4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

There are a number of ways of approaching a geographical analysis. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) for the collection and dissemination of geographically organised statistics (ABS 2006c). The ASGC provides seven interrelated classification structures which are designed for different practical purposes. This report uses the 'Main Structure' which covers the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. The Main Structure comprises five hierarchical levels: census districts, statistical local areas, statistical subdivisions, statistical divisions, and states and territories. This analysis uses statistical divisions and statistical subdivisions as the main geographical categories, because patterns can be identified more easily if larger geographical categories are used.

In each state and territory, the capital city is treated as a statistical division which includes the greater metropolitan area and any anticipated growth corridors for at least the next 20 years. The statistical division 'represents the city in a wider sense' (ABS 2006c, p. 15). Statistical divisions outside of the capital cities are 'relatively homogeneous region(s) characterised by identifiable … links between the inhabitants and between the economic units within the region, under the unifying influence of one or more major towns or cities' (ABS 2006c, p. 15).

Victoria is divided into 11 statistical divisions, as shown in Map 1 (excluding off-shore and migratory). They are Melbourne, Barwon, Western District, Central Highlands, Wimmera, Mallee, Loddon, Goulburn, Ovens-Murray, East Gippsland and Gippsland.

Statistical subdivisions are defined as 'socially and economically homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable links between the inhabitants' (ABS 2006c, p. 14). Melbourne is divided into 16 statistical subdivisions. There are also statistical subdivisions which correspond to major regional population centres. There are 44 of these across the country, including eight in Victoria. They are Geelong, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Mildura, Bendigo, Shepparton, Wodonga and the La Trobe Valley.

In other cases, statistical subdivisions cover non-urban areas. These are defined as rural areas which do not include cities with populations of 25 000 or above. These non-urban areas are said to have 'identifiable links between economic units within the region' and there may be the 'unifying influence' (ABS 2006c, p. 14) of one or more country towns. These rural/remote subdivisions have small populations, and sometimes they have high rates of homelessness but few homeless people.

4.3 OVERVIEW: VICTORIA

Three-quarters (73 per cent) of the population of Victoria lives in Greater Melbourne and this is where we find the largest concentration of homeless people. Table 4.1 shows that the census identified 14 568 homeless people in Melbourne, where the rate of homelessness was 41 per 10 000. This is similar to the rate of homelessness in Sydney (39 per 10 000) and Canberra (42 per 10 000), but lower than the rate in Brisbane (45 per 10 000) and Adelaide (47 per 10 000).

4.1 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, MELBOURNE AND REGIONAL VICTORIA

	Melbourne	Regional	Victoria
Number	14 568	5943	20 511
Rate	41	44	42

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

The homeless population was distributed fairly evenly in Victoria. There were 5943 homeless people in regional Victoria where the rate was 44 per 10 000, similar to the rate in Melbourne (41 per 10 000).

This chapter focuses on the distribution of the homeless population in Melbourne. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 discuss regional Victoria.

4.4 MELBOURNE

The Melbourne statistical division comprises 16 subdivisions (Map 2). This analysis groups them into four areas which we refer to as the 'City Core', the 'Inner City Ring', the 'Outer City Ring' and the 'Frankston-Dandenong Corridor'.

The City Core is the subdivision of Inner Melbourne. It has a population of 271 000 and includes the central business district, the City of Port Phillip, the City of Yarra, and part of the City of Stonnington (Prahran).

The Inner City Ring (population 1.34 million) includes five subdivisions which have a boundary with the City Core. The subdivisions are Western Melbourne, Moreland, Northern Middle Melbourne, Boroondara and Southern Melbourne.

The Outer City Ring includes seven subdivisions with a population of 1.597 million. The subdivisions are Melton-Wyndham, Hume, Northern Outer Melbourne, Eastern Middle Melbourne, Eastern Outer Melbourne, the Yarra Ranges and South Eastern Outer Melbourne.

The Frankston-Dandenong Corridor includes the Greater Dandenong, Frankston City and Mornington Peninsula subdivisions. It has 380 000 people.

Table 4.2 shows that there were 3490 homeless people in the City Core and the rate of homelessness was 129 per 10 000. The City Core had eight per cent of Melbourne's population, but 24 per cent of its homeless people. It is usual to find a higher rate of homelessness in the inner suburbs of capital cities. This is the case in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Perth. People often gravitate to the inner city where services for homeless people have traditionally been located.

4.2 NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE AND RATE PER 10 000 OF THE POPULATION, MELBOURNE

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Number	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568
Rate	129	38	40	28	41

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, there were 5047 homeless people and the rate was 38 per 10 000. There were 4501 homeless people in the Outer City Ring, where the rate was 28 per 10 000. The rate was 40 per 10 000 in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor where there were 1530 homeless people.

Altogether, there were 11 078 homeless people in suburban Melbourne, compared with 3490 in the City Core. The provision of services in suburban areas assists people in the early stages of homelessness, including those at risk, and reduces the move to the inner city.

Table 4.3 shows the proportion of people in different sectors of the homeless population. In the City Core, 58 per cent of homeless people were staying in boarding houses, 19 per cent were with friends or relatives and 18 per cent were in supported accommodation (SAAP or THM). There were 160 people (five per cent) in squats or sleeping rough, although it is unlikely that everyone was counted. One census collector reported 'four people sleeping on the banks of the Yarra'. Another collector sighted a 'group sleeping in Albert Park', and another counted 'people on benches outside a church'.

