



INAUGURAL VICTORIAN HOMELESSNESS CONFERENCE

Wednesday 19th November 2008 Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, Preston



Media release –

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Going It Alone – Single women face homelessness risk

Australia faces an unprecedented increase in the number of single women over 35 at risk of homelessness in the next 20 years, according to a new research report to be launched on Wednesday 19th November at the Inaugural Victorian Homelessness Conference.

Going It Alone: Single, Low-Needs Women and Hidden Homelessness describes the issue of housing affordability for single women as a “slow-moving train wreck” that threatens to become an endemic social issue.

Going It Alone reports that the majority of older single women are turned away by homelessness support services because they are considered a ‘low needs’ group, even if they are living in poverty.

Report author, Dr Andrea Sharam from the Women’s Information, Support and Housing in the North (WISHIN), said older single women were particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

“The Australian Bureau of Statistics projects a significant increase in the number of lone female households in the next 20 years. At the same time, there is still a substantial gender wage gap and women continue to shoulder the majority of lower-paid caring roles in society. Young women also tend to link their housing to partnership, more so than men, which means if the relationship breaks down in later life they are left more vulnerable to housing stress,” Dr Sharam said.

“Combine this with the lowest housing affordability since the early 1980s and we’re looking at an unprecedented number of pension-aged single women entering the primary homeless population in the next 20 years.”

Inaugural Victorian Homelessness Conference calls for State Government strategy to halve homelessness by 2020

The launch of *Going It Alone* at the **Inaugural Victorian Homelessness Conference**, run by the **Council to Homeless Persons**, comes amid calls from the sector for the State Government to develop a **bold new strategy to halve homelessness by 2020**.

Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) CEO, Deb Tsorbaris, said more than 23,000 Victorians were experiencing homelessness, an unacceptable situation that could only be addressed through committed State and Federal Government action.

“This is truly a disgrace. We’re coming up to Christmas and there are thousands of families that will not only not be able to afford gifts for their children, but not even have a home to live in,” Ms Tsorbaris said.

“We have a social responsibility and the capacity to end homelessness – but we need the political commitment as well.

“We can’t sit around waiting for the Federal Government to release its White Paper on Homelessness, we have to take action in Victoria and make addressing homelessness a priority issue.

“One of the key aims of this conference is to secure a commitment from the State Government to develop a new Victorian Homelessness Strategy that will lead us forward, significantly boost services, and give us the capacity to at least halve homelessness in the next 10 years.”

Ms Tsorbaris said key elements of the strategy must include:

1. Strong vision for ending homelessness and clear, measurable targets, including halving homelessness to less than 11,000 by 2020
2. Doubling the investment in homelessness-specific services
3. Doubling the stock of public and community housing.

Almost 400 delegates from across Victoria and other states are registered to attend the conference.

Key presenters and facilitators include:

- The Honorable Richard Wynne, Minister for Housing and Local Government
- Salvation Army Officer and former Chair, National Youth Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness, David Eldridge
- St Vincent de Paul General Manager of Community Services, Netty Horton
- Office of Housing Manager, Housing Support Services Unit, Peter Lake
- Members of the Council to Homeless Persons Peer Education Support Program (people who have experienced homelessness, and who now advocate on behalf of others experiencing homelessness)

About the Council to Homeless Persons

CHP is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

The CHP incorporates the Homelessness Advocacy Service (HAS), a service aimed at securing and protecting the rights of people experiencing homelessness, and the Peer Education Support Program (PESP), a group of people who have experienced homelessness who work to ensure that those affected by homelessness have a powerful voice in decisions that have a direct impact on their lives.

Ends/ends...

MEDIA PLEASE NOTE:

Going It Alone: Single, Low-Needs Women and Hidden Homelessness will be launched at 1.15pm in the foyer of the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, corner Bell Street & St Georges Rd, Preston. An embargoed copy of *Going It Alone* is available in PDF format and Dr Sharam is available for interview.

A conference program, key speaker bios and a fact sheet about homelessness in Victoria are available. A pre-print copy of the latest PARITY, Australia’s national homelessness magazine, is available as PDF.

Deb Tsorbaris is available for interview.

For interview arrangements and further information:

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