



Hygiene Poverty in Australia

Impact Report July 2024

**IMAGINE CHOOSING BETWEEN
HEATING, EATING OR KEEPING CLEAN**



4 million Australians face the impossible choice of heating, eating or keeping clean daily.

What is hygiene poverty?

Hygiene poverty is not being able to afford everyday personal hygiene products many of us take for granted. Many people experiencing hygiene poverty face the impossible choice of heating, eating or keeping clean daily.



Summary



Over four million Australians are currently living in 'hygiene poverty'¹



The current cost of living crisis has left a staggering 14% of Australians unable to afford hygiene essentials for the first time¹



Hygiene poverty also takes a toll on the mental and physical health of 2.6 million Australians¹



Charitable organisations play an important role in supporting people in hygiene poverty. In the first 6 months of 2024, over 207,000 individuals Australia wide have been supported with brand-new hygiene items from Good360's member network.

Introduction

Everyone deserves access to life's essentials to eat, sleep, and keep clean. However, this is not the reality in Australia today.

Hygiene poverty is a lesser-known facet of poverty. It is often a precursor to food and fuel poverty, as people are likely to give up the everyday essentials many of us take for granted like toothpaste, shower gel or shampoo before they go without food. In a recent survey conducted by Good360 Australia, 15% or over four million Australians say they recently skipped buying essential personal hygiene or household cleaning products because they cannot afford them.

Hygiene poverty is going without one or more hygiene products because you can not afford them.

When people are forced to go without hygiene products, their ability to participate fully in society is diminished. The impact on physical and mental health is profound, with people feeling ashamed, embarrassed and avoiding socialising as a result.

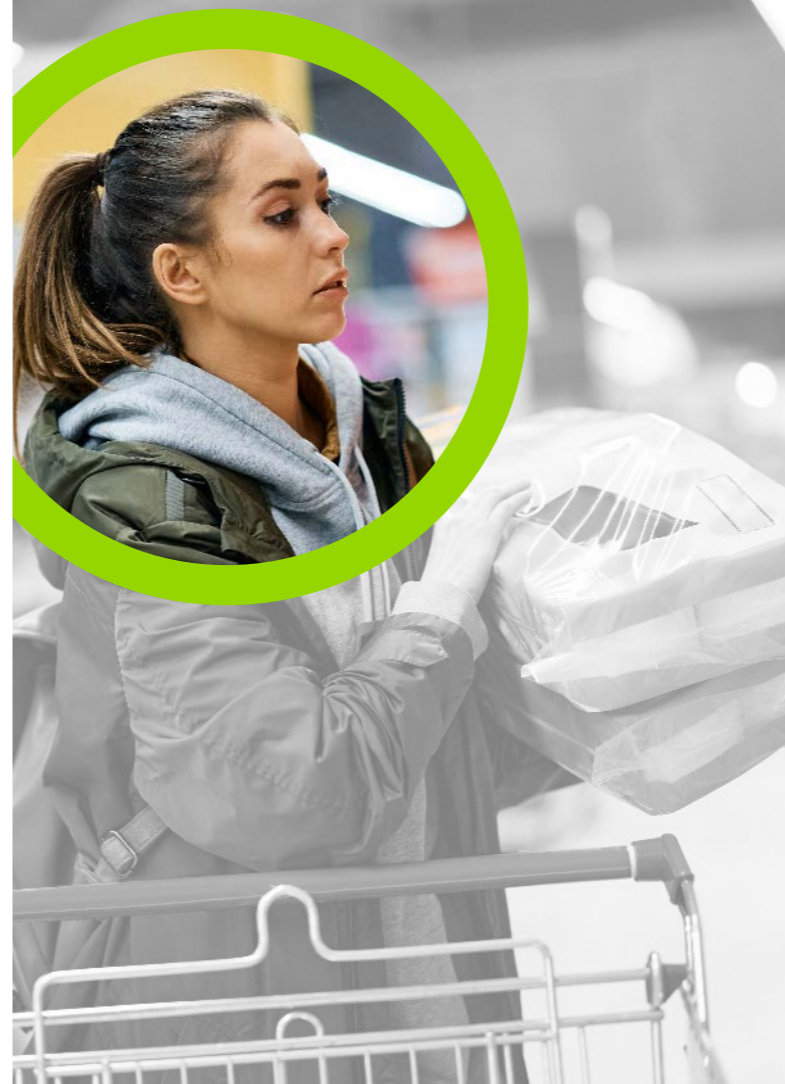
What does this mean? If you have access to these everyday essentials you don't realise what others are avoiding.

This means potentially avoiding a job interview, missing work or school, or children not going to daycare simply because they can't afford the everyday essentials to stay clean. Everyday interactions we take for granted, many are now having to consider if they can do, simply because they cannot afford to stay clean.

