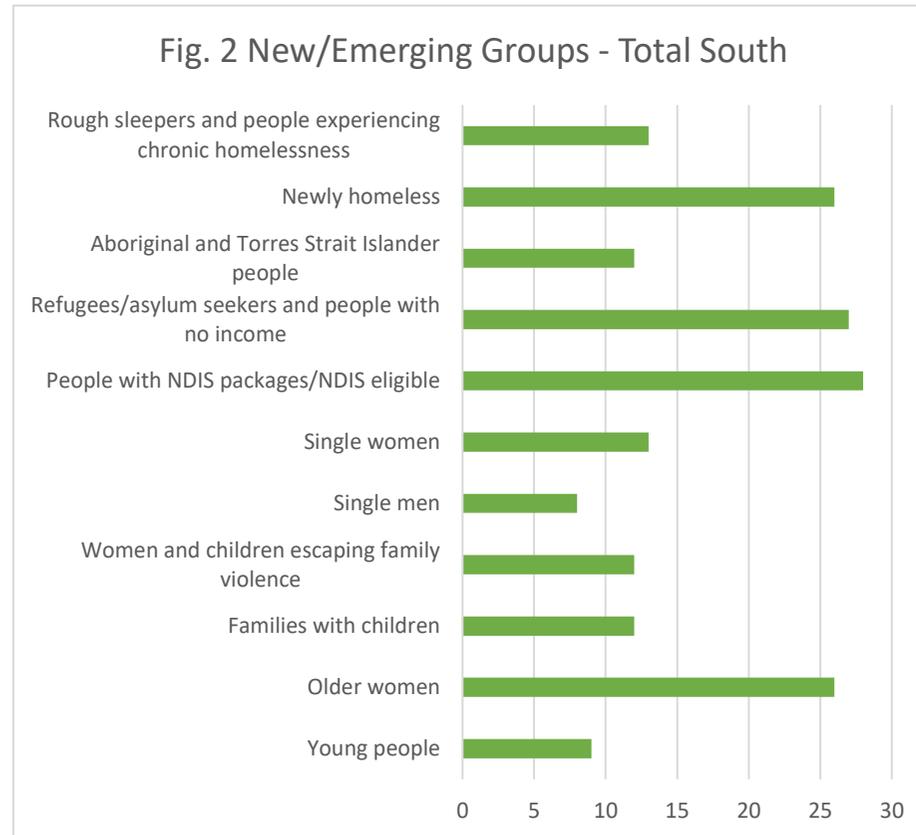
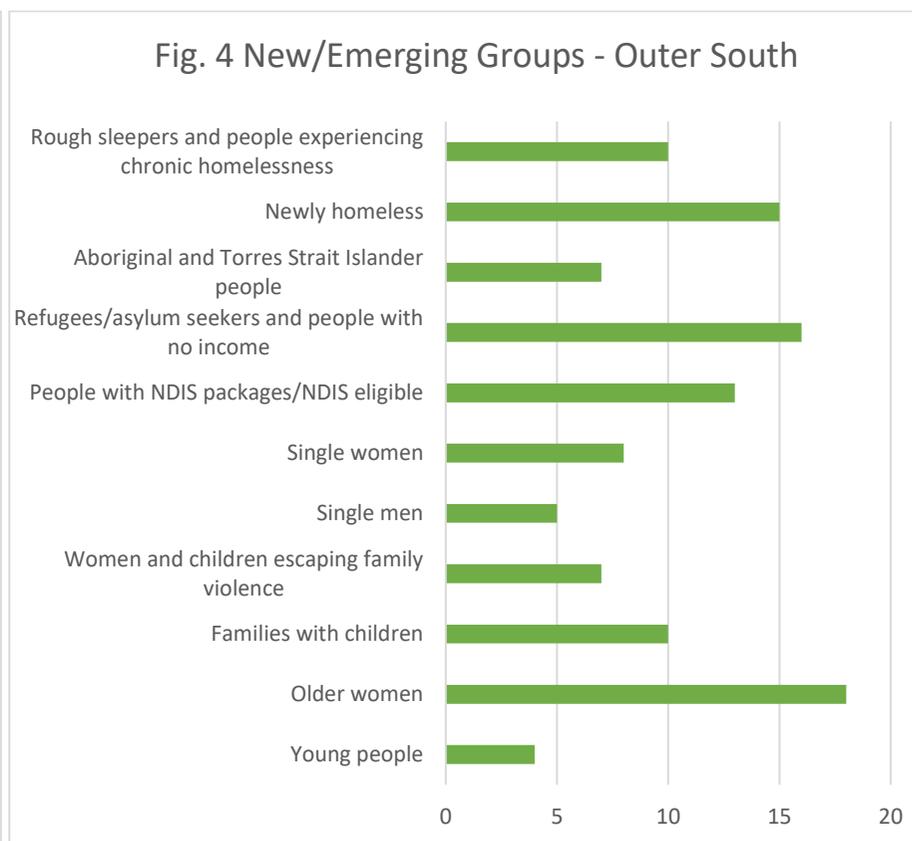
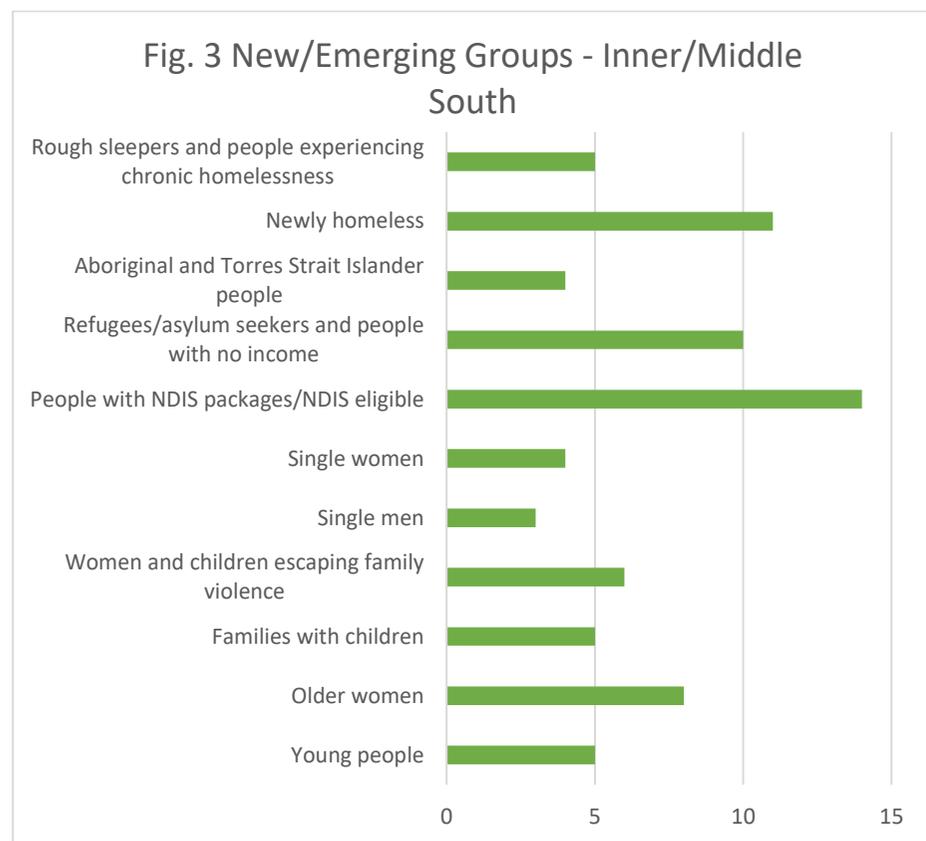


