



## **Byron Shire tops NSW for homelessness: 2024 Street Count reveals alarming surge**

*Byron Bay sees 16% increase in rough sleepers, highlighting urgent need for support for homeless services like Fletcher Street Cottage.*

Byron Bay, May 15 2024 – The latest data from the [NSW Government's 2024 Street Count](#) has revealed a stark and troubling reality for **Byron Bay, which now accounts for the largest number of rough sleepers in NSW**. The count found 2,037 people sleeping rough in 2023 in NSW compared to 1,623 people last year, marking a significant increase, with 348 in Byron Bay alone.

The increase of approximately 16% in Byron Bay starkly contrasts with a more modest 1% rise in the City of Sydney. These statistics underscore the escalating crisis in regional areas, with the Byron Shire now at the forefront of people at risk of homelessness and those already sleeping rough.

[Fletcher Street Cottage](#), Byron's homeless hub, is at the frontline of efforts to support the growing number of homeless in our region. Since its inception in 2022, the hub has become a vital resource, providing essential services and support to those in need. Over the past two years, it has served over **21,000 breakfasts**, provided **9,200 showers and laundry** services and helped countless service users access health and social services.

Lindy Swain, Manager of Fletcher Street Cottage, says, "*The 2024 Street Count only gives a snapshot of rough sleepers in Byron Bay and doesn't account for the many hidden homeless, those sleeping in cars, tents and couchsurfing. We are in urgent need of social housing in our region. Fletcher Street Cottage remains committed to providing a lifeline to those affected by this crisis. The support we offer is more critical now than ever, and we are in dire need of funding to sustain our efforts.*"

The rising interest rates, cost of living pressures, local rental crisis and lack of social housing are driving the surge in homelessness in Byron Bay. These challenges are not new, but their impacts are becoming increasingly severe. This is particularly evident in the growing number of women seeking support at Fletcher Street Cottage, reflecting the broader societal pressures that continue to mount.



The Byron Community Centre has been supporting local rough sleepers since the early 2000s. As demand for services consistently rises, sustained community collaboration and the generosity of supporters are more crucial than ever in addressing this escalating crisis. Fletcher Street Cottage collaborates with various service providers, including Centrelink, My Momentum, Social Futures, Homeless Health Outreach Team and others, to provide comprehensive support to those in need.

Louise O'Connell, General Manager of Byron Community Centre, adds, "*As Fletcher Street Cottage recently passed its two-year anniversary, the community's support is more vital than ever in these challenging times. We are deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, volunteers, donors and partners whose support has been instrumental in helping us address this escalating crisis. Our team works tirelessly to generate the necessary funding to keep Fletcher Street Cottage open and continue providing essential services to locals in need.*"

To learn more about Fletcher Street Cottage and to donate, visit [www.fletcherstreetcottage.com.au](http://www.fletcherstreetcottage.com.au).

The 2024 street count was completed between 1 February and 1 March 2024 and is published annually. For more information visit:

[www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/housing-reforms/homelessness/street-count](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/housing-reforms/homelessness/street-count)

## **BACKGROUND**

The Byron Community Centre is an independent not-for-profit organisation that provides essential services including meals, advocacy and counselling, as well as arts and social programs for the benefit of the whole community.

[Fletcher Street Cottage](#) provides support and services for people at risk of homelessness and those already sleeping rough.

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