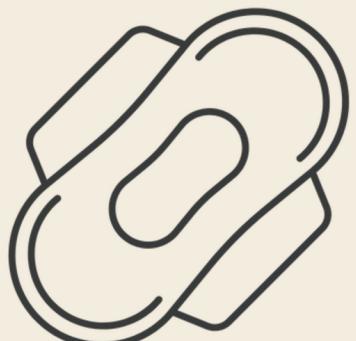
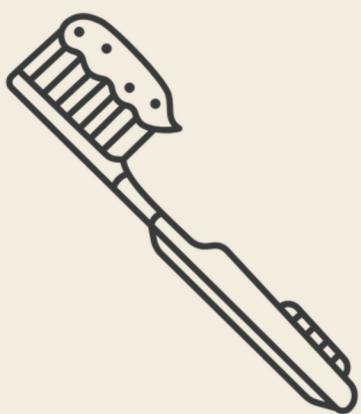
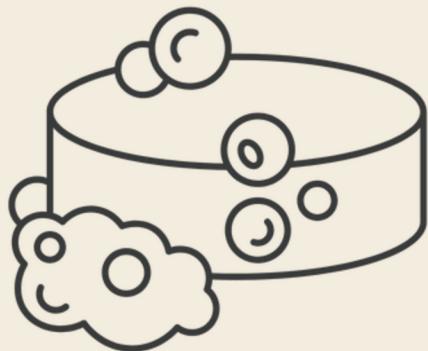


# blessing bags melbourne

annual report 2024-25



Blessing Bags would like to acknowledge the many sacred lands and waterways we work on. While our work is predominantly on Wurundjeri and Bunurong lands, we know our bags travel far and wide across the many traditional lands in what we now call Victoria.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and that First Nations people are shamefully over-represented in the population of those experiencing homelessness, and accessing homelessness services in Victoria.

Our aim is to help those experiencing homelessness, and our ability to provide meaningful change naturally extends to joining the struggle for true and meaningful reconciliation with First Nations peoples. This was and always will be Aboriginal land.

# At a glance

## OUR PURPOSE AND IMPACT

Our organisation's mission is to provide people experiencing homelessness with essential items that we often take for granted. We advocate for the rights of people experiencing hardship, including homelessness, and place community at the centre of everything we do.

## WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE DO IT

Blessing Bags have the privilege of providing bags to a wide range of individuals and communities across Melbourne and surrounds.

We partner with organisations, crisis centres, schools, community groups and businesses who reach out to us for support.

We supply bags of toiletries containing: a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, tissues a muesli bar and a note of hope and encouragement.

These bags are regularly distributed to individuals and groups who are facing disadvantage and/or homelessness.

## IMPACT SNAPSHOT

**2,554**

Hygiene kits made

**25**

Organisations we partnered with

**10**

Local Government Area's we worked across

**1,195**

Instagram followers

**\$9,038.81**

Raised this year

# A message from our director

This year has continued to be a challenging one for people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage across Victoria. Ongoing housing insecurity, rising living costs, and increasing demand for frontline services have shaped much of our work, and we have seen this reflected in the growing need for hygiene kits across our community. While it is encouraging to see Blessing Bags Melbourne reaching more people than ever before, this growth is also a reminder of how much work remains.

I am incredibly proud of what our organisation has achieved over the past year. From expanding our partnerships and increasing distribution, to strengthening our sustainability practices and community engagement, these outcomes have only been possible because of the dedication of our volunteers, supporters, partner organisations, and committee members. Your time, generosity, and belief in this work continue to drive everything we do.

I would also like to share that the 2025–2026 financial year will be my final year as Director of Blessing Bags Melbourne. This decision comes as I prepare to commence a PhD in Public Health with Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation. While this next chapter will take me in a new direction, my commitment to the values that underpin Blessing Bags remains strong.

Over the coming year, I will be working closely with our committee to ensure a thoughtful and smooth transition, with a focus on continuity, stability, and supporting the next phase of leadership. I have every confidence in the strength of this organisation and in the people who make it what it is.

Thank you to everyone who continues to walk alongside Blessing Bags Melbourne. It has been a privilege to be part of this community, and I look forward to the year ahead as we continue to support those who need it most.

