



MEDIA RELEASE

HOMELESS - YOU'RE ONLY TWO STEPS AWAY!

The Hobart City Council and Shelter Tasmania are working on ways of alleviating the number of people sleeping rough in Hobart. In a joint announcement today, the Lord Mayor of Hobart Alderman Rob Valentine and Shelter Tasmania's Executive Officer Pattie Chugg said that the latest research shows we are all just two steps away from being homeless.

“A long hospital visit, which prevents you from paying your rent and when you're discharged, you could be homeless. It can happen that easily, but ‘where will I sleep tonight?’ is a serious question most of us do not have to ponder, yet for too many people in Hobart it is a daily issue.”

“So, what does homelessness look like in Hobart? There are around 2,600 people who experience homelessness across Tasmania, with about 1200 located in the Greater Hobart area.”

Alderman Valentine said the current disturbing situation involves:

- About 120 are living temporarily in rooms in hotels, or on-site caravans,
- 600 people staying temporarily with friends or relatives in a spare bedroom, a fold-out lounge, or on the floor,
- 300 accommodated in homeless shelters each night,
- And up 180 people sleeping rough in bushland, parks, empty buildings and their own vehicles.

Ms Chugg said that around 15% of homeless people have a mental illness prior to becoming homeless, but an additional 16% will develop a mental illness after becoming homeless. Additionally, if you include alcohol abuse in these statistics then the percentage of homeless people suffering poor mental health jumps to about 85%.

“In addition, Hobart, like much of the rest of Australia, is experiencing a housing affordability crisis. Monitoring of average rental prices for a 2 bedroom home in various suburbs around Greater Hobart over the last five years reveals an average price increase of 40%, with the lowest increase being in Glenorchy (14%) and the highest in Bridgewater (59%). This means that many people on lower incomes are living in housing stress (paying over 30% income just in rent) with many others unable to find or maintain affordable housing leaving them homeless or at risk of homelessness.”

“A recent survey of available rental properties by Anglicare Tasmania revealed that only 12.8% were affordable for low income earners,” Ms Chugg said.

The Lord Mayor said that in response to this pressing issue, the Hobart City Council and Shelter Tasmania are coordinating an event called Hobart Connect. This is a one day community event aimed at fostering social inclusion, where organisations provide free services (such as haircuts, food,, accommodation information, medical services and legal advice) to people experiencing homelessness, or those who are at risk of being homeless.”

“Because homelessness is such a critical issue, there are many worthy organisations that provide accommodation and support for people in and around Hobart. These organisations provide accommodation, counselling, support, food, clothing and a range of programs that provide opportunities to break out of this cycle for the people caught in it. Hobart Connect assists this cycle-breaking process by giving people the opportunity to re-establish connections with the community and various support services,” said Alderman Valentine.

(Statistics are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics - Counting The Homeless Report by Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie, Infrastructure Australia – State Of Australian Cities 2010 & Hobart City Council Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2012)

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