Figure 3 shows the most common new/emerging groups identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- people with NDIS packages/NDIS eligible (14)
- newly homeless (11)
- refugees/asylum seekers and people with no income (10)

Figure 4 shows the most common new/emerging groups identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- older women (18)
- refugees/asylum seekers and people with no income (16)
- newly homeless (15)



3.2 Large Client Groups

Figure 5 shows the most common large groups identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- single women (45)
- single men (44)
- women and children escaping family violence (33)
- rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness (32)

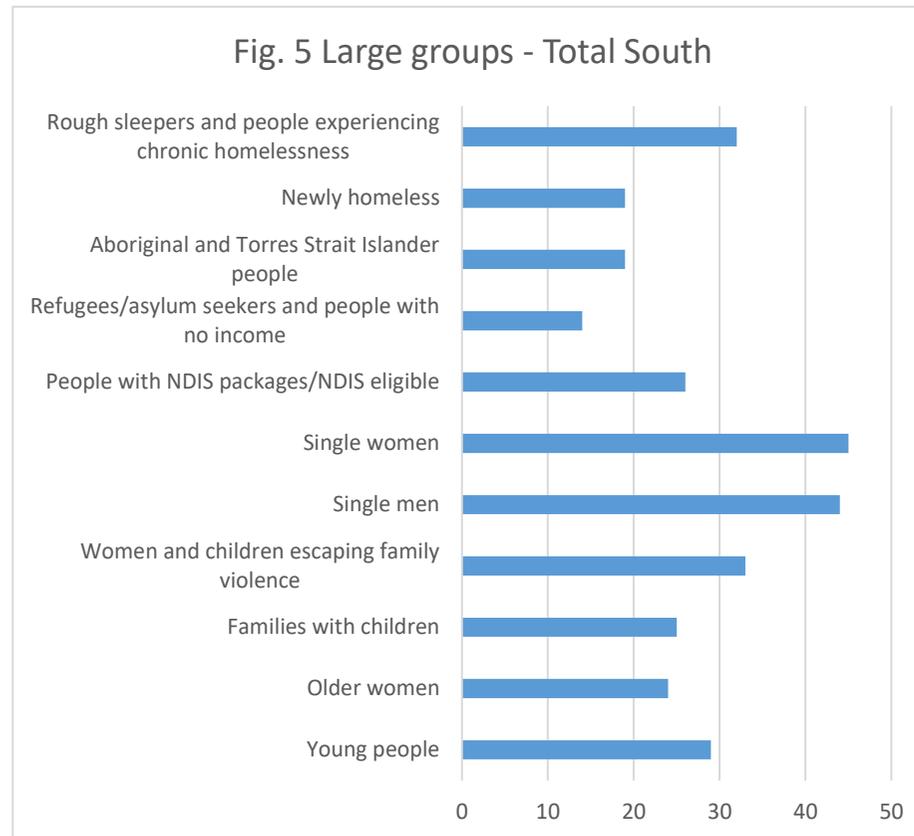
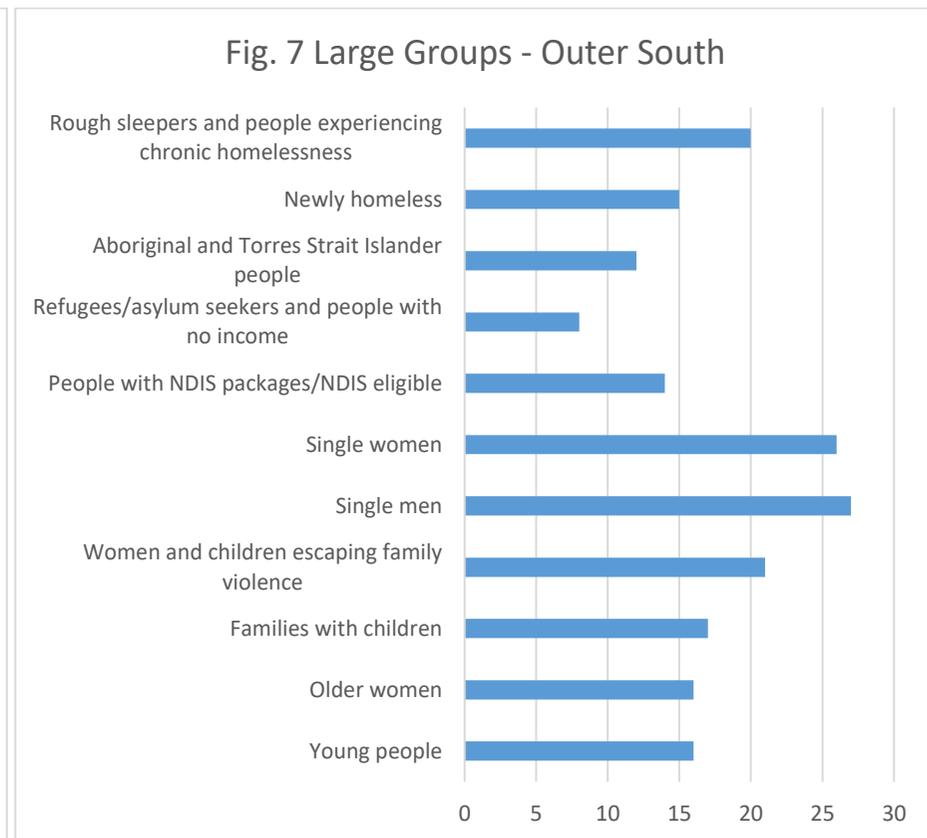
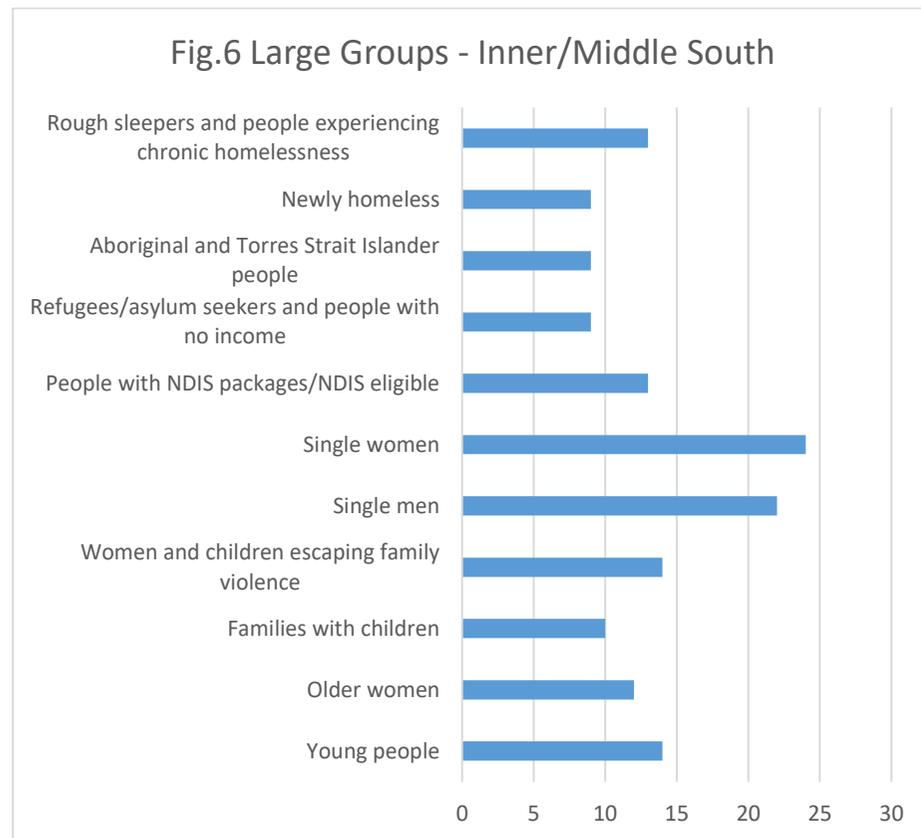


