

**Dear supporters,**

Thank you again for your ongoing interest and support of our work. It's now a year since the merger to form Launch Housing and we are stronger than ever. In this edition you'll find a range of stories about how your support truly matters to the thousands of people experiencing homelessness, who we support every year.

We've achieved a lot in our first year, building on the legacy of two respected organisations. With your support, we continue working with people experiencing homelessness and advocating for the changes we

need to achieve our mission: to end homelessness.

Research is a vital part of the work we do at Launch Housing, informing both our work with clients and our policy and advocacy work. It can help inform and improve understanding of homelessness in the community too. Read more on page 5 about our recent research into perceptions of homelessness, highlighting some of the myths and misconceptions we still need to tackle.

In conjunction with our research program, we were recently visited by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick from Heriot-Watt University in the UK. An expert in research on homelessness and housing exclusion, it was a wonderful opportunity to discuss internationally relevant research on rough sleeping and some of the solutions that might work in Melbourne too.

I'm sure you've noticed there has been a significant focus on rough sleeping, particularly in the CBD, recently. We have a number of programs in inner Melbourne working with this small but

vulnerable group of people. Read more about our work and some increased funding for these programs on page 3.

Our generous supporters often allow us to run programs that funding would not otherwise be available for. Thanks to the Shine On Foundation, we now have a nursing service on-site at our Southbank crisis accommodation. Read all about the great work she's doing on page 2. We're also working with Crêpes for Change to provide extra ongoing support to students once they leave the Education First Youth Foyers, details page 6.

Our Consumer Participation Strategy is now well underway, and our representative group has commenced working within Launch Housing. This is an exciting opportunity to involve people with a lived experience of homelessness in our work. Read about the group on page 5.

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

Tony Keenan, Chief Executive Officer

THANK YOU!

Your support is helping in our mission to end homelessness.

Thank you for continuing to support the work that we do and the people experiencing homelessness in your community. Your donations go directly to the thousands of men, women and children we support every year. We believe that housing is a basic human right and you're helping us make that a reality for everyone.



Winter is a particularly difficult time for people experiencing homelessness, your support helps get people out of the cold and into emergency accommodation. It also supports the women and children who come to Launch Housing for support in times of crisis or domestic violence and supports young people to create pathways out of homelessness through continued education.

Thank you again for this ongoing support – it makes a difference every day.

A merger between

Southbank's new nurse

The residents living at Launch Housing's Southbank crisis accommodation regularly experience a range of challenging health issues. Through the generosity of the Shine On Foundation, we are now able to provide much needed access to a nursing service onsite.

In May 2016 Sarah was employed to be an onsite nurse at Southbank. In the short period since Sarah commenced, we're already seeing the benefits. Sarah provides nurse consultations, follow up treatment and assisted referrals, but importantly, she is also empowering clients to better manage their health. This response has already far exceeded expectations in demonstrating that it is filling a critical gap for people experiencing homelessness.

Sarah says there are a range of conditions she assists residents with, often related to sleeping rough. "It might be something as simple as a chest infection, but without treatment could get much worse." She says.

"For someone experiencing homelessness, their health is usually a low priority in terms of the challenges they're facing. Often people will wait until they are so unwell they need to go to hospital, so early intervention is important" says Sarah.

Working to link people in with GPs is a component of the work too, though Sarah admits there can be challenges due to the stigma attached to people experiencing homelessness, particularly around drug use.

Sarah also runs a program for clients who are engaging in high risk substances to be safer. "I basically teach people how to give naloxone to each other if they're having an overdose. It's just enough until an ambulance arrives, but it could save your life."

Having previously worked in a drug health services detox unit, Sarah says she enjoys working at Southbank due to the less restrictive more flexible environment. "It's great to be able to provide medical support to people where they live" she says. "It might just start with a chat about general health, but most people are responsive to that."



A new home together

Finding a home during a time of crisis is a challenge in itself, but is often more difficult with a pet. We recently helped settled Johanna* and her beloved dog into her new home after staying at Launch Housing's women's only space in East St Kilda.

Johanna arrived at Launch Housing after fleeing a domestic violence situation and finding herself homeless for the first time in her life. While she was able to place her dog temporarily with Lort Smith, the separation was understandably quite distressing. Being housed together was key to Johanna's success going forward.

