



Dear supporters,

Thank you again for your ongoing interest and support of our work. In this, our first newsletter for 2016 you will find a range of stories about how your support truly matters to the thousands of people experiencing homelessness who we support every year.

As you know, Launch Housing is a new organisation formed by a merger between HomeGround and Hanover. In July we will celebrate a full year as a new organisation, building on a legacy of over 75 years of service to the Melbourne community.

The merger in July 2015 drew together two well respected, independent organisations, working to create better futures for Victorians experiencing homelessness. The primary focus was to better meet our mission – to end homelessness. The merger helps this through providing better outcomes for our clients and enabling us to become more efficient. We strongly believe that by combining the resources and expertise of Hanover and HomeGround, we can do a lot more to make lasting change for a far greater number of people.

The response we've had from the community, from government and from business has been overwhelmingly positive. We are pleased that everyone is so keen to get in behind our work.

Research continues to be an important part of what we do at Launch Housing. Recent research released in partnership with RMIT and Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, gives new insights into the national picture of homelessness, as well as the unique

drivers of homelessness we see here in Victoria. Read more on p4.

We believe that people experiencing homelessness should be involved in the development and improvement of all our services, which is why we are pleased to be leading an important project to involve people with a lived experience of homelessness in our work. Read more about this on p3.

Our not-for-profit real estate agency HomeGround Real Estate, continues to grow from strength to strength under Deputy CEO Heather Holst's leadership. The initiative has been described as a financially rewarding investment with a social heart - and we're always looking for new landlords. You can read more about the impact of this incredible social enterprise on p4.

Launch Housing's work often relies on the incredible generosity of people who give their time and money to support people in our services. Read about our generous volunteer Andrea on p6 and how your support in our festive appeal has truly made a difference to the families we support across our services.

Thank you again for your ongoing support and interest in our work.

**Tony Keenan,**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Celebrating Diversity

Building on an important tradition our CEO, staff, clients and volunteers marched in the Midsumma Festival Pride March in St Kilda in January. Led by students from the Holmesglen Education First Youth Foyer, and brilliant in new purple t-shirts, the team stood out proudly on Fitzroy Street. Foyer student Bella, who was involved in the march, spoke about Launch Housing's inclusive services, "I feel happy here and feel accepted as being transgender, and there are a few other LGBTI people here as well and we feel safe."

Launch Housing CEO said "We've noticed there are always a number of gay and lesbian young people in our services. It's really important that we make sure all our services are available to everyone in need – as there is an incredible housing shortage in Australia."

*Launch Housing staff and students at Pride.*



A merger between

## Involving people with lived experience

Launch Housing has commenced an ambitious program to change the way that people who use our services contribute to new service development and the organisation more broadly. We have developed a Consumer Participation Strategy to involve people with lived experience of homelessness throughout our work.

The strategy is based on the recognition that our clients are at the centre of everything we do and their views and feedback should shape our services, research and advocacy.

The first stage of the strategy involves the employment of two consumer consultants. We have appointed Nic and Emily to undertake these important roles and both of them bring a range of skills and experience to this initiative.

Nic says he's pleased to be working on the project, "Emily and me have been really surprised by how warm all the people at Launch are. Working on the Participation Group has been 'steep learning', but it's a great innovation and we are very optimistic that it will be

happening soon. I think it is a great step forward for Launch."

The Consumer Participation Group will be made up of consumers from our many programs and over time they will take part in team meetings, hiring staff, planning activities, advocacy and in helping us develop processes such as feedback and complaints systems, client intake, assessment and case planning, brochures and forms.

One of their most exciting tasks will be to help develop and pilot the 'meet and greet' service at our access points, commencing around July 2016. This service will provide peer support to clients in our waiting rooms, helping to welcome them to Launch



Emily and Nic.

Housing by sharing their experiences and providing guidance as to what clients can expect from Launch Housing and the worker they're going to meet with. This is quite unique to the homelessness sector and we're proud to be developing this program in partnership with the community. We strongly believe it will make us a better organisation, but most importantly, it will continue to improve the way we provide services to people needing our assistance.

