

Part of our role is to manage complaints received in relation to incidents of severe domestic squalor and compulsive hoarding. Hoarding is recognised by the World Health Organisation as a diagnosable, and treatable, behavioural mental health condition. Squalor describes a living environment which the SA Health guideline 'A Foot in the Door' defines as;

'either 'wet' or 'dry'. Wet squalor refers to an accumulation of filth and refuse, and dry squalor refers to the accumulation of items and possessions. While it may be possible to distinctly separate cases of wet and dry squalor, they may occur together. Severe domestic squalor does not refer to properties that are simply unsightly, un-kept or where the accumulation of items does not jeopardise the occupants' health and safety.'

Hoarding and squalor can affect any age group or demographic, however, conditions can worsen over time meaning that there are often strong links to our aging population. A common misconception is that people who live in such conditions do not care and that they choose to live in this way. Often the root cause of incidents of severe domestic squalor and compulsive hoarding can be associated with physical and/or mental health incapacity sometimes triggered by trauma, depression or brain injury. Conditions can develop quickly, or over many years.

People living with hoarding and squalor can become socially isolated and withdrawn, feel embarrassed, hopeless and may have a fear of losing their home. These feelings do not only affect the person who is hoarding but also their family members who often feel as though their home is not really their home.

Children may not be allowed or want to have friends come over, relationships can break down and frustration can lead to argument and fights. Family members can be ashamed of the conditions, however they are often powerless with little or no control over cleaning and are basically forced to live in chaos.

Community connections, understanding and patience can go a long way to reducing the stigma individuals may feel. Understanding that hoarding is a mental health illness that requires support and recognising that there is a person behind the hoarding and squalor is essential. It may be that a relationship or a connection in the community can be the first step towards reducing isolation and accessing support.

'The hoarder's journey can be a long one – it takes years for a house to fill up: it doesn't simply take a weekend clear-out to solve the issue. It is better to let them know that you will support and help them when they are ready to clear the house, and in the meantime you can maintain your relationship outside of the home.' (Jo Cooke, *The Guardian*, 21/08/2018)

The complex nature of these cases often mean that a multidisciplinary approach is required to achieve successful, sustainable outcomes to address the underlying cause rather than the symptom.

EHA convenes the Eastern Hoarding and Squalor group which has been established within our community to assist people affected by hoarding and squalor and is actively working alongside local service providers to ensure a range of information, assistance and advice is available for those in need.

For further information or support with hoarding or squalor see the links below.

<u>Mental Health Support</u>		
Beyond Blue	1300 224 363	https://www.beyondblue.org.au
Eastern Community Mental Health	7425 5555	http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
Mental Health Coalition of South Australia	8212 8873	http://www.mhcsa.org.au
Lived Experience Telephone Support Service	1800 013 755	https://www.linkstowellbeing.org.au/services/letss
Mind Australia	1300 286 463	https://www.mindaustralia.org.au/services/south-australia
Partners in Recovery	8307 2800	https://ucwb.org.au/services/partners-in-recovery/
SA Health Mental Health Triage Service	13 14 65	
Skylight	8378 4100	https://www.skylight.org.au/
Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service	8206 8900	http://www.sttars.org.au/
<u>Hoarding Support</u>		
DAIR	8159 1400	
Hoarding Home Solutions	0418 186 056/ 0403 164 468	help@hoardinghomesolutions.com.au
Hoarding and Squalor SA		http://www.hoardingandsqualorsa.com.au
Clear Space	0414 484 824	www.clearspace.net.au
Clutter Management Solutions	0414 827 296	
Professional Organising Solutions	0423 694 452	www.facebook.com/professionalorganisingsolutions
<u>Homelessness</u>		
Hutt Street Centre	8418 2500	https://www.huttstcentre.org.au
One Voice	1300 426 386	https://onevoice.org.au/mobile-showers

Homeless Gateway	1800 003 308	https://www.unitingcommunities.org/
Street to Home	1800 811 180	http://www.neaminational.org.au/get-support/find-service/street-to-home
<u>Housing Support</u>		
Adelaide Benevolent Society	8231 5321	http://www.adelaide.org.au
Habitat for Humanity		https://habitat.org.au/what-we-do/australia/sa
Housing Safety Authority	1300 700 329	https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/contacts/housing-sa-contacts
Tenants Information & Advisory Service	1800 060 462	https://www.syc.net.au/home/housing-support/tias/
<u>Financial Assistance</u>		
Louisa de Costa Foundation		https://www.louisadacosta.com.au
Wyatt Trust	8224 0074	https://wyatt.org.au/small-grants/
<u>Support for People Living with Disability</u>		
Advocacy for Disability Access and Inclusion Inc	8340 4450	https://advocacyfordisability.org.au
Baptcare	13 22 78	https://www.baptcare.org.au
Wesley Social Enterprises Inc. (WSE)	8440 4243	https://unitingsa.com.au/social-enterprises/
<u>General Support</u>		
Baptist Care	8118 5200	https://baptistcaresa.org.au
Catalyst Foundation	8168 8776	http://www.catalystfoundation.com.au
Centacare		http://www.centacare.org.au