**Monique Murray**  
Director, Blessing Bags Melbourne

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# Snapshot of homelessness

## what homelessness looks like in Victoria 2024-25

Homelessness in Victoria is increasing and becoming more entrenched. While homelessness is often thought of as a temporary crisis, for many people it is now longer, more complex and harder to escape. Rising housing costs, ongoing family violence, and a severe shortage of affordable housing mean more Victorians are being pushed into homelessness, and staying there for longer.

Each year, tens of thousands of Victorians seek help from homelessness services. Increasingly, people are reaching out only after they have exhausted all other options. Many have already lost their housing, are sleeping rough, or are living in unsafe or unstable situations by the time they ask for help. Services are stretched well beyond capacity, leaving too many people without the support or housing they need.

Homelessness is no longer affecting only those at the margins. Women, children, families and older people are making up a growing share of people experiencing homelessness. Family and domestic violence remains a leading cause, while rising rents, evictions and financial stress are forcing more people, including those in paid work, into housing insecurity.

The impacts of homelessness extend far beyond the loss of housing. Homelessness disrupts children's education, undermines physical and mental health, makes it harder for people to maintain employment, and places long-term strain on health, justice and social service systems. For communities, it represents lost potential, higher costs and deepening inequality.

Frontline homelessness services continue to provide critical support, helping people stay safe, access immediate assistance and, where possible, find housing. Early intervention and prevention, when support arrives before people lose their housing, can be highly effective. However, the scale of need now far exceeds the available housing and support options, particularly longer-term housing pathways.

Homelessness is not inevitable. It is shaped by the availability of safe, affordable housing and the strength of our social safety net. The current situation in Victoria highlights the urgent need for sustained investment in housing supply, prevention and specialist supports to ensure fewer people fall into homelessness, and that those who do can exit quickly and safely.

# Deeper dive into homelessness

## Scale and context

Homelessness in Australia and Victoria remains widespread and is intensifying. The most recent Census (2021) counted an estimated 122,494 people experiencing homelessness nationally, including 30,660 Victorians ( $\approx 47.1$  per 10,000 people), a 24% increase in Victoria since 2016.<sup>1</sup> Census figures are a point-in-time measure and significantly underestimate the scale of need.

Administrative data from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), show much larger and growing numbers of people seeking homelessness assistance each year, reflecting sustained housing stress, rising poverty, and limited pathways into stable housing.

## Demand and unmet need

AIHW SHS data for 2024–25 confirms a system under extreme strain. Nationally, 288,970 people sought assistance from homelessness services in 2024–25, a 3.2% increase on the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

Demand continues to exceed available service capacity: on average, services were unable to assist 353 people each day, with unassisted requests rising by 18% in a single year.<sup>2</sup> Almost one in three people (31%) who needed short-term or emergency accommodation were not provided with it.<sup>2</sup>

Victoria is bearing a disproportionate share of this pressure. In 2024–25, more than 105,000 Victorians sought homelessness assistance, accounting for 36% of all homelessness presentations nationally, despite Victoria having around one-quarter of Australia's population.<sup>3</sup> Services were unable to provide long-term accommodation to 95% of Victorians who needed it, highlighting the severe shortage of exit options.<sup>3</sup>

Rough sleeping continues to rise. In 2024–25, the number of people sleeping rough at the point of seeking assistance increased by 12% nationally to 34,833 people, and one in five clients reported sleeping rough in the month prior to seeking help.<sup>2</sup>

In Victoria, rough sleeping presentations rose by almost 10% to 10,673 people in 2024–25.<sup>3</sup>

### **Who is affected**

Women, children and young people remain disproportionately impacted. In 2024–25, 73% of people seeking homelessness assistance nationally were women or children, including nearly 79,000 children.<sup>2</sup> In Victoria, women accounted for almost 60% of all homelessness presentations.<sup>3</sup> Alarmingly, homelessness among women aged 55–59 increased by 14% in 2024–25, reflecting the acute impact of housing affordability pressures on older women.<sup>3</sup>