Visit [launchhousing.org.au](http://launchhousing.org.au) to read more about the Consumer Participation Project.

## Students get schools involved to help raise awareness and funds to end homelessness!

The wonderful prep students and their teacher Meredith Blakeney from Collingwood College worked hard to raise money for Launch Housing. The class held a lemonade stall, a red potato spoon race and made and sold cards. Their amazing efforts raised \$714 which the preps presented as a giant cheque to Launch Housing staff.

Dolores Mifsud, a year 9 student from Box Hill High took an innovative approach to fundraising when her whole year level participated in the Citizenship Project. The project encourages students to explore their role as an Australian citizen, by using a skill or passion to create a product related to your role as a citizen.

"I went around the Melbourne CBD and took photos of graffiti in various laneways around the city. I then printed out these photos and sold them on the Citizenship Project presentation night. Photography is one of my hobbies and I have always loved seeing graffiti around the city, especially when there are laneways full of it."

"To me, the graffiti also largely represents the colour and vibrancy of the city, which contains a lot of homeless people. Graffiti is a free art that anyone can enjoy, regardless of whether you have a home or not."

Dolores chose to donate the proceeds of her sales to Launch Housing after reading some of the success stories on our website. She wanted to make a



contribution towards giving those less fortunate safe and stable homes.

"Providing people (especially young ones) with stable homes is so important in today's society, and I wanted to find out more about you guys and help you out if I could."

Thanks to Dolores, Meredith and your prep students for all your hard work, and to both Box Hill High and Collingwood College for enabling your students to be involved in such valuable initiatives.

"To me, the graffiti also largely represents the colour and vibrancy of the city, which contains a lot of homeless people. Graffiti is a free art that anyone can enjoy, regardless of whether you have a home or not."

Above: Zoe Probyn (Launch Housing) and students from Collingwood College.

Below: Graffiti images sold to raise funds for Launch by Dolores.



# A national picture of homelessness

New research into the rates and trends of homelessness across Australia gives new insights into the national picture of homelessness, as well as the unique drivers found here in Victoria.

This research shows that where you are in Australia makes a huge difference to your likelihood of experiencing homelessness.

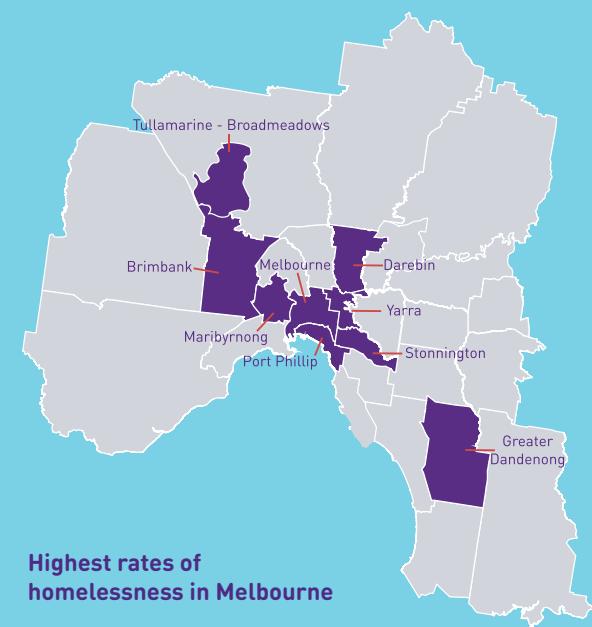
The area you live in and other broader social and economic factors such as an area's income inequality are better indicators of risk of homelessness than explanations which focus only on factors affecting an individual such as problems with drugs and alcohol, or mental illness.

The Northern Territory accounts for a large proportion of homelessness in Australia. But outside the Territory, homelessness increased most between 2001 and 2011 in areas clustered in the metropolitan regions of our mainland state capitals.

The research also indicates that a number of demographic factors are correlated with higher rates of homelessness. Areas with higher numbers of single men and

higher numbers of sole parents have higher rates of homelessness. In large cities, areas with higher numbers of young people are also associated with higher rates of homelessness.

