

Homeless man dies outside New Zealand government minister's office

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A homeless man was found dead on the morning of August 28 outside the Auckland offices of three MPs from New Zealand's governing National Party. This followed at least three other deaths reported in the past two months of people living on the streets of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

The cause of the latest death has not been reported and the man has not been publicly named. The building outside which he was found, in the affluent suburb of Epsom, houses the electorate offices of Justice Minister Paul Goldsmith and MPs Melissa Lee and Nancy Lu.

According to the *Post*, a worker at a neighbouring physiotherapy business said homeless people were regularly seen in the area and noted: "There used to be emergency housing on the street. That's not there anymore."

Auckland City Mission chief executive Helen Robinson described the death as a "tragedy" and pointed to the lack of services available to homeless people. She told the *Post* it was "incredibly distressing that this could have been avoided if we had adequate services to respond."

Charities have reported a sharp increase in homelessness, driven in part by the government's restrictions on access to emergency housing. Robinson asked: "How will ministers ensure that rough sleepers have genuine access to the services that they need, so that no other people die?"

Goldsmith issued a brief, cynical statement: "This will naturally be an extremely upsetting situation for anyone involved, and it would be inappropriate to politicise it, or to comment further. Our thoughts are with the family of the deceased."

Goldsmith has been at the forefront of promoting draconian policies that treat homeless people like criminals. On May 14, he announced legislation

empowering police to issue "move-on orders" against people for rough sleeping, begging or displaying "behaviour indicating an intent to inhabit a public place."

Goldsmith said at the time: "Unfortunately, our streets and town centres have endured unprecedented levels of disruption in recent years. Many people no longer want to be there. Businesses residents and visitors are paying the price."

The new police powers will be used to push homeless people out of central, shopping and tourist areas, without giving them anywhere to live.

The homelessness crisis is the outcome of decades of cuts to welfare services, the destruction of healthcare and mental health services, a lack of affordable housing, and soaring unemployment and poverty.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has pushed its regional managers to reduce the number of people granted emergency housing. The percentage of applications that are declined has risen from 5 percent in June 2024 to 32 percent in June 2026. The numbers receiving such accommodation fell from 3,141 households in December 2023 to 471 two years later.

An Auckland Council survey found the number of people living without shelter more than doubled from 426 in September 2024 to 940 in September 2025. There were still 706 counted in January this year. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon revealed the ruling class's contempt for the fate of homeless people when he told the media in June that he did not know there was no night shelter in Auckland.

Serena Moran, a nurse who works with homeless people in Wellington, told RNZ on August 20 that she often failed to find anywhere for her patients to go: "I basically have to say to them, I'm sorry I can't find you anywhere to stay tonight. You'll need to go back

to the street.”

The number of homeless people admitted to hospital increased from fewer than 1,000 in 2018–2019 to nearly 2,000 in 2024–2025.

The death outside the Auckland MPs’ offices, and Goldsmith’s insistence that it not be “politicised,” provoked an outpouring of anger on social media.

One person wrote on Reddit’s r/newzealand forum: “If only there was a night shelter, or MSD didn’t have targets to meet” and asked whether Goldsmith, Lu and Lee would recognise “the very real outcomes of their and their parties’ decisions.”

On the *New Zealand Herald*’s Facebook page, James commented: “The person didn’t die alone... Our country and everything it once stood for went with them.” Christopher wrote: “A rough sleeper dying outside a National Party MP office is just a microcosm of the last 3 years of National.”

In a letter to the *Press*, Juliet Neill noted that an encampment of about 90 homeless people in the Christchurch suburb of Bexley (which was demolished after the 2011 earthquakes) has been told “to leave the area in February with no options provided of where they can go, despite the plethora of empty premises in Christchurch. Surely this could lead to more deaths from either the cold or the massive heat predicted for this summer.

“A body found outside a politician’s office should be a wake-up call for the Government. Despite the call not to politicise the event, this is political. We need a government which will respond with compassion as well as action,” she said.

The homelessness crisis, however, did not begin with the present government.

Eight years ago, the *Herald* reported on August 25, 2018: “Advocates for the homeless estimate one person dies roughly every two weeks on the streets of Auckland—but there are no official figures. For the most part their deaths are going largely unnoticed.” Moira Lawler, from the Lifewise charity, said: “There is no concentrated resourced effort to prevent these deaths.”

At the time, the Labour-Greens-NZ First coalition government under Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had been in office for almost a year. It had campaigned on false promises to end child poverty and improve housing affordability.

According to Statistics NZ, the number of people

experiencing “severe housing deprivation” increased under Labour from 99,462 in 2018 to 112,496 in 2023, equivalent to 2.3 percent of the population. The number living without shelter—rough sleepers and people in improvised or mobile dwellings—rose from 3,624 to 4,965.

Labour initially claimed that its KiwiBuild policy would deliver 100,000 “affordable” homes over a decade. It only built about 2,300 homes before the scheme was scrapped in 2024, and these were sold at market prices out of reach of low-income families. Meanwhile, soaring property values and rents enriched investors and placed secure housing and home ownership increasingly beyond the reach of working-class people.

New Zealand is an extremely unequal country: the wealthiest 10 percent of households control 49 percent of the total wealth, while the poorest half own less than 5 percent. The number of billionaires has jumped from 18 to 26 in the space of a single year. The resources exist to provide high-quality housing, healthcare and properly funding social services for all, but they are monopolised by a wealthy elite.

As the November 7 election approaches, the capitalist parties have nothing to offer except deeper austerity, protecting the wealth of the super-rich, and the transfer of billions of dollars in public funds to the military in preparation for war.



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