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Coroner calls for improved supports for people experiencing homelessness

The death of a man while sleeping rough has prompted Victorian Coroner Simon McGregor to recommend improved supports for people experiencing homelessness and that access to housing be recognised as a human right in Victoria.

The recommendations follow the death of Sacha Lefebvre, a 52-year-old man with a complex history of mental ill-health, physical health concerns and substance use who was unhoused at the time of his death on 2 December 2024. Mr Lefebvre was found deceased outside Hawthorn Library having suffered a heart attack while sleeping rough.

Research cited in the finding shows that homelessness is a risk factor for premature mortality, with the life expectancy of people experiencing homelessness shown to be decades lower than the national average. *“The nexus between homelessness and the coronial jurisdiction comes via common health issues which, if left untreated, become life threatening”*, Coroner McGregor said, also commenting that, *“people experiencing homelessness often face barriers, including stigma or exclusion, when accessing primary care.”*

During the investigation, Coroner McGregor was advised that homelessness in Victoria is increasing. Information provided to the Court by the Council of Homeless Persons showed that 105,125 people sought assistance from the specialist homelessness sector in 2024–25. St Vincent’s Health Service also reported in submissions made to the Court that approximately 10 per cent of clients seen in 2024–25 were sleeping rough when first seeking assistance – a number that has increased by 25 per cent over the past five years. Furthermore, Victoria has the lowest proportion of social housing by jurisdiction in Australia.

Observing that *“prevention investment in the homelessness space reduces avoidable health care and justice costs, develops productivity and decreases mortality”*, Coroner McGregor sought to understand successful intervention models during the coronial investigation. He examined the Better Health Housing Program (BHPP), an initiative based at St Vincent’s Hospital and delivered in conjunction with Launch Housing and the Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence. BHPP is a housing-led healthcare model that provides people experiencing chronic homelessness secure accommodation for up to six months, access to health and housing support staff, and an optional additional six months of support from St Vincent’s Hospital staff to ensure continued care from local health services. Coroner McGregor also found economic data showing that the costs of late intervention by public hospitals and the justice system far outweighed the potential savings available from earlier and better prevention initiatives.

In Victoria, the right to housing is not a protected human right despite its inclusion in the Australian Capital Territory’s *Human Rights Act 2004* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, ratified by Australia in 1975.

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Coroner McGregor recommends that the Victorian Government, in line with recommendations outlined by the Victorian Parliament Legislative Council – Legal and Social Issues Committee reports on *The rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria* and *Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria*, consider including the right to housing in the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*; and that the Victorian Government consider the suitability of the BHHP programme for further rollout in conjunction with other public hospitals and specialist homelessness sector providers across the state.

[Access the finding here.](#)

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