Homelessness rates are rising in areas that have a more severe shortage of affordable rental properties. This research that increasing the supply of affordable rental housing will help address homelessness because it will help prevent people who are at risk from actually becoming homeless. To read more on this research visit [launchhousing.org.au/research](http://launchhousing.org.au/research).



## Financially rewarding investment with social heart

Finding an affordable home in Victoria today is like finding a needle in a haystack for low income households. There are no easy solutions but we have come up with one initiative that is proving successful in creating more opportunities in the private rental market.



Our social enterprise, HomeGround Real Estate is about to turn two. Launched in March 2014 the not-for-profit real estate is now managing over 200 properties. The initiative has been described as a financially rewarding investment with a social heart. HomeGround Real Estate emerged as an innovative solution to growing demand on

our services at a time when the supply of affordable housing was at an all-time low. We realised the private rental market was an untapped resource for us, with the income from property management fees being reinvested into our core business of ending homelessness.

While many of our landlords require a market return on their investment, others have the capacity to help out by reducing the rent by even a small amount so that a low income family can access their properties.

Rachel is a tenant in one of our affordable properties in Kew. After escaping a violent home with her two children, Rachel lived with friends and in her car for months before securing her new home through HomeGround Real Estate.



"I left home with the clothes on my back and had to start from scratch," Rachel says. "The kids and I slept on couches and in the car. It was so good to find out about HomeGround Real Estate and move into our new home in Kew. The landlord even helped us with some furniture."

Rachel is back at work and providing for her children. Now that they are back on their feet they are looking to move into a larger property and make way for another family in need.

If you would like to find out more about HomeGround Real Estate please visit the website [homegroundrealestate.com.au](http://homegroundrealestate.com.au) or call us on (03) 9288 9600.

## Corporate Partner – Maddocks



Maddocks

**Launch Housing works with a number of corporate partners, often through Corporate Social Responsibility programs. Our relationship with law firm Maddocks exemplifies how this can make a real difference to the people we work with.**

Maddocks is leading the way by investing in young people's futures through their partnership with the Education First Youth Foyers. Over a number of years they have provided annual grants to support a range of programs at the Education First Youth Foyers. This has helped us add some really exciting elements to the Youth Foyer program.

Maddocks has championed a Mentor program, matching young people with staff to provide real world opportunities. We really appreciate the incredible support of Maddocks' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committee through both financial and non-financial contributions.

Maddocks CSR Committee Chair, John Thwaites, says "Maddocks is proud to support the wonderful work of Launch Housing and is looking forward to our continuing partnership."

Launch Housing operates two Education First Youth Foyers for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness who want to study; providing them with a safe affordable home and direct access to education and employment opportunities.

More information on the Education First Youth Foyers is available at [Launchhousing.org.au](http://Launchhousing.org.au). If you would like to talk to us further about corporate partnerships please get in touch via email [supporters@launchhousing.org.au](mailto:supporters@launchhousing.org.au).

## Having our voice heard

**Launch Housing has a strong legacy of researching and using evidence to advocate on behalf of people experiencing homelessness. We're enthusiastic about the challenge of putting homelessness on the agenda for politicians and the community to take action on. We strongly believe that in a country as wealthy as Australia, no one should be homeless and we will use our strengths and expertise in research and service delivery to advocate for housing for all Australians.**

As part of the recent merger, we've maintained a commitment to research playing a critical role in Launch Housing's work. Research at Launch Housing builds on Hanover and HomeGround's legacy in using evidence to change public perceptions, develop new services and influence major system changes to benefit people experiencing homelessness.

We have an ambitious program of research and evaluation projects underway to ensure

for people. We will use this evidence to advocate to government for the changes necessary to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness - and prevent people from becoming homeless.