Figure 6 shows the most common large groups identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- single women (24)
- single men (22)
- young people (14)

Figure 7 shows the most common large groups identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- single men (27)
- single women (26)
- women and children escaping family violence (21)



3.3 Priority Client Groups

Figure 8 shows the most common priority groups identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- women and children escaping family violence (40)
- families with children (31)
- rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness (31)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (28)

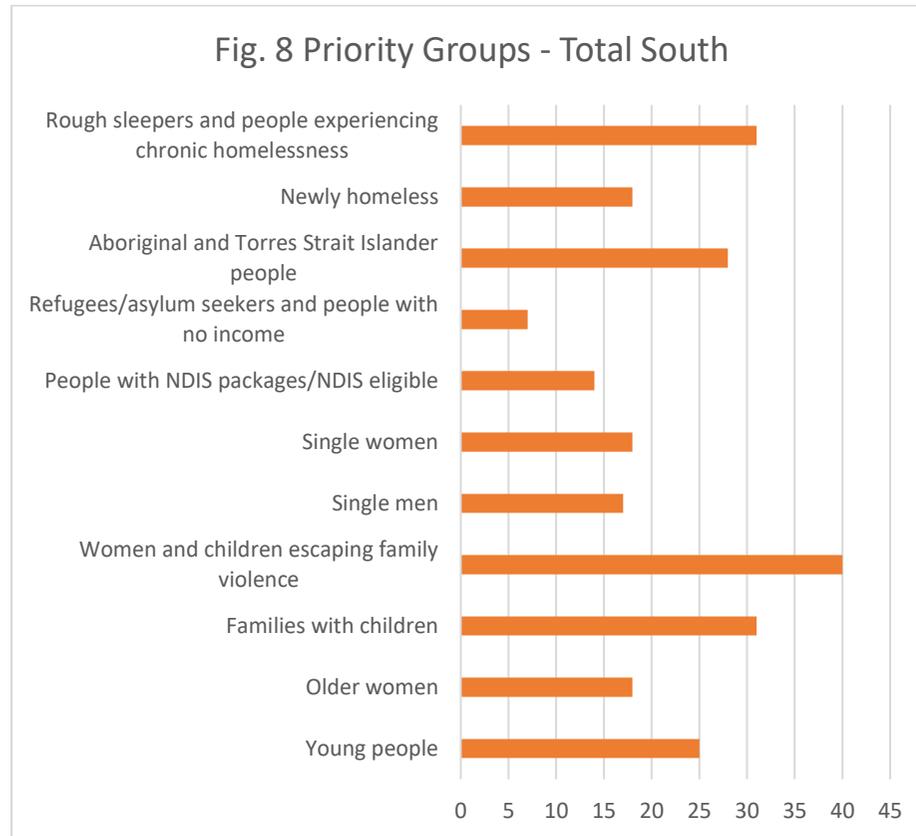
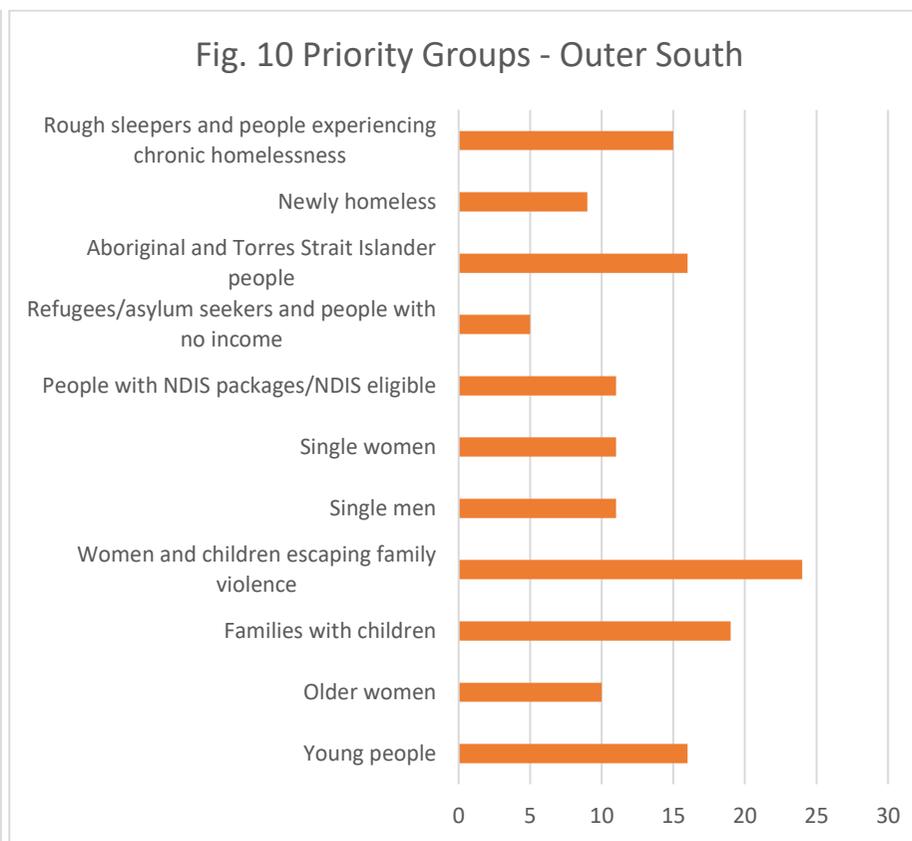
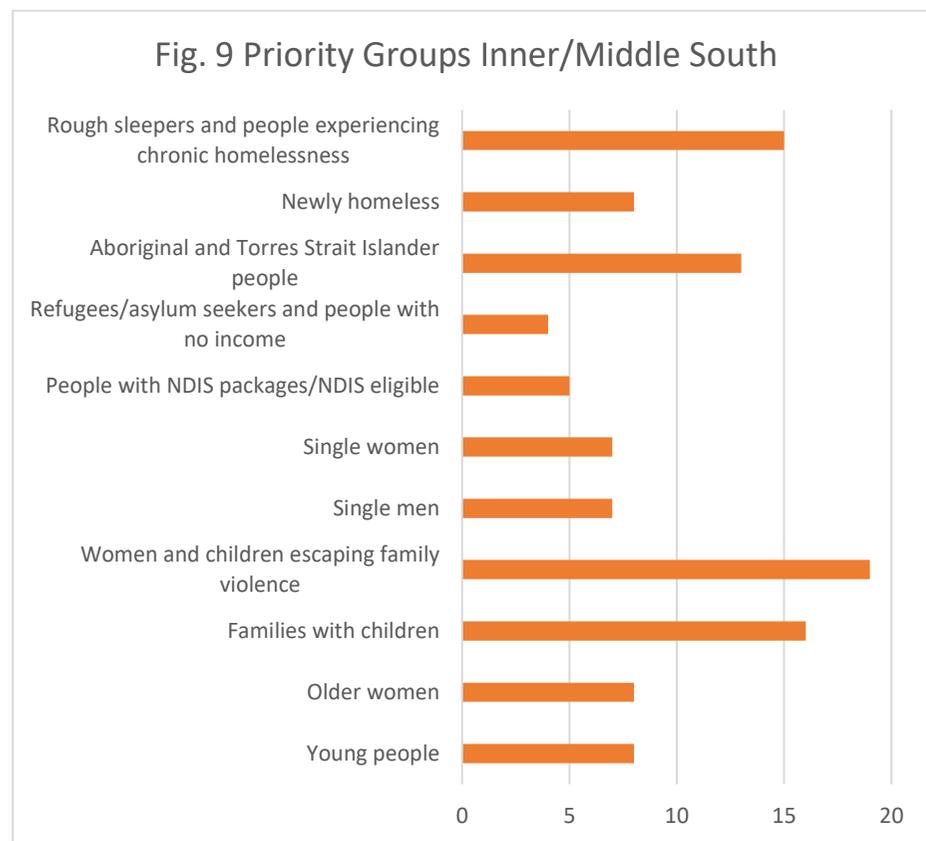