It is hard to imagine that four million Australians don't have access to some of these basic essentials:

- › Toothpaste
- › Toothbrushes
- › Shampoo
- › Bodywash
- › Deodorant
- › Period care
- › Toilet paper
- › Nappies
- › And much more

Good360 Australia is bringing together national research alongside stories from our charity network. Our research sheds light on the reality of hygiene poverty in Australia today, and the steps that we can take together to ensure no one has to go without.



Hygiene poverty is going without one or more hygiene products because you can not afford them.

2.1 million Australians avoid social events or miss work due to the impacts of hygiene poverty.



The bigger picture

Australia is currently amidst a cost of living crisis, with costs of essentials like food and fuel skyrocketing and consumers spending less than they used to⁴. For people living in low-income households who already spend a larger proportion of their income on these essentials, the increased cost of living hits especially hard.

Millions are being pushed into financial hardship, many for the first time. In fact, [1 in 4 Australians are 'doing it tougher than ever before'](#)⁵. We are seeing greater numbers turning to charitable organisations to help make ends meet, but these organisations also find themselves struggling and running on limited budgets.

Good360 partners with over 4,200 charities and disadvantaged schools to connect essentials to people in need Australia-wide. In January 2024, we recorded a 400% increase in charities seeking support compared to last year, with over \$20 million RRP worth of hygiene items already distributed to our network of charities and disadvantaged schools by June 2024 and over 207,000 individuals supported.

However, there are likely many more who feel too embarrassed to ask for help to access hygiene products. Support for local organisations must continue, so everyone has what they need today.


"With the shipment of toothpaste provided by Good360, we were able to send 60 Happy Boxes to two remote communities in the Northern Territory, meaning 60 women didn't have to go without access to these essential items."

Accessing essential items become near impossible for the women we support due to the unaffordable price of groceries in remote stores. The distance families must travel to be able to visit a Woolworths or Coles store can be up to 1000km. Thanks to Good360 and its donors, 60 women and their families were able to access these essential items at no cost."

Happy Boxes Project (NT)

"We received some high-quality hygiene kits that were perfect for our homeless families. Even though these donations may seem small, a simple toothpaste, toothbrush, and soap can make a world of difference in staying clean and facing the world! We are truly grateful for these donations and would like to see more of them."

Divinity Foundation (NSW)



Over \$20 million RRP worth of hygiene items already distributed to our network of charities and disadvantaged schools in 2024

Who is going without?

Over four million Australians are currently living in 'hygiene poverty' and for 3.6 million of these, it is the first time they've had issues affording personal hygiene or cleaning products. As the costs of housing and food increase, items like toothpaste, shampoo, soap and hygiene health items have become unattainable "luxuries". Our research also highlights that women, younger people and people living in South Australia and NSW are more likely to be impacted by hygiene poverty.

The increased struggle faced by households across Australia during the cost of living crisis means that affording basic hygiene essentials is increasingly out of reach - families already living in poverty have been disproportionately affected by cost increases.

Impossible decisions must be made everyday between putting food on the table or buying soap, internet access for work and school or shampoo.

Providing access to essential products helps people make ends meet. That is why we must ensure corporates get involved in donating these goods, so charities can distribute them and meet the demand so communities can stay clean and healthy.

"Managing limited funds is difficult for many of the people who present to us and personal supplies are always gratefully received as food is their priority. Cleaning products are particularly appreciated by people moving into housing after a period of homelessness."

The Salvation Army (Mt. Gambier, SA)

14% of people living in Australia are struggling to afford personal hygiene and cleaning products for the first time.



When asking the general public about their experiences affording hygiene products, we found:



2.6 million Australians (1 in 10) say the inability to afford personal hygiene or cleaning products has impacted their mental and physical health¹



5.3 million Australians (1 in 5) are worried about not being able to afford essential personal hygiene or cleaning products¹

The impact of hygiene poverty

Going without essentials particularly takes a toll on young people. It increases anxiety and can lead to social isolation and exclusion. Not having access to hygiene products is also contributing to rising school absenteeism.

Research conducted by Pinchapoo² involving a group of educators and school leaders revealed 81% of respondents noticed kids facing hygiene poverty were absent more often than their peers, while 78% observed these kids being teased because of their hygiene.

Hygiene poverty in childhood can have long-lasting effects, impacting future opportunities³. If cycles are not broken in childhood, going without becomes the reality in adulthood.

Donate to Good360 to help fight the impact of hygiene poverty



\$25 can provide \$500 of essential baby items to a mum fleeing domestic violence



\$50 can give \$1,000 worth of hygiene products to people experiencing homelessness



\$100 can give \$2,000 of cleaning products to seniors struggling to make ends meet

Good360's member network

Good360's charity and disadvantaged school members play an important role in supporting people in hygiene poverty. They provide shame-free access to products to help meet immediate needs and often act as a gateway to wider support.

