

This father sleeps on a garage floor hours away from his children amid the 'worst housing crisis in history'

By [Daryna Zadvirna](#)

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Jonathon and his family have been unable to secure a rental, and they're not alone. (ABC News: [Daryna Zadvirna](#))

Jonathon considers himself lucky to have a roof over his head, sleeping on the floor of his friend's garage in Perth's east.

But living hours away from his wife and three young children, who share a homestead in rural WA with more than two dozen other displaced people, is unbearable for him.

"It hurts to not come home and hear the words 'daddy', that's for sure," the 49-year-old concreter said.

"I didn't realise that this would happen to me. I've always been a good provider [for my family]."

Key points:

- Despite working full-time, Jonathon can't secure a rental for his family
- He lives on the floor of a friend's garage, two hours from his wife and children
- Service providers say previously financially stable families are facing homelessness

Unable to secure a rental, the family of five has spent the past couple of years between homelessness shelters, friends' homes and a hotel room.

They are among a growing number of previously financially stable families who have recently found themselves homeless or on the brink, according to service providers.



"I've been doing this this work for over 15 years, and I have never experienced or seen anything like this," Emma White, a senior manager at Uniting WA told the ABC.

"This is a group of people who, up until potentially one pay check ago, would have had employment and ... whether it is the loss of a job, or there's been a rental increase, or an interest rate rise, they suddenly find themselves in a position where they can't sustain their accommodation."

No rental options

Jonathon moved to Perth from Lancelin at the peak of the pandemic, needing medical treatment for a workplace injury, which also left him unemployed.

Even after getting full-time work again, he was unable to secure a rental for his family.

"The reality is, there's 216 people rocking up for house viewings along with me," Jonathon said.

"That's not good odds."



He says staying in a budget hotel room seemed like a good temporary option, but it was not safe, and the family was ultimately forced to live apart.

"My wife, at the time was pregnant, and she was robbed and attacked there," he said.

"[She] and the children are now about two hours out of the city and they're residing with at least 11 adults and 18 children in one homestead."

Children living in cars

A group of homelessness support agencies, including Uniting WA, recently helped a Perth man and his seven-year-old son, who were living out of their car for some time, get accommodation.

Ms White says many WA children and their parents are still living in cars and even tents.

"If you think about children who are coming home from school — they're not coming home," she said.



"They're going to a place where there's real insecurity and this potential fear of the people that are around them.

"I think it is quite a scary time."

Figures released earlier this month show WA experienced the second highest surge in homelessness services demand in the country.

Analysis by Homelessness Australia shows the number of people seeking assistance in the state increased by more than 11 per cent between December 2022 and March 2023.

The organisation's chief executive Kate Colvin said the increase in demand was making it harder to assist people confronting homelessness.

"It forces homelessness services to make extremely tough decisions about who gets assistance," she said.

"The reality is highly vulnerable people are being turned away because services simply have too few staff and other support resources.

"This is just one terrible side effect of the worst housing crisis in living memory."

More than 40,000 visits

Tranby Engagement Hub, run by Uniting WA, is the only crisis facility in Perth offering meals, showers, laundry, healthcare and other support services for people experiencing homelessness every day of the year.

In the first six months of 2023, there have been 40,139 presentations at Tranby of people asking for assistance.



On My Feet helps people like Jonathon stay positive by being active — whether its walking or running.

"The whole concept behind it is to help people who are at risk of homelessness or coming out of homelessness and try and journey back to self-sufficiency," chief executive Kath Mc Quaide said.

"They're walking with other people who are making positive choices who are also at risk of homelessness."

For Jonathon, that community has been a family away from his family.



"The closest thing I've got to my family right now is my son's pillow and my daughter's blanket that I hug at night," he said.

"But we're not the only people going through this ... and there's a lot of people worse off."