Nicola Ballendon will be leading this work at Launch Housing. She joined us in 2015 to head up the Research, Service Development and Advocacy team, with an ambitious agenda to ensure that our voice is heard in the debate on affordable

"Our strong experience in providing services together with our research puts us in a great position to have our voice heard and influence government to achieve better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness."

that we are contributing to the public debate on homelessness and our programs are effective. We recently commissioned research into public perceptions of homelessness and we're looking into the development of an annual monitor measuring the impact broader policy settings have on homelessness rates year to year. An important focus will remain on the program evaluation to ensure that our services are delivering the best outcomes

housing and homelessness. Nicola comes from a strong policy and campaigning background having held senior roles at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Choice and in federal government. Nicola says that it's an exciting time to be driving a research agenda to end homelessness. "Our strong experience in providing services together with our research puts us in a great position to have our voice heard and influence government



to achieve better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness".

We have recently completed a number of submissions to government, including the Review of the Residential Tenancies Act, employment services, budget submission and the review into affordable housing. More information on Launch research go to [Launchhousing.org.au/research](http://Launchhousing.org.au/research).

## Unique partnership houses hundreds of women and children

Since launching in March 2015 a national rapid rehousing partnership for women and children fleeing family violence has assisted over 560 people across 204 households, including 357 children.

The partnership between Launch Housing and REA Group Ltd (the parent company of realestate.com.au) is a great illustration of how the not-for-profit and corporate sectors can collaborate on finding solutions to homelessness.

Australia's housing affordability crisis is one of the key barriers to women and children leaving violent homes. "Women and children trying to escape a violent home are over represented in the homelessness sector generally," Heather Holst, Launch Housing's Deputy CEO and Director of Services said.

"More than 30% of the people we assist every year at our frontline services are women and children who are unable to remain in the family home because of abuse and violence."

The partnership with REA Group and Launch Housing provides a great model of how the not for profit and corporate sectors can work together to make a huge difference in local communities. "When REA Group approached us we knew that this kind of partnership could be a game changer. In just 12 months we have worked with partner agencies nationally to help hundreds of women and children who might otherwise have slept in cars or in overcrowded and unsuitable accommodation. Even worse they might

have continued to endured damaging, and in some cases, life threatening abuse and violence at home."

REA Group CEO Tracey Fellows said she was humbled by the number of women and children the partnership has been able to assist.

"Every day our people come to work to make property simpler, more efficient and stress-free. The sad reality is that for others, simply having a safe place to call home is a struggle. We wanted to do something about that, and we're thrilled that our partnership with Launch Housing has been able to make a difference so far," she said.

"Launch Housing does a fantastic job of helping people at risk of homelessness find housing, and we're so proud to help make a difference to hundreds of people in need around Australia."

The program is delivered in partnership with a number of agencies locally and interstate: Micah Projects – (Brisbane), Ruah Community Services (Perth), Safe Steps (Melbourne), Justice Connect (Melbourne), Kildonan UnitingCare (Melbourne), DVCS (Canberra) and Central Domestic Violence Service (Adelaide).

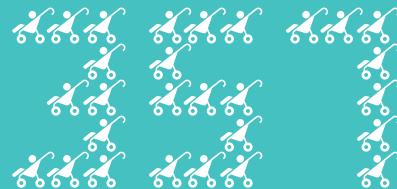


# 560

PEOPLE ASSISTED



ACROSS 204 HOUSEHOLDS



CHILDREN SUPPORTED



**realestate.com.au<sup>®</sup>**  
Australia lives here

## You made the festive season special for hundreds of families!

**A big thank you to all of our supporters who helped make the festive season special for the people we work with. Your generosity raised over \$98,000 towards the people we support.**

More than 350 families received an incredible array of gifts thanks to the amazing work of our Adopt-a-Family supporters. Adopt-a-Family is a group of volunteers who purchase gifts for families in need during the festive season. This group organised everything – from gifts for each member of the family, to vans donated by Hertz to deliver the presents.

Maddocks Lawyers, long-time supporters of the Education First Youth

Foyers, contributed to the festivities by treating all 80 students to gifts, and helped fund a special lunch for them to enjoy.