While staying at Launch Housing she had little expectation that she would find somewhere for her and her beloved dog to live within the next 6-8 weeks. After much effort and often travelling great distances to apply for private rental properties at the last minute, she managed to secure a pet-friendly, private rental, which she considers to be a dream home.

This wonderful photo was taken the day Johanna moved into her new home and features not only her pet dog, but a handmade quilt from the women of the Baptist Church in Murrumbeena – the perfect housewarming gift. Johanna was delighted to receive the quilt from the group, who donate beautiful handmade quilts and knitted blankets for women who have stayed with us at Launch Housing.

*not her real name

Rough sleeping in Melbourne and StreetCount

When most people think of homelessness, they tend to think of someone sleeping rough on the streets. In fact sleeping rough is only one type of homelessness and at the Census in 2011 only about 6% of people who were experiencing homelessness were rough sleeping. Results from the most recent Census won't be available until 2017.

Sleeping rough can refer to anyone who is living on the streets, sleeping in parks, or squatting in derelict buildings for temporary shelter.

People sleeping rough are some of the most vulnerable in society. It can be dangerous and is often traumatizing. Many people who sleep rough will suffer from multiple health conditions, including poor physical health, mental health problems and drug misuse.

It appears there has been an increase in the number of people rough sleeping in Melbourne. Each year the City of Melbourne's StreetCount collects information about people sleeping rough in the CBD. StreetCount 2016 took place in the early hours of Tuesday June 7 and continued at homelessness services throughout the day. A total of 247 people were counted sleeping rough. This represents an increase of 74% from the 2014 total of 142 people. The number of people seeking support is so high that Specialist Homelessness Services are struggling to keep up with demand. In 2014-15, an average of 116

people were unable to be assisted each day in Victoria.

The people identified in the StreetCount are often stuck in a cycle of long term homelessness, with the complex physical and mental health issues associated with rough sleeping. This requires a coordinated Housing First and health response if we want to see these numbers go down.

Dr Heather Holst says "Access to safe and secure housing is a major issue for the range of people experiencing homelessness in Melbourne. While people sleeping rough are highly visible, particularly in the city, the shortage of affordable housing is impacting on these numbers."

The people identified in the StreetCount are often stuck in a cycle of long term homelessness, with the complex physical and mental health issues associated with rough sleeping.

To find out more about StreetCount, visit the City of Melbourne's website.

The Andrews' Government recently committed to provide \$850,000 towards crisis accommodation and support programs for people sleeping rough in Melbourne. We've also had a \$750,000 funding commitment for the successful Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) that is working collaboratively with other agencies to find long term housing solutions for people sleeping on the streets of inner Melbourne.

"This funding will allow agencies like ours to provide direct assistance to people sleeping rough in Melbourne, supporting people into crisis accommodation or other short term accommodation, as well as starting the process of finding the right long term housing for each person." Said Dr Heather Holst, Launch Housing Deputy CEO and Director of Services and Property.

Our two great programs currently working in the CBD: Melbourne Street to Home and the Rough Sleeper Initiative, have shown that a coordinated approach is successful for this particular group of people.

The funding will allow Launch Housing outreach staff to extend their support to weekends and will continue to provide nursing staff to offer health checks and treatment plans to people sleeping rough. This will ensure more people sleeping rough have access to support services and a pathway out of homelessness.

In the last 14 months these two programs have supported 461 people and we are still currently working with 120 individuals.

Number of rough sleepers in the Melbourne CBD

2014

142
people



2016

247
people

*numbers from Melbourne StreetCount

Rising homelessness, including rough sleeping, appears to be driven by a number of key factors >



"Access to safe and secure housing is a major issue for the range of people experiencing homelessness in Melbourne. While people sleeping rough are highly visible, particularly in the city, the shortage of affordable housing is impacting on these numbers." **Dr. Heather Holst**

What can you do to help someone who is sleeping out?

There's no one right way to respond if you see someone sleeping rough, but there are some practical things you can do to help.

1. First and foremost, remember people who are sleeping rough are regular people experiencing a traumatic situation, so if you'd like to, introduce yourself, and ask if you can be of assistance.

2. If you'd like to provide food or water for someone sleeping rough – just check with them first. Often people who are experiencing homelessness are aware of and are linked in with homelessness services, though options, including suitable rooming houses or crisis accommodation, are scarce and might be inappropriate for the person.

3. If the person requires emergency medical attention please call an ambulance.

Who to contact

If the rough sleepers are in the areas of Stonnington, Port Phillip and City of Melbourne you can call the **Rough Sleeper's Initiative** on **8598 1125**.