Figure 9 shows the most common priority groups identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- women and children escaping family violence (19)
- families with children (16)
- rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness (15)

Figure 10 shows the most common priority groups identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- women and children escaping family violence (24)
- families with children (19)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (16)
- Young people (16)



3.4 Commentary

A number of other groups were identified in the survey including:

- people with long term homelessness histories who are entrenched in the homelessness service system, but for whom numerous interventions and referrals have not changed their housing trajectory
- over 50s and over 45s for Aboriginal and TSI (priority)
- young women under 25 with one or more children or pregnant
- Indigenous young people with Better Futures Funding."
- clients who are already living in the OOH properties and looking for transfer and general support
- couples
- people with pets
- young people in out of home care who have been reported missing by local police and begin couch surfing.
- international students
- older people released from incarceration who require support to obtain housing and community support.
- African and South Sudanese young men
- people exiting custody (on bail)

Discussion

The survey broke down the questions about priority groups to allow for a more nuanced understanding of different priority groups in terms of identifying groups that are new and emerging, larger groups and groups that are the overarching priority for the South.

The new and emerging groups question allowed respondents to identify priority groups that may not come up in the overall priorities but who are groups warranting attention and who may become higher priority or larger groups in the future if not provided for. People with NDIS packages/NDIS eligible, refugees/asylum seekers and people with no income and newly homeless were identified as new/emerging groups across both the Inner/Middle and Outer South. More than twice as many respondents in the Outer South identified older women as a new/emerging group than in the Inner/Middle South.

Singles (both single men and single women) were most commonly identified as the largest groups across the whole South. Interestingly, rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness were more commonly identified as a larger group by Outer South respondents as were women and children escaping family violence.

Groups identified as the highest priority groups across the South represented some of the most vulnerable groups. Groups including children were identified as the highest priority groups across the South – both women and children escaping family violence and families with children. Rough sleepers and people experiencing chronic homelessness and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also seen as priority groups across the South.

4. Priority Issues

The survey broke down the priority issues into three categories – new/emerging issues, high impact issues and priority issues - to see if there were differences or similarities. Respondents could select as many answers as applied.

4.1 New /Emerging Issues

Figure 11 shows the most common new/emerging issues identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- access to housing through the NDIS (23)
- risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) (21)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (17)

