

Census data helps Orange Sky give free laundry, warm showers and genuine conversation to people experiencing homelessness

Orange Sky Australia supports people experiencing homelessness. They use Census data to inform where the biggest need for their services are, so they can best support the community with access to free mobile laundry services, warm showers and genuine conversation.

In Australia, 1 in 200 people are experiencing homelessness. That means 116,000 people across the country are homeless every night, including those sleeping on the streets.

Orange Sky Communications and Brand Manager, Ben Knight said, "Census data helps us to know where our services are needed in urban and remote areas. It helps us provide important services to some of Australia's most vulnerable people".

Nev, an Orange Sky worker, said, "I started out volunteering with Orange Sky when I was homeless and eventually, years later, I became employed and I've been employed for a couple of years now".

Orange Sky's mission is to positively connect communities. Every day during their own shifts, employees and volunteers on the service are connecting with each other and with friends on the street.

Ben explained that every Orange Sky van has six orange chairs that come out, and volunteers sit down and have genuine conversations with their friends who come to use the service.

"I found it really important to have that weekly conversation, because I wouldn't have many conversations otherwise. It is quite lonely, you're just stuck with your own thoughts," Nev said.

"It's very important for us to understand the needs of each location. The Census data helps us understand how many people may be experiencing homelessness and where they are. Knowing the location helps us plan where to run our shifts," Ben said.

"We want to be able to provide a shift where there are the most people experiencing homelessness and can best benefit from the service."

Orange Sky is now moving out to a platform that will be able to connect all the services they provide across Australia. This will enable them to track their data and understand what impact they're making in the community.

"The 2016 Census found that 116,000 Australians are experiencing homelessness and the 2021 Census data will help us to continue targeting the right areas," Ben said.