Families are increasingly entering homelessness already in crisis. In 2023–24, more than 92,000 people in families sought homelessness assistance nationally, and almost half had already lost their housing at the time of presentation.<sup>4</sup> Even after receiving support, tens of thousands of parents and children remain homeless.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be severely over-represented. In 2024–25, 29% of all SHS clients nationally were Indigenous, with client numbers increasing by 6% in one year.<sup>2</sup>

A growing proportion of people seeking help are also in paid work: 11.5% of clients had a waged income in 2024–25, underscoring rising housing stress among low-income workers.<sup>2</sup>

### **Drivers of homelessness**

Family and domestic violence (FDV) and cost-of-living pressures are the dominant drivers of homelessness. In Victoria, domestic and family violence was the leading reason people sought homelessness assistance in 2024–25, with 32,752 people presenting for this reason (a 6.3% increase on the previous year).<sup>3</sup> Nationally, FDV-related demand has increased by 13% over the past two years.<sup>5</sup>

Housing affordability pressures remain acute. Evictions, financial difficulty, and housing affordability stress consistently rank among the top reasons for seeking homelessness assistance, with affordability-related demand increasing by more than 8% nationally between 2023 and 2025.<sup>5</sup> Rising rents, limited social housing supply, and inadequate income supports are pushing more people into overcrowding, insecure accommodation, and rough sleeping.

## System strain

The homelessness service system is operating beyond capacity. In Victoria in 2024–25, 95.6% of the 40,259 people who needed long-term accommodation were unable to access it.<sup>3</sup> While services could provide short-term accommodation to 22,102 people, a further 9,766 people missed out. For medium-term accommodation, 21,385 Victorians (75.7% of those assessed as needing this support) were unable to access it in 2024–25, highlighting the lack of transitional housing options.<sup>3</sup>

Increasing client complexity and longer periods of support indicate that people are entering homelessness with deeper needs and facing prolonged barriers to housing. Frontline services consistently report escalating difficulty securing housing outcomes due to constrained social housing supply and a highly competitive private rental market.

## Responses and early progress

Victoria's homelessness response includes expanded social and affordable housing investment, priority housing allocations, and targeted prevention initiatives. Evidence from service providers shows that early-intervention measures, such as rapid financial assistance and short-term rent relief, can be highly effective in preventing homelessness when delivered quickly. However, sector analysis, including by Homelessness Australia, consistently finds that current levels of investment in housing supply and homelessness services have not kept pace with rising demand. Without sustained and scaled investment in social housing, prevention, and specialist supports, homelessness in Victoria is likely to continue growing in scale and severity.

### References:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2021, ABS, Canberra, 2023.
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3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2024–25 – Victoria, Australian Government, Canberra, 2025.
4. Homelessness Australia, Families and Children Experiencing Homelessness: Analysis of AIHW SHS Data, Homelessness Australia, Canberra, 2024.
5. Homelessness Australia, Drivers of Homelessness in Australia: Analysis of AIHW Monthly SHS Data, Homelessness Australia, Canberra, 2025.

# Our year in reveiw

## looking back at our goals for this year

In last year's annual report, we shared a set of goals to guide our work for the year ahead. As part of staying accountable to our community, we've outlined those goals here and reflected on the progress we made toward each one.

### Small steps to success

Action area	Progress
Apply for a community grant.	Successfully applied for the Frankston City Council's Annual Community Grant
Hold quarterly Community Day events.	Held 3 out of 4 quarterly community days.
Implement a sustainability checklist to assess the environmental impact of our Hygiene Kits.	Used checklist to inform next steps in line with our sustainability commitment

### Key milestones

Distribute 20,000 Hygiene kits	Completed in December 2024
Develop First Nations policy for hygiene kit distribution	In progress with expected completion 2025-2026

Looking ahead to the next financial year, we are excited to finalise and publish our First Nations policy and aim to deliver four community days. We will also focus on identifying sustainable ways to increase the reach of our hygiene kits, while ensuring our work remains manageable for our team.

# From little things big things *grow*

## Our sustainability commitment in action



Supporting people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage is at the core of what we do, and we recognise that environmental responsibility is an important part of this work. Climate change disproportionately affects people already facing vulnerability, through extreme weather, rising living costs, and increased pressure on essential services. This understanding has shaped how we think about sustainability within Blessing Bags Melbourne.