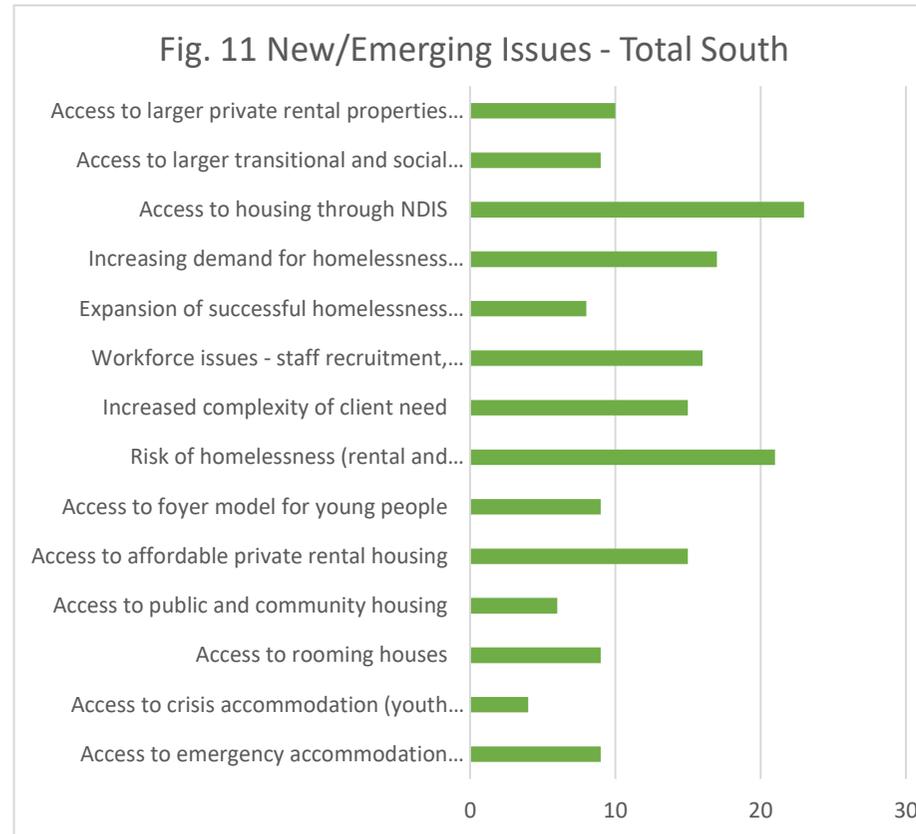
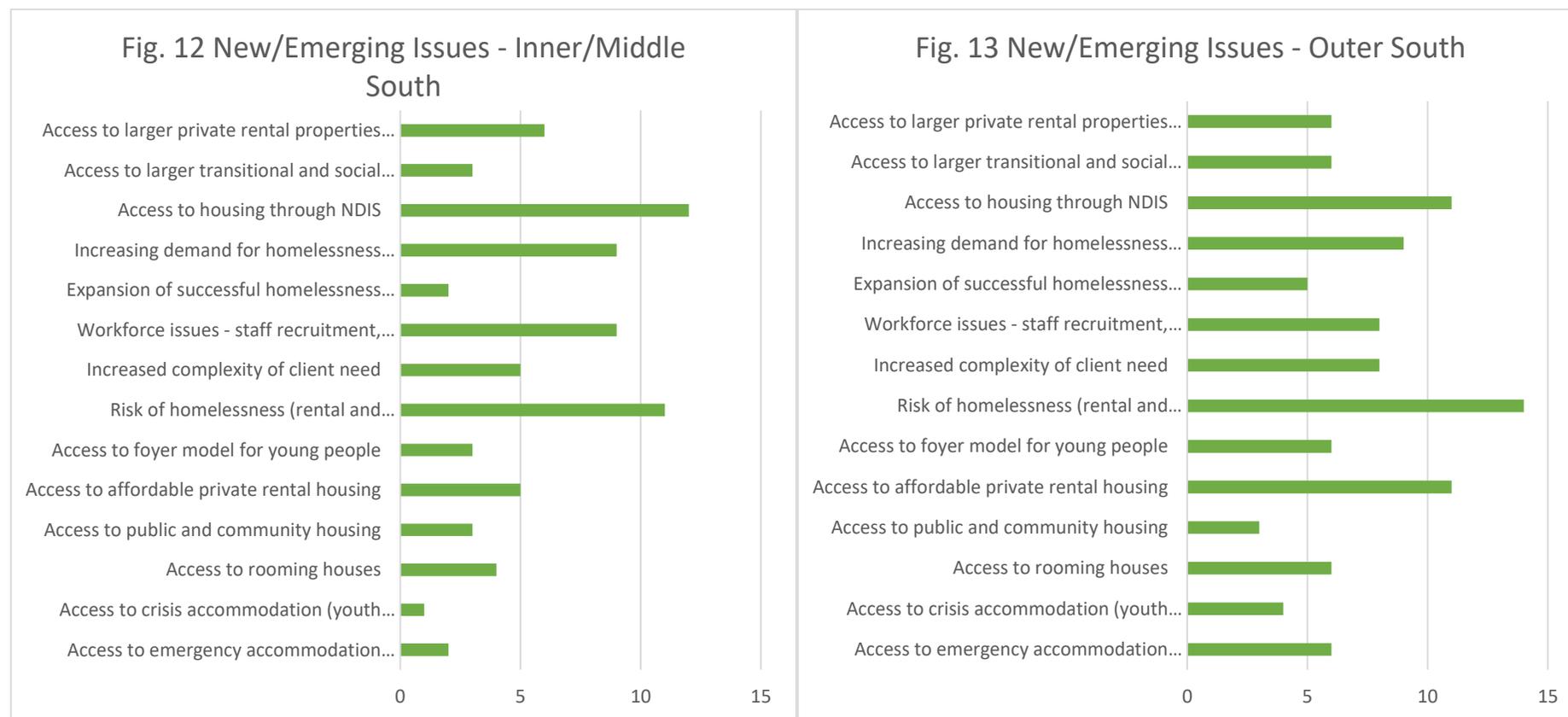


Figure 12 shows the most common new/emerging issues identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- access to housing through the NDIS (12)
- risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) (11)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (9)
- workforce issues - staff recruitment, retention and remuneration (9)

Figure 13 shows the most common new/emerging issues identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) (14)
- access to housing through the NDIS (11)
- access to affordable private rental housing (11)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (9)



4.2 High Impact Issues

Figure 14 shows the most common high impact issues identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- increased complexity of client need (54)
- access to affordable private rental housing (42)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (42)
- access to public and community housing (41)
- risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) (41)
- access to emergency accommodation including HEF resourcing (hotels/motels/caravan parks) (41)

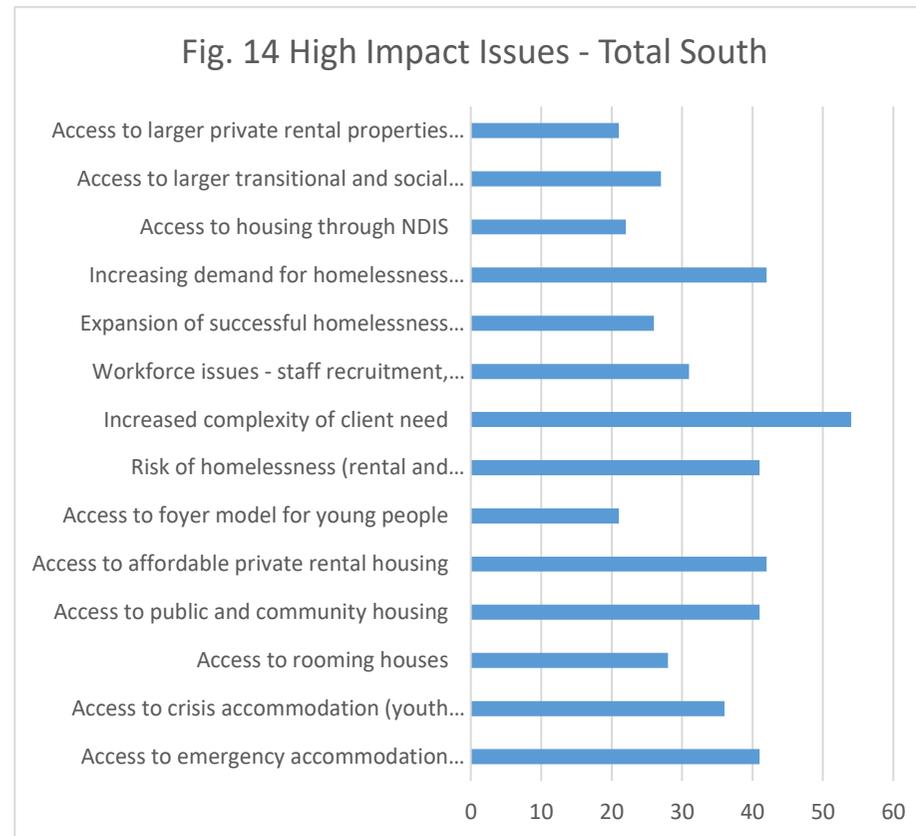
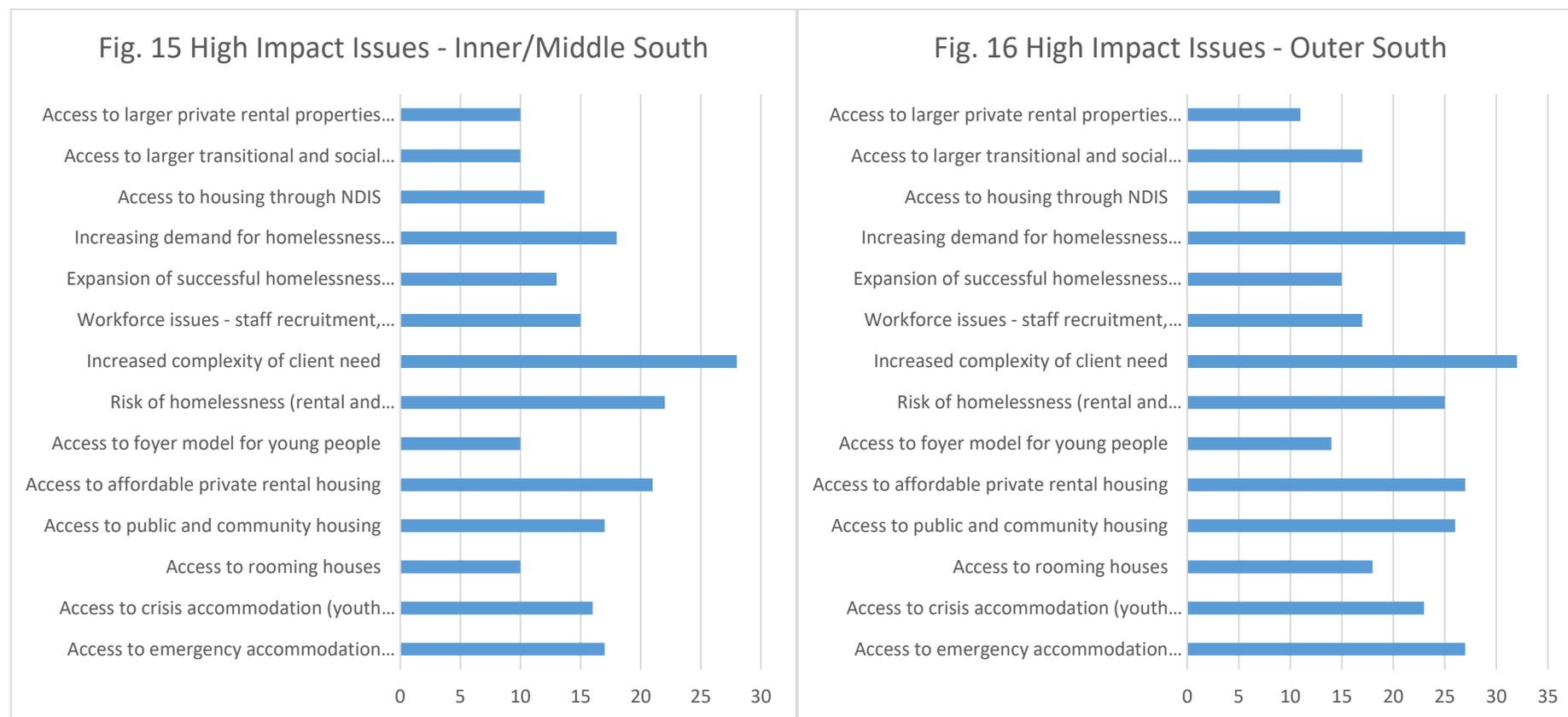


