

Housing Stability – UTAS Students

Background/Scope:

Of the 671 student caseload presenting to the TUSA Student Advocacy Service between August 1, 2022, and August 7, 2023, 70 students reported with significant housing stability issues. This report focuses on this subset of the student caseload who have reported homelessness, insecure housing, or crisis housing.

Many students present with primary concerns not directly related to housing stability. Housing security is often part of the multifaceted complexity of the individual circumstance. As such, recording these issues accurately is challenging due to limitations in the reporting system (UTAS Advocate – Simplicity).

It's also important to note that not all students return to TUSA Student Advocacy for follow-up or additional services, and data on gender, age, ATSI indicators, enrolment status, housing situation, and personal safety is limited, anecdotal, or unknown.

In addition to the TUSA Student Advocacy Service caseload, the TUSA Student Legal Service, a partnership with Youth Law Australia, have reported 40 cases of housing matters of a total caseload of 291 students for the same reportable period.

Caseload Categorisation

Of the 671 cases reviewed, 70 cases (10.43%) met the criteria for inclusion in this report as per Table 1. It is unclear whether students remain in these circumstances or remain enrolled at the University of Tasmania. Among these 70 cases, 8 students had urgent safety concerns, including active threats to their wellbeing and/or property. In one case, Tasmania Police were involved.

Categorisation	Number of Cases	Description
Insecure	50	Insecure refers to those individuals affected by significant pressures or life disruptions. For example, these include major financial, social or health issues. The identified cases encountered unforeseen influences necessitating a need for significant lifestyle changes. This resulted in a persistent period of sustained insecurity, disrupting stable living arrangements.
Homeless	12	This report defines “Homeless” as referring to an individual not residing at a fixed address for a period greater than 1-week or permanently unable to return. This also encapsulates those who presented as moving between temporary sleeping arrangements (couch-surfing) or connecting with shelters.
Crisis	8	Crisis refers to those individuals that were unable to return to their place of residence (fixed or non-fixed), for any period of time. This also includes those who received sudden notice to vacate or were unable to return due to a sudden change of circumstance (including the ending of a relationship or a risk to personal safety).

Primary Presenting Categories

Students present to the TUSA Student Advocacy Service seeking help for various issues. Students may perceive their issues in a variety of ways, and through one-on-one meetings and conversations, Student Advocates frequently uncover a range of complex problems including homelessness, insecure housing and housing crisis issues.

Fee Paying Status (Domestic v International)

More domestic students sought help from the TUSA Student Advocacy Service compared to international students within the case study cohort. Whilst this is a surprising outcome due to related financial hardship and food insecurity data, this difference may be attributed to several factors, including government policies related to international students and visas, limited awareness of available services and support for international students, and a shortage of support agencies willing to assist international students.

Table 2 – Fee Paying Status (Case Study Cohort)		
Domestic	45	64.29%
International	25	35.71%

Other Cohort classifications

Other classifications of individuals within the student cohort are represented below in Table 3 and 4.

Table 3 - Undergraduate and Postgraduate Status (Case Study Cohort)	
Undergraduate Study	58
Post-graduate Study	10
University College	2

Sandy Bay is the main location where students seek help, where there are two consistently staffed locations and two Student Advocates (one full-time and one part-time). This accessibility plays a crucial role in encouraging students to use the service.

Table 5 – Campus of Enrolment (Case Study Cohort)	
Sandy Bay	37
Hobart	17
Newnham	7
Sydney - Rozelle	3
Inveresk	2
Other	2
Cradle Coast	1
Off-Campus	1

Homelessness in Tasmania

Table 6 shows a concerning 75% increase in homelessness in Tasmania over a 5-year period, the highest among all states and territories. This significant trend likely reflects the UTAS student experience. Within the Australian Government [Homelessness Data for Tasmania Report](#), the 15 to 24-year-old group, which includes many UTAS students, ranks as the third-largest group affected by homelessness.

Table 6	Rates Per 10,000 – As Per ABS Data Key Statistics			
	Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)			
	2006	2011	2016	2021
NSW	34	40	50	43
Vic	35	42	42	47
Qld	48	44	46	44
SA	37	36	37	42
Wa	42	41	36	37
Tas.	24	31	32	42
NT	792	724	600	564
ACT	30	49	40	39
<i>Australia</i>	45	48	50	48

The TUSA Student Advocacy Service staff understand that students seek help with the hope that the service can assist them in making their individual situation better. The goal is not for staff to completely solve all problems but to provide guidance, information, and support to help students overcome challenges and find solutions. It's about offering hope and empowering students to take charge of their situation and future.

This report was informed by information from the following sources:

[Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

[Homelessness in Tasmania | Shelter Tasmania](#)

[Homelessness-week-2022-fact-sheet.pdf \(hobartcity.com.au\)](#)

[Housefin 2020 cth homeless sub.pdf \(grattan.edu.au\)](#)

[PowerPoint Presentation \(communities.tas.gov.au\)](#)

[Specialist homelessness services 2020-21: Tasmania Fact sheet \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

[What the 2021 Census data told us about Homelessness | AHUR](#)