

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Understanding family homelessness

Dr Elizabeth Conroy from the Centre for Health Research has received funding from Mission Australia to investigate family homelessness in NSW. The research aims to determine the risk and protective factors of family homelessness across different family types. An assessment tool to reliably measure these factors will be created for Mission Australia to use as part of its work in preventing homelessness.

'One third of people accessing homeless support services in Australia are families with children', Dr Conroy says. 'According to Mission Australia, they are the fastest growing homeless group, and yet there is still very little evidence on which programs deliver effective support for these families.' In NSW, the Mission Australia Centre at Kingswood (MAC-K) in Western Sydney offers a wide range of support for these families, such as "universal programs" available to all families, early interventions for families experiencing heightened risk, and traditional housing for homeless families. The number of services catering to families with a range of support needs makes MAC-K an ideal place to investigate the factors that contribute to or protect families against homelessness, and how to best provide assistance.

The research will be carried out at MAC-K, and will be comprised of two phases. Phase 1 will involve a qualitative exploration of risk and resilience among families accessing the MAC-K. The findings from this phase will inform the development of an assessment tool for identifying risk. The tool will be trialled during Phase 2 where the feasibility of using it with families experiencing different levels of risk will be tested. A third phase of the research is dependent upon future funding, but it is planned that it will follow different family groups over time to test the effectiveness of the assessment tool in measuring risk and resilience.



The development of a homeless family assessment tool has the potential to assist families in danger of becoming homeless to access more appropriate services, and may also improve existing universal support services that maintain support networks for whole communities.

Project Title: An examination of family homelessness: A study of families accessing Mission Australia Centre Kingswood (MAC-K)

Funding has been set at: \$167,080

Contact Details: e.conroy@uws.edu.au;
<http://www.uws.edu.au/centreforhealthresearch>

August 2015

Supported by:

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA** | together
we stand