Over the past year, we have made considered changes to reduce our environmental impact while maintaining the quality and practicality of our outreach programs. One achievement we are particularly proud of is transitioning from conventional polyethylene ziplock bags to Biogone landfill-biodegradable resealable bags for our Blessing Bags. These bags are designed to biodegrade in landfill environments, reducing the long-term presence of plastic waste. Importantly, they provide the durability and ease of use required to safely store and distribute essential items.

This change reflects our commitment to making responsible, achievable improvements to how we operate. While this is only one step in an ongoing journey, it represents meaningful progress and reinforces our focus on balancing environmental sustainability with the needs and dignity of the people we support.



# Reaching the milestone

Twenty K

One of the key goals for the year listed in our 2024 Impact Report was reaching a total of 20,000 hygiene kits distributed to the community since Blessing Bags was founded in 2015. The demand for our kits has been rising significantly, reflecting the homelessness crisis across Victoria more broadly, so reaching this milestone was identified as a major step towards addressing the needs of our community. We were very proud to see this milestone achieved on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2024 when we distributed an order containing our 20,000<sup>th</sup> hygiene kit. We are so grateful to all the supporters, volunteers, organisations, schools, community groups and businesses who have allowed us the privilege of providing these hygiene kits to the community. Without their support, encouragement and collaboration, we wouldn't be able to reach as many individuals and communities as we do.

Of course, whilst we are very grateful to have achieved this milestone, we know that a growth in numbers is a sign of much more work to come. There is still an incredibly high demand for hygiene packs from those experiencing homelessness and/or disadvantage, so 20,000 certainly isn't job done. We will build on this momentum and continue to advocate for our community and provide as many Blessing Bags as we can!

## HYGIENE KITS MADE AND DISTRIBUTED SINCE 2015

20,909



# Big news we won an *award*

Thankyou to our  
partners and team of  
amazing volunteers

In May, Blessing Bags Melbourne was honoured with the Awards Australia Foundation, “Connecting Communities Award” at the 7NEWS Young Achiever Awards.

This award recognises young changemakers who are bringing people together, building belonging, and creating impact that lasts. For Blessing Bags, it's more than a trophy—it's a reflection of every volunteer who has packed a bag, every partner who has opened a door, and every person who has shared our belief that dignity and compassion should never be a luxury.

This recognition highlights how far we've come, from grassroots beginnings to a growing network of individuals, businesses, and community organisations united by purpose. It's also a call to keep pushing forward, to keep connecting, collaborating, and challenging the systems that leave people behind.

“This award is a reminder of the power of connection—not just between communities, but within the systems that shape them. In the homelessness sector, we see both the gaps and the potential. With our partners, we're reminded that real progress comes when advocacy and systems thinking are part of all our work, not just what we do, but how we do it.” ~ Monique Murray



# Financial Statement

for the 2024-2025 financial year

Income	
Donations - Individual Contributors	\$643.48
Fundraising Income	\$725.33
Grants	\$7,500.00
Other Income	\$170.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$9,038.81</b>
 Gross profit as a percentage of Total income	 \$9,038.81 100.00%
Operating expenses	
Fundraising Expense	\$680.00
Liability Insurance	\$492.72
Product for Blessing Bags	\$5,894.17
Storage Expense	\$2,344.97
Venue Hire	\$275.00
Website	\$574.95
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>\$10,261.81</b>
 Net profit (loss) as a percentage of total income	 (\$1,223.00) (14%)

We couldn't have  
done it without your  
generous *support*.

# Thank you

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the committee who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned within.

Our sincere thanks go to Frankston City Council for their generous support through the Community Grant program. This funding has been instrumental in enabling us to deliver our work and strengthen our impact in the community over the past year.

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Apollo Technology. Their generosity has made a real difference to our ability to operate effectively.

**Monique Murray** Director

**Tess Farmer** Secretariat

**Lauren Terhes** Social Media and Communications

**Sarah Jones** Fundraising

**Nayana Vikhale** Grant and Policy Writer

**Matthew Terhes** Treasurer



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