

# Homeless woes spike

DANIEL WOOD

Big Centralian need for help

FOR every 10,000 people in the Northern Territory Outback, 576 accessed specialist homelessness services across 2019-20, the second highest rate in the nation.

According to data released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) last week, only the Western Australian Outback experienced a higher rate at 583 per 10,000 population.

"We're going backwards," NT Shelter executive officer Peter McMillan said. "What we've seen in the last 12 months in the NT is a rise of 7 per cent in the number of people seeking homelessness services. Whereas there's been an overall fall of 1.5 per cent elsewhere in the nation."

The AIHW report revealed the NT had the highest rate of youth presenting at homelessness services without a parent or guardian. Nationally, more than a quarter of youth presenting alone were Indigenous. "What we're seeing is a staggering rise in the young people presenting to homelessness services," Mr McMillan said. "That's up 63 per cent in the past two years. Youth homelessness is skyrocketing."

Mr McMillan said the NT was seeing a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in Aboriginal people presenting to homelessness services, and that the biggest hurdle in overcoming this trend was a critical lack of funding.

"The NT receives a really paltry amount of federal government funding for homelessness services," he said.

"We get only 1.3 per cent of the funding because that's our population share, but Alice Springs, for example, has a homelessness rate that is 17 times higher than the national average."