Our member network has connected 16,014,382 hygiene items to people in need since 2015, supporting 1,625,201 individuals.

In 2024 alone, over \$20 million worth of hygiene items have been connected to people in need, supporting over 207,000 individuals.

Hygiene items are high-demand items for our charity network, Good360 cannot keep up with the demand and are ordered (sold out on the Good360 website) within five days of being available.

"Razors are a highly requested item from both our homeless community and our weekly clients. Unfortunately, they don't last very long, so we are always in need of them. Personal hygiene is incredibly important, and having access to a razor can empower and uplift our clients. Just because someone is going through a tough time, it doesn't mean they can't look and feel good. Good360 helps us maintain people's mental health by offering simple items like a razor."

BK 2 Basics (Melbourne, VIC)

"Thanks to the support of Good360 and their many donors, we can give much-needed support to many rural/remote schools around NSW. This time we were very excited to drop off packets of sanitary items ... These items can be expensive to buy, especially in country towns. To be gifted boxes of period products can take a lot of pressure off families and help young girls feel safe that they have access to what they need. Having period products available at school ensures girls continue attending school through their period!"

The Backpack Venture (NSW)

Special thank you to our generous product donors, whose kindness means vulnerable communities can access much-needed hygiene essentials, providing hope and dignity.



What can be done?

While our network has made an incredible impact in connecting hygiene essentials to communities in need, there are still so many going without, impacting their physical and mental health and reducing their ability to engage with work, education and social opportunities.

It is clear that this is not a short-term crisis, but a long-term problem we cannot allow to become the new normal. We're calling on businesses, charities and public bodies to join us and protect the human right to hygiene.

How everyone can play a role in tackling hygiene poverty in Australia:



Donate hygiene products

Retailers, manufacturers and brands with new hygiene products to donate can contact Good360 Australia: corporatepartnerships@good360.org.au



Join our network to access hygiene products

Charities and disadvantage schools can join our network for free to access hygiene products to support local communities. Register at: <https://good360.org.au/get-the-goods/>




Donate money


to help reduce hygiene poverty, because everyone deserves access to life's essentials. Donate today via <https://give.good360.org.au/impact-area-hygiene/>




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A note from our Founder and Managing Director

“Demand for donated personal hygiene and household cleaning products is outstripping supply as the cost of living crisis continues to impact households around the country. That’s why it’s crucial for retailers to step up and donate unsold goods and for governments to step in and help fund the delivery of other essentials like soap, shampoo and toothpaste to people in need.

These are basic items that most of us take for granted, but for many, they are becoming unaffordable luxuries. In a country as wealthy as Australia, this shouldn’t be happening. By redirecting these products, we can significantly alleviate this crisis. Everyone deserves access to basic hygiene and cleaning essentials. It’s time to come together as a community to ensure every Australian has the dignity of cleanliness and the opportunity for good health.”

Alison Covington AM,
Good360 Australia Founder & MD

Sources:

1. Nationally representative online survey of 1,000 Australians conducted by PureProfile in June 2024 on behalf of Good360. Based on survey findings and ABS Australian population data.
2. (2022). *Hygiene Poverty In Australian Schools: The Hidden Crisis*. Pinchapoo. <https://www.pinchapoo.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Hygiene-Poverty-in-Australian-Schools-The-Hidden-Crisis.pdf>
3. Australia. Parliament. Senate. Community Affairs References Committee & Hutchins, Stephen (Steve) Patrick & Australia. Parliament. Senate. Community Affairs References Committee. (2004). *A hand up not a hand out: renewing the fight against poverty : report on poverty and financial hardship / Senate Community Affairs References Committee*. Canberra : Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat https://www.aph.gov.au/~media/wopapub/senate/committee/clac_ctte/completed_inquiries/2002_04/poverty/report/c11_pdf.ashx
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5. Good360 Australia. (2024, February 10). *One in four 'doing it tougher than ever before' amid calls for more support to address cost-of-living crisis* [Media release] <https://good360.org.au/good-news/one-in-four-doing-it-tougher-than-ever-before/>

About Good360 Australia:

Good360 Australia is the largest digital marketplace in Australia for the retail industry to donate unused and unsold consumer goods to people in need. Good360 is a connector – we distribute millions of new, unsold consumer goods like clothes, homewares, appliances, furniture, toiletries and toys that have been donated by around 600 partners, to a network of over 4,200 charities and disadvantaged schools across Australia supporting people in need. The result is a Circle of Good that reduces need and waste in our communities, helping both people and our planet.



Be part of the Circle of Good.

For more information visit www.good360.org.au
or follow us @good360au

