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Vets in street battle

One in 20 homeless did their time in the military

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MORE than one in 20 homeless people around Australia are Defence Force veterans, a shocking new report reveals.

The previously hidden plight of hundreds of ex-service men and women sleeping on the street has prompted calls for more to be done to identify and support veterans with post traumatic stress disorder and other problems. "More proactive follow-up is essential to stop them falling through the cracks and becoming homeless," said Karyn Walsh, CEO of Brisbane's leading homelessness service Micah Projects.

"Veterans are more hesitant to come to services so we all need to be aware how trauma impacts on their ability or willingness to seek support

"There might be an element of feeling guilt or shame because they have not coped. People might be embarrassed to ask for help."

The problem has been highlighted in the report "The State of Homelessness in Australia's Cities", being released today by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of WA.

Researchers analysed the data collected from face-to-face interviews with homeless people in five states during annual registry week activities between 2010 and 2017. Of the 8344 people spoken to, 457 reported that they had served in the ADF, including 71 women.

Almost two-thirds of the veterans were sleeping rough,

rather than in hostels, shelters or with friends.

The study found the ex-servicemen and women were more likely to have suffered

brain injury or head trauma than other homeless people.

"A substantially higher proportion of veterans than non-veterans reported that they had a permanent physical disability that limited mobility."

Troy Watson, CEO of Mates4Mates which supports current and former ADF members who are wounded, injured or ill resulting from their service said the figures were "sobering".