The Commonwealth Bank Direct Banking Melbourne call centre pitched in by donating a range of items to help us provide food hampers for families and clients through our St Kilda service. Their generosity was matched by staff at Fletcher Insulation in Dandenong who rallied together, collecting presents under their office tree in the lead-up to the festive season to spread some cheer to our clients in the northern services.

Elizabeth Street Common Ground celebrated with a lunch earlier in December. Residents also received a bonus when our partner Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre teamed up with Breville to not only created a gingerbread house on display in Myer, but also donated \$5,000 worth of kitchen appliances.

Thank you to everyone who supported us – the festive season can be a particularly challenging time of year for people experiencing homelessness, your support means a great deal.

# Thank you!

## Doing real work for a worthwhile cause

**Volunteers are involved in a range of different roles across Launch Housing's 14 sites. Andrea joined Launch Housing 12 months ago, volunteering at our South Melbourne site.**

After finishing her employment as a consultant and after taking some time to travel with her husband and daughter, Andrea was looking at getting back into the workforce on a part-time basis. There were few positions that particularly interested her and matched her skills, so she started looking at volunteering.

The reception and admin position at Launch Housing South Melbourne became available and at only one day a week was perfect as Andrea still has a daughter at school.

Andrea says that she's so proud to volunteer. "My heart goes out to the clients, it makes you feel humbled to contribute to Launch Housing in the little way you can."

Andrea says that before joining Launch Housing she had no idea about homelessness or what a homelessness service would be like, "it's been a bit of an eye opener" she said.

Andrea says volunteering at Launch Housing has absolutely changed her perceptions of homelessness as she

didn't really have an appreciation of what these families go through.

"I'd never thought about what women and children would go through after escaping family violence beyond perhaps a women's refuge. Now I know there's a whole step-by-step process that takes place from staying here at South Melbourne, working with the team to get transitional housing, with a view to then securing longer term, more permanent and secure housing."

"And when you think a little deeper about it, people come here from all over Melbourne, they have been uprooted from community and education. It is not as easy as placing the children into the local school up the road and all is okay. It's so disruptive for all concerned."

*"I want to be a role model for my daughter, to show her that work isn't always about being paid, and to give her an understanding that others in the community are not always as fortunate as us and to give her an appreciation of how lucky we are in comparison."*

"I would certainly recommend volunteering for Launch Housing, it's so rewarding and meaningful. The work I do, I feel like I'm really making a difference, assisting and doing very 'real' work towards such a worthwhile cause"



Volunteering makes a difference to the people we work with and helps support us achieve our mission to end homelessness. If you'd like to find out more about volunteering contact [volunteers@launchhousing.org.au](mailto:volunteers@launchhousing.org.au) or go to [launchhousing.org.au/volunteer](http://launchhousing.org.au/volunteer).

## South Melbourne back up and running

**It's been a positive start to the year for our South Melbourne site after an unexpected end to 2015. At the start of December the site suffered significant damage during a storm. The staff did an amazing job rehousing all of the families who had been staying there, and who were evacuated on the night of the storm.**

The community's response to our call for assistance during this time was overwhelming; we're so grateful for the extra support we received as we continued to work with the affected families.

The repair work to crisis accommodation units is almost completed and we've taken the opportunity to make additional improvements while they're vacant,

including painting and laying new carpets for our residents to enjoy.

Once again, thank you to everyone who contributed to the call for help, it means a great deal to the clients and staff at Launch Housing South Melbourne. A special thanks to the staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to make sure families were supported during this difficult time.



## We'd love to hear from you

We're always interested in your thoughts, compliments and feedback on our newsletters, appeals and website. If you would like to share some feedback please contact our Communications and Development team at [supporters@launchhousing.org.au](mailto:supporters@launchhousing.org.au) or free call 1800 720 660.

**Contact us**

**t 9288 9600**

**Launch Housing**

**f www.facebook.com/launchhousing**

**68 Oxford Street, Collingwood, VIC 3056 | launchhousing.org.au**

**@LaunchHousing**