

COUCH SURFING AT FED SQUARE

Why would you place one old couch opposite St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne's Federation Square? The answer for McAuley is simple: how better to describe women's homelessness than a couch and when better to do so than during **Homeless Persons' Week** (August 4-10).

On 7 and 8 August, a large once-loved couch will take pride of place along the Flinders Street part of Fed Square to draw attention to the fact that the majority of women who are homeless couch surf from friend to friend or live in a car. Few – just 20 women in Melbourne currently – sleep on the streets.



Julie Shiels, a community artist, will stencil a message onto a cushion to highlight still further the urgent need to do something about homelessness in Victoria.

"I work mainly in sculpture and photography, using whatever comes to hand, to explore ideas of abandonment, banality and impermanence against a backdrop of global mass production and consumption," said Julie Shiels.

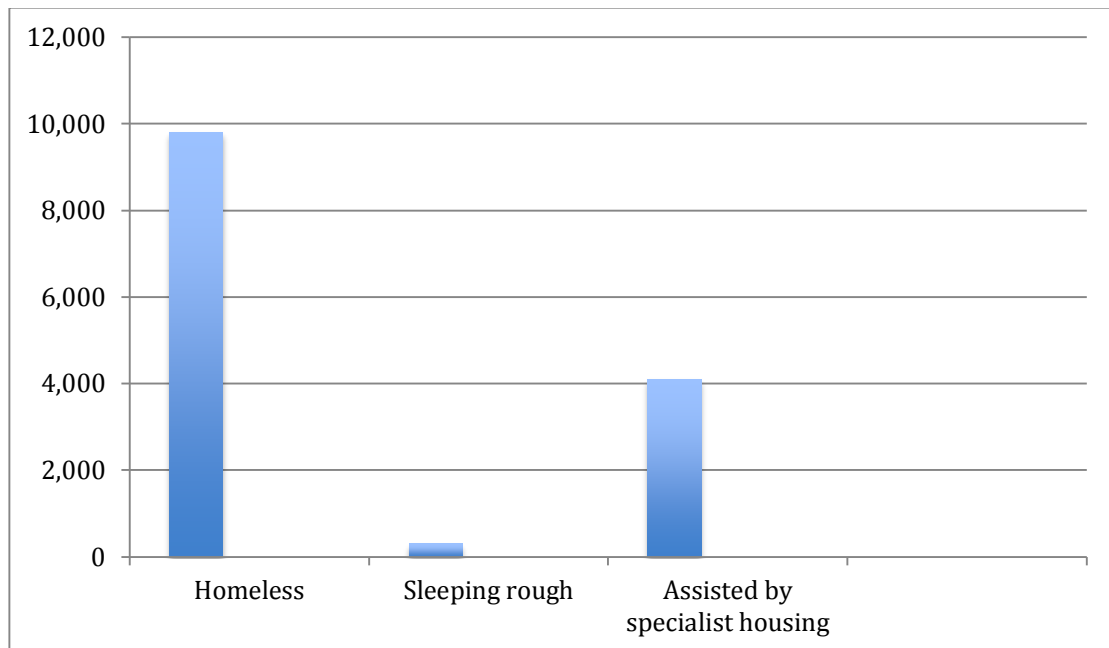
"We need to open up a debate in society about how long and why we are ignoring the issue. I am delighted to a part of this project that aims to shine a light on women and the type of homelessness they experience."

Women who are homeless and living at McAuley House will take part in the event, as will staff and volunteers.

Throughout the day, there will be different objects placed onto the couch, such as a cereal bowl, transparent zip up carry bag or piles of books, to emphasise how a couch is often the safest home for many women who are escaping family violence with their children.

We look forward to seeing you at Fed Square, bring your friends and family and spread the word.

On Census Night in 2011 in Victoria, the number of women who were homeless, sleeping rough or in assisted specialist housing such as McAuley's crisis accommodation, refuges and McAuley House were:



. Figures from *Homelessness Australia*

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