



A campaign to house  
and support Brisbane's  
50 most vulnerable  
homeless people.

## 50 Lives 50 Homes Survey Week Fact Sheet By Common Ground USA for the Community June 7–11 2010

### 50 Lives 50 Homes

50 Lives 50 Homes is a campaign to house and support Brisbane's 50 most vulnerable homeless people. Their vulnerability is determined by a number of factors including the length of time that they have been homeless and their healthcare and social support needs. The campaign was initiated by Micah Projects and other not for profit organisations in partnership with Rosanne Haggerty, Common Ground USA.

The campaign gathers other partners from government, not for profit organisations, business and citizens who are committed to ending homelessness for the most vulnerable people of Brisbane, including:

- Micah Projects
- Common Ground USA
- Mater Health Services
- Queensland Health
- Queensland Police Service
- Brisbane City Council
- Goori Referral Centre Ltd
- SANDBAG
- OzCare
- Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House
- Centacare
- Spiritus
- Mission Australia
- 139 Club
- 99 Consulting
- Brisbane Youth Service
- Murri Watch
- Pindari Womens, Salvation Army
- Minter Ellison
- Grocon Constructions

50 Lives 50 Homes was made possible with the support of the Mater Foundation.

During the week of 7 June between the hours of 4am and 6am, 12 teams made up of over 70 community volunteers canvassed the streets of Brisbane metropolitan areas. Specialised teams also targeted food vans, emergency accommodation, youth services and squats. Locations were based on current knowledge of hot spot areas. The volunteer teams used Common Ground USA's **Vulnerability Index** to survey and create a by-name registry of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and rough



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sleeping who are most at risk of premature death. Over 100 volunteers in total participated during the week, helping with data entry, administering surveys, fundraising for household items and providing meals and support for the teams.

In addition to systematically gathering the names, pictures, and dates of birth of individuals sleeping on the streets, the teams also captured data on their health status, institutional history (jail, prison, hospital, and military), length of homelessness, patterns of crisis accommodation use, and previous housing situation. This data was collected by use of a 38 item questionnaire. The Vulnerability Index was used to identify those who have been homeless the longest and are the most vulnerable. This registry will be used to target new and available housing and service resources to the most vulnerable in an effort to reduce chronic homelessness within Brisbane.

The Vulnerability Index is based on research by Dr. Jim O'Connell, of Boston's Healthcare for the Homeless Program. His research shows certain medical conditions place a homeless individual at a higher risk than others for dying if they remain on the streets.

### Results

- 249 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness in Brisbane including people at food vans, emergency accommodation, youth services and squats.
- 231 (93%) of those individuals were surveyed using the Vulnerability Index.
- 118 (51%) were found to have health conditions associated with a high mortality risk.
- 156 (68%) individuals identified as rough sleepers. Of the rough sleepers, 83 individuals were found to have health conditions associated with a high mortality risk.
- 83% of people allowed their pictures to be taken as part of the survey.

### At-Risk Indicators

Indicator	Number
Tri-morbidity of co-occurring psychiatric, medical, and substance abuse problems	79 (34%)
More than 3 hospitalisations or ER visits over a year	47 (20%)
More than 3 Emergency Room visits in the past three months	28 (12%)
Aged 60 years and over	11 (5%)
HIV+/AIDS	4 (2%)
Cirrhosis/liver disease	41 (18%)
ESRD (End Stage Renal Disease)/kidney disease	11 (5%)



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History of cold/wet weather injuries	11 (5%)
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#### Older Adults

- 16 (7%) are over 55 years old.
- The oldest respondent was 79 years old.
- 9 individuals reported being homeless longer than 10 years.
- The longest reported length of homelessness was 40 years.

#### Years Homeless

- The average years homeless for the Vulnerable population is 7.7 years.
- The average years homeless for the Non-Vulnerable population is 4 years.

#### Service Needs (Total Surveyed)

- 118 people reported a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse.
- 66 people reported a history only of substance abuse.
- 18 people reported only signs or symptoms of mental illness.
- 202 (87%) of respondents report at least one behavioural health issue.
- 105 people reported IV drug use.
- 47 people reported drinking everyday for the last 30 days.

#### Veterans (Total surveyed)

- 13 (6%) surveyed were Veterans.
- 7 of the Veterans met criteria for "Vulnerable."

#### Youth (Total surveyed)

- 31 respondents were under 25 years old.
- The youngest respondent was 17 years old.
- 20 respondents under the age of 25 have increased mortality risks specific to adults.
- 17 respondents under the age of 25 have increased mortality risks specific to that age group. (Youth risk factors are HIV/AIDS, drink alcohol everyday for past 30 days, injection drug use.)
- All but 1 of the youth reported injection drug use.

#### Forgotten Australians

- 59 (26%) respondents report having a history of foster care or institutional care as a child.



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#### Inpatient Hospitalisations (Total surveyed)

- A total of 320 inpatient hospitalisations were reported in the past year at an average annual cost of \$1,335,040. This assumes \$4172 per separation (Productivity Commission 2010, average Queensland figure).

#### Emergency Room Visits (Total surveyed)

- A total of 1184 ER visits are estimated by all respondents in the last year for an annual cost of \$932,992. This assumes \$197 per visit (Productivity Commission 2010, New South Wales figure).
- Inpatient and ER costs combined total over \$2.2 million annually for 231 people.

#### Health System Impacts (Total surveyed)

- The majority of respondents go to a GP (N=13), Princess Alexandra Hospital (N=11), Mater Health Services (N=7).

#### Income Source

- 17 individuals report being employed.
- 83 individuals report receiving the Disability Support Pension.
- 14 individuals report receiving the Aged Pension.
- 16 individuals report no income.

#### Prison

- 109 people reported having been to prison.
- Based on an average stay of 3 months, using Productivity Commission data is \$2,638,890.
- Based on an average stay of 6 months, using Productivity Commission data is \$5,277,780.

#### Identity

- 48 individuals identified as Aboriginal
- 19 individuals identified as New Zealanders

#### Violence

- 114 (49%) report being a victim of a violent attack since becoming homeless.



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#### Brain Injury

- 63 (27%) report suffering from a brain injury.

#### Family Situation

- 8 people reported being with children or family members.
- 6 women reported being pregnant.
- 45 people reported being with friends.
- 14 people reported having a pet.

#### Common Ground USA

- The mission of Common Ground in the United States is to end homelessness by transforming people, buildings, and communities. Founded in 1990, Common Ground rapidly grew to become the largest developer and manager of supportive housing in New York City, and has pioneered a new approach to outreach called Street to Home that is being replicated in cities across the country. Common Ground is currently organising change agents to find and house the 100,000 most vulnerable homeless individuals in America as part of its 100,000 Homes Campaign.

#### Micah Projects

- 50 Lives 50 Homes has been initiated by Micah Projects, a Brisbane community organisation with a mission to create justice and respond to injustice at the personal and structural levels of society. We aim to break social isolation and build community. Micah Projects provides direct support to individuals and families who are homeless and at risk of homelessness, with a goal of permanently ending their homelessness.

#### Contact Information:

Karyn Walsh, Coordinator, Micah Projects

[karyn.walsh@micahprojects.org.au](mailto:karyn.walsh@micahprojects.org.au)

(07) 3029 7000 0413 619 785

Becky Kanis, Director of Innovations, Common Ground USA

Los Angeles, California, USA

[bkanis@commonground.org](mailto:bkanis@commonground.org)

Beth Sandor, Los Angeles Director, Common Ground USA

Los Angeles, California, USA