4.3 PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE HOMELESS POPULATION, MELBOURNE

Percentage

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Boarding house	58	18	20	11	26
SAAP/THM	18	44	32	34	33
Friends/relatives	19	35	37	47	35
Improvised dwellings	5	3	11	8	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Number

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Boarding house	2040	922	308	469	3739
SAAP/THM	630	2224	487	1543	4884
Friends/relatives	660	1757	567	2 116	5100
Improvised dwellings	160	144	168	373	845
	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

In the Inner City Ring, 35 per cent of homeless people were staying with other households, 44 per cent were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and 18 per cent were in boarding houses. There were 144 people (three per cent) in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, including 50 in Western Melbourne.

In the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor, the proportion of people staying with other households was similar to the Inner City (37 per cent). However, in Frankston-Dandenong, there were fewer people in SAAP/THM accommodation (32 per cent) and more people (11 per cent) in improvised dwellings and sleeping rough, including 133 in Frankston City. There was a coding error by a census collector in Frankston City and the improvised dwellings count was actually 61. Local service providers in Frankston confirmed that sleeping out is common. One person said, 'Homeless people sleep down near the beach and there are quite a few squats in town'. Others talked about 'people sleeping in the tea tree shrub along the foreshore'. Another knew of a couple 'living in a toilet block'.

In the Outer City Ring, about half (47 per cent) of the homeless were staying with other households (2116 people), 34 per cent were in SAAP and 11 per cent were in boarding houses. There were 373 people (eight per cent) who were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough. One census collector counted 'three people sleeping at the football ground, one person sleeping

in a car, one person sleeping in a disused shed, and two people behind some shops'. Another collector counted people 'behind the railway station and at the back of a church'.

Altogether, 35 per cent of the homeless (5100 people) in Melbourne were staying with other households, mainly in suburban Melbourne. Another 33 per cent (4884 people) were in SAAP/THM accommodation, and about three-quarters (77 per cent) of this group were in the Inner City or Outer City Ring. One-quarter (26 per cent) of the homeless were in boarding houses (3739 people), mainly in the City Core and inner suburbs. Finally, six per cent (845 people) were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough.

4.5 MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS

The national report pointed out that boarding houses are more common in capital cities and less common in regional centres and country towns. In these communities, SAAP workers sometimes refer homeless people to the local caravan parks if there is no emergency accommodation available. Marginal residents of caravan parks were defined as people who were renting caravans or cabins, living at their usual address, and with no one in the dwelling having full-time employment.

Seventy per cent of boarding house residents across the country were in capital cities, and in Victoria 84 per cent of boarding house residents were in Melbourne (Table 4.4). Most regional centres had a small number of boarding house residents.

4.4 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS IN BOARDING HOUSES AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, VICTORIA

	Boarding house (N=4457)	Caravan (N=2789)
	%	%
Melbourne	84	45
Remainder of Victoria	16	55
	100	100

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Nationally, 71 per cent of marginal caravan park residents were outside of the capital cities and in Victoria this figure was 55 per cent (Table 4.4). In some communities, local SAAP workers send homeless people to the local caravan park if there is no alternative accommodation available. Caravan parks may also house some people on a longer-term basis who are unable to re-enter the private rental market.

Table 4.5 shows that there were 1247 marginal residents of caravan parks in Melbourne. Eighty-four per cent were in the Frankston Dandenong Corridor (617 people) or the Outer City Ring (428 people).

In general, caravan parks in Melbourne fall into two groups. First, there are caravan parks which are used by tourists in the summer, as well as people who own their caravans. In winter, the number of tourists declines and some of these parks remain closed for part of the year. In other cases, owners rent out vans to poor people during the winter months. Before summer, rents are increased and marginal tenants are forced to move on.

4.5 HOMELESS PEOPLE AND MARGINAL RESIDENTS OF CARAVAN PARKS, MELBOURNE

	City Core	Inner City Ring	Frankston-Dandenong	Outer City Ring	Total
Homeless	3490	5047	1530	4501	14 568
Rate per 10 000	129	38	40	28	41
Caravans	0	202	617	428	1247
Total	3490	5249	2147	4929	15 815
Rate per 10 000	129	39	56	31	44

Source: Census of Population and Housing 2006; SAAP Client Collection 2006; National Census of Homeless School Students 2006.

Second, there are caravan parks which are used as permanent accommodation for poor people and as emergency accommodation. Local informants in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor told us that there are a number of these parks in their community. One was described as 'backing on to a freeway, with more than 100 vans and small cabins'. Another was described as a 'dumping ground for people with mental health issues and other problems'.

In the Northern and Western suburbs a number of the caravan parks are in industrial locations close to major highways. These parks provide permanent accommodation for poor people, as well as emergency accommodation for the homeless.

For some policy purposes, marginal residents of caravan parks might be thought of as part of the tertiary homeless population. If this broader definition is employed, then the rate of homelessness was 44 per 10 000 in Melbourne, compared with 41 per 10 000 using the ABS definition. The broader definition makes a significant difference in the Frankston-Dandenong Corridor where the rate increases from 40 to 56 per 10 000.