Figure 15 shows the most common high impact issues identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- Increasing complexity of client need (28)
- risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) (22)
- access to affordable private rental housing (21)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (18)

Figure 16 shows the most common high impact issues identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- Increasing complexity of client need (32)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (27)
- access to affordable private rental housing (27)
- access to emergency accommodation including HEF resourcing (hotels/motels/caravan parks) (27)



4.3 Priority Issues

Figure 17 shows the most common priority issues identified by the survey respondents across the South were (number of responses are in brackets):

- access to public and community housing (52)
- access to affordable private rental housing (40)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (35)
- increased complexity of client need (33)

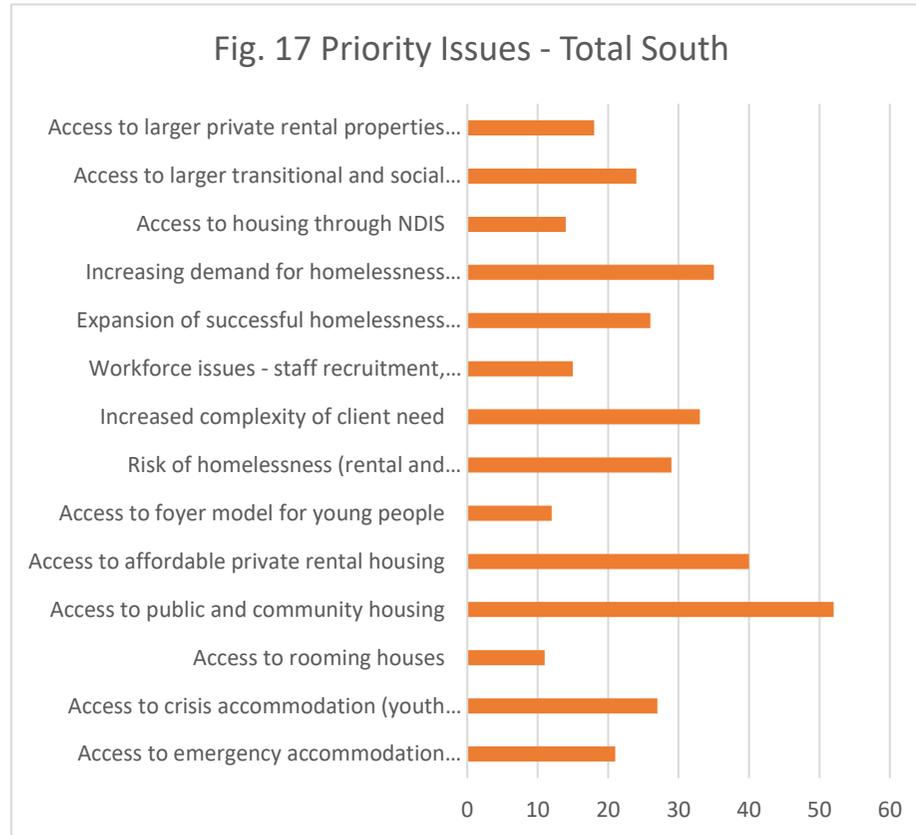
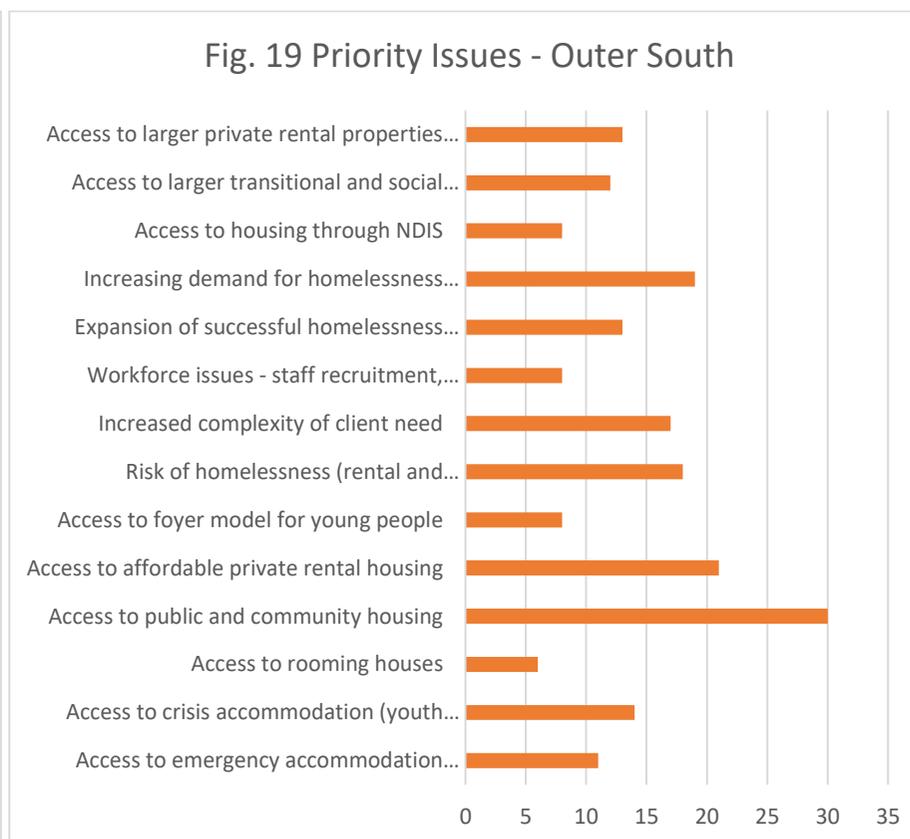
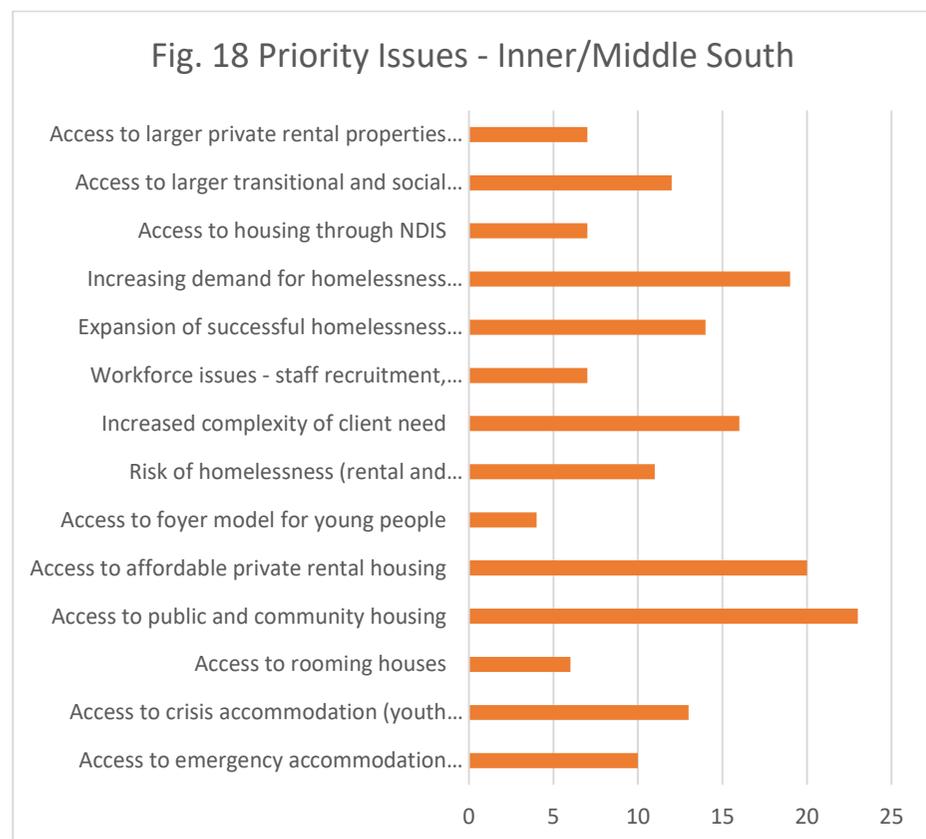


Figure 18 shows the most common priority issues identified by the survey respondents in the Inner/Middle South were:

- access to public and community housing (23)
- access to affordable private rental housing (20)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (19)

Figure 19 shows the most common priority identified by the survey respondents in the Outer South were:

- access to public and community housing (30)
- access to affordable private rental housing (21)
- increasing demand for homelessness assistance (19)



4.4 Commentary

Other issues identified in the survey were:

- funding for those escaping family violence, who have a social housing tenancy
- not enough 1-2 bedroom housing stock in rental market, social or affordable housing
- unsuitability of public housing, including health issues such as mould
- no access to crisis accommodation/youth refuge in Frankston-Mornington Peninsula area
- access to any safe affordable accommodation for young people with mental health and AOD and complex trauma issues
- not enough affordable private rental properties on the market
- food and hygiene products (cost)
- young people being turned away at from access point due to lack of youth placement worker
- access points not providing crisis accommodation/sufficient assistance as housing access point
- clients being exiting from Homelessness to a Home (H2H) program without long term housing
- the system has almost no capacity to work with highly complex clients who have behaviours of concern and therefore experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

The issues have not changed much for many 20 years - e.g., complex presentations (e.g., trauma, AOD use), poor access to decent affordable housing, limited ongoing support options. It should be noted that some community housing organisations discriminate against of people with complexity or rough sleeping histories. They are viewed entirely through a deficit lens. Perhaps this is the fault of the business model which sees tenants as an 'investment' (as long as they pay rent and behave). Mental health and AOD services are extremely poor in responding to rough sleepers (especially Aboriginal clients) and constantly say 'it's not mental health, it's substance use' or 'it's not substance use, it's mental health.' (Quote from survey respondent, SHSN Advocacy Survey 2022).

The survey broke down the questions about priority issues to allow for a more nuanced understanding of different priority issues in terms of identifying issues that are new and emerging, high impact issues and issues that are the overarching priority for the South.

The new and emerging issues question allows respondents to identify emerging issues that may not come up in the overall priorities but which warrant attention and which may become higher priority or higher impact issues in the future if not addressed. New/emerging issues were fairly consistent across the region with access to housing through the NDIS, risk of homelessness (rental and mortgage stress) and increasing demand for homelessness assistance identified as new/emerging issues. Access to affordable private rental housing was more commonly identified as a new/emerging issue in the Outer South.

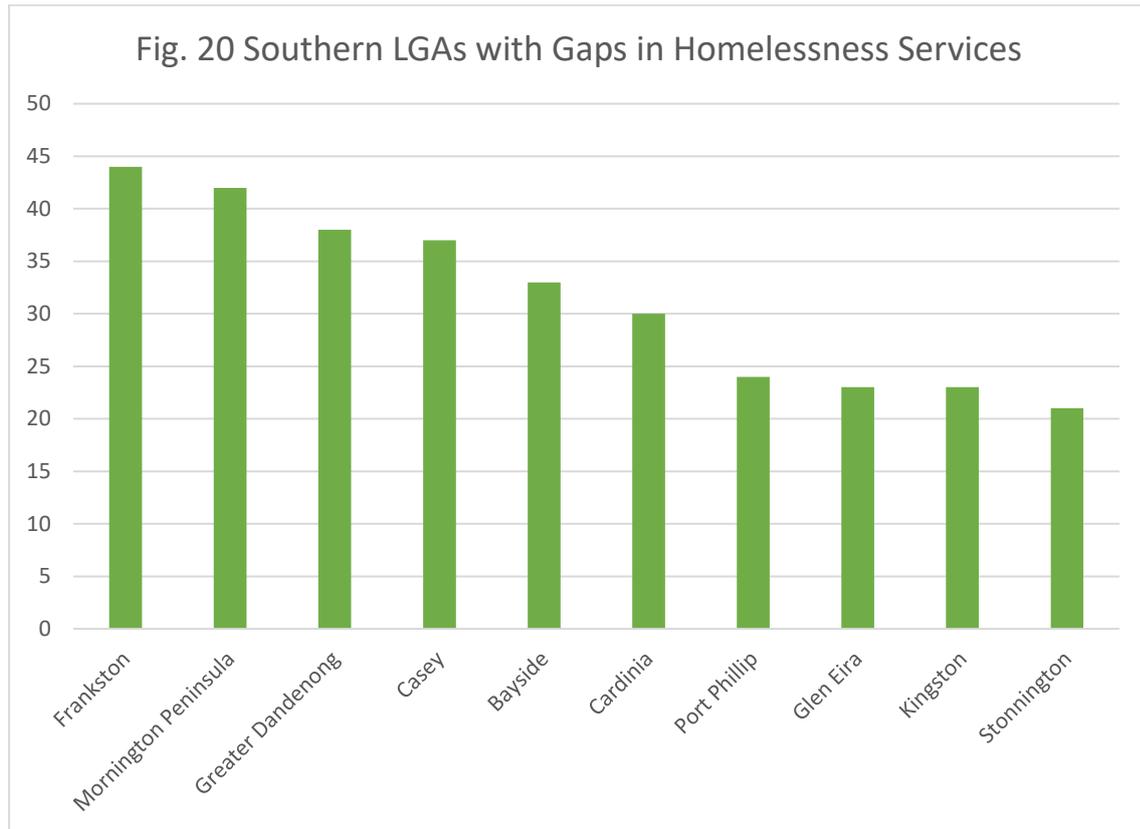
The most commonly identified high impact issues across the South were increasing complexity of client need, increasing demand for homelessness assistance and access to affordable private rental housing. Respondents from the Outer South more commonly identified access to emergency accommodation including HEF (brokerage) resourcing as a high impact issue than respondents in the Inner/Middle South.

The highest overall priority issues were consistent across the South and relate to access to long term housing options with access to public and community housing and access to affordable private rental as the two key priority issues followed by increasing demand for homelessness assistance .

5. Priority Areas

Figure 20 shows the local government areas (LGAs) where survey respondents identified gaps in homelessness services. The most commonly identified areas with service gaps were the outer metropolitan LGAs of Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Greater Dandenong and Casey. Out of the inner/middle South LGAs, Bayside was the most commonly identified area with service gaps.

Respondents working in the outer South tended to identify outer South LGAs as having gaps in homelessness services. Respondents working in the inner/middle South identified across LGAs across the entire South as having gaps in homelessness services.



6. Additional Comments

Survey respondents were asked to provide any additional comments, in addition to their survey responses. These comments are summarised below.

6.1 Homelessness Service System

- better resourcing of support workers and supported crisis accommodation
- providers are funded regionally which means outer areas do not get a fair share of funding
- no services providing housing support case management (for those not in crisis accommodation eg, Southbank) to single men in the Inner South
- areas of high affluence have significant pockets of disadvantage that often go unnoticed because they are not shown in the data as statistically significant. The people in these areas are really struggling and their services are limited
- difficulty in contacting and gaining response from some homelessness entry points is an issue
- most funding targets families which is understandable, yet most clients are single and experiencing homelessness and the local entry point is unable to provide emergency accommodation due to lack of funds for this cohort
- older women increasingly have fewer options and end up in their cars or trading sex for accommodation
- it seems ethically questionable to be handing out a swag in the middle of winter to a lone person sleeping rough because the local homelessness service only has rooming house options that are unsafe and unaffordable
- more programs such as from Homelessness to a Home (H2H) are required to provide intensive support and case management for the increasing demand from people with complex health and mental health needs across the whole homeless sector
- new programs require ongoing funding and support - not a new program being introduced for 18 months to two years only to have funding reduced or pulled when there is evidence these programs are effective
- increased response for basic needs such as showers and hygiene products, hot food, and clothes
- financial support for the Functional Zero projects across the South is required
- more funding for mental health supported accommodation for youth

6.2 Increasing Complexity of Client Need

- increase in presentations of complex clients who are homeless with dual diagnosis issues - a dual diagnosis clinic out of Peninsula Health would be beneficial
- client complexity is high whilst worker sophistication and experience can be low. Some workers lack the skills and experience to provide appropriate support to people experiencing homelessness, including practical client facing skills. The result is a service system starved of resources but also starved of expertise. Recruitment and staff retention is poor which is a big problem in a highly complex human service sector. This is not said against those highly competent and dedicated staff who also remain in the sector.
- the service sector has difficulty assisting young people who are living with significant mental health issues and trauma histories, and accessing timely and affordable mental health support for these young people is extremely difficult. Often those who are most difficult to engage with are either left completely unsupported, or are left to deteriorate until they come into contact with justice or medical services, which can lead to longer lasting consequences such as criminal histories, or community treatment orders with significant compulsory medication that could have been avoided
- complexity of mental health issues and access to housing.

- many referrals for young people under 25 exiting custody (sometimes multiple times) into homelessness. We need targeted programs for these young people which address their trauma, AOD/mental health issues and housing insecurity firstly, and subsequently look at education and training pathways

6.3 Housing Options

- lack of maintenance of public housing when required
- family violence victims are not able to transfer quickly enough between social housing properties for their protection if perpetrators is about to be released from prison –for example, one client is still waiting two years for a transfer as the perpetrator will be again be released from prison. It is likely he will return to this property again and the consequences could be fatal
- some tenants need to learn how to maintain a social housing tenancy, particularly if they have been previously homeless – including how to pay rent, clean and maintain a tenancy. Some tenants have never had a tenancy of their own and have never learnt skills to do so. This could include classes, modules, additional support programs and training
- supported exit plans in social housing for when tenants are successfully maintaining a tenancy, working and paying market rent for a significant amount of time. This would assist people to successfully exit this type of tenancy and transition into private rental or home ownership. This would free up some social housing stock
- there have been several recent incidents of public housing tenants discovering someone living in the roof and/or entering the property through the roof. Just wondering if this is a new trend.
- using HEF for two weeks rent to access a bed in a rooming house adds to the problem of unaffordability and ensures a fortnightly turnover of residents as most rooms are not affordable on Job Seeker and so the homelessness agency uses HEF for a new client in the vacant bed two weeks later. And around it goes!
- more social housing including community rooming houses with case management would be a better use of funds as it would stop the homelessness cycle for a person for long enough to address other issues in their lives. More flexibility in NDIS packages for this precise situation would be another great use of this stream of funding. It's been proven time and again that resolving someone's housing issue is often the catalyst to real change as it takes people out of 'survival mode' so they are able to improve their quality of life
- the gap between Centrelink benefits and rent increases is getting wider with people having fewer rental options simply because they can no longer afford the areas that they have always lived in
- when the new rental laws came in, it caused a lot of landlords to sell their rental properties and the new owners have wanted to live in the properties themselves so there is less rental stock. There needs to be more government initiatives to encourage landlords to retain their rental property and not increase the rent
- massive lack of appropriate crisis accommodation for families with children. Children should not have to stay in dodgy motels or couch surf because of a lack of options
- in Frankston there are too many rooming houses and not enough affordable private rental options