If they are in the areas of City of Yarra, Moreland or Darebin you can contact the Assertive Outreach team at **Launch Housing Fitzroy** on **9288 9800**.

In other areas, you can find out who the local housing access point is by calling **Opening Doors** on **1800 825 555**. This is a free call number that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your call will be answered by a worker who can put you in touch with an organisation closest to you.



Rising homelessness, including rough sleeping, appears to be driven by a number of key factors:



Rising cost of housing



Declining rental affordability



Social housing has failed to meet demand



Reduced supply of marginal housing caused by closure of rooming houses and caravan parks



Rising incidence of family violence



Federal government income support is failing to meet housing costs

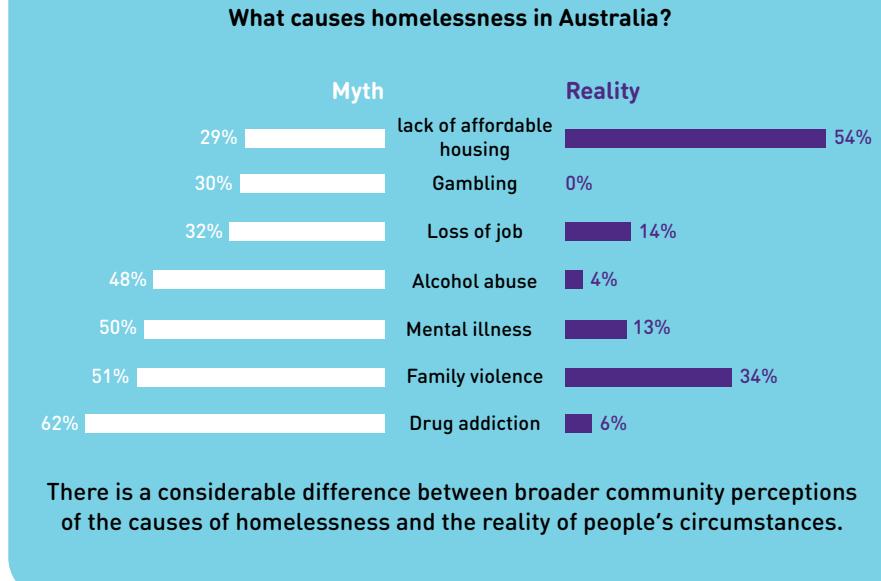
Perceptions research

Research into homelessness is a vital component of Launch Housing's work. We undertake and commission a range of research to inform improvements on the work we do, as well as to influence policy and community understanding of homelessness.

We recently conducted a study into community perceptions of homelessness and housing affordability. The survey was carried out in February 2016 by Forethought on a pro bono basis working with LightSpeed GMI (who also provided their expertise on a pro bono basis) to survey 1,022 Australians.

The survey found that there is a considerable difference between broader community perceptions of the causes of homelessness and the reality of people's circumstances. We found that people still believe drug addiction, mental illness and alcohol use are key reasons why people experience homelessness. In reality the primary causes include accommodation crisis and family violence.

There is a persistent misconception about how long people remain homeless for. Only 13% of survey



Only 13% of survey participants believe that homelessness is normally for short periods in people's lives, while 44% disagree with this view.

participants believe that homelessness is normally for short periods in people's lives, while 44% disagree with this view. But 26% of people who seek assistance from a specialist homelessness service only require support for up to five days.

We asked people if they thought homelessness could be ended in Australia. Compared with survey responses from 2009, there is a level of

pessimism today that was not present before.

In 2009, nearly two-thirds (61%) of participants believed that homelessness could be ended compared with 38% in 2016. This means that today, around two-thirds (62%) of participants do not believe that homelessness can be ended.

Consumer Participation at Launch Housing

The Launch Housing Consumer Participation and Leadership Strategy has been developed to reflect our commitment to authentic participation and leadership by the people who use our services – our consumers. We are committed to this because we want to make sure that our consumers have choice, access to opportunities and are able to build their capabilities.

One of the first initiatives in the strategy is to establish a Launch Housing Consumer Participation Group. Co-Chaired by Deputy CEO Heather Holst and Annie Bracey, a Launch Housing consumer, the group consists of 11 other members with a lived experience of homelessness.

The members are extremely passionate about continually improving services. One of their first

actions is to design a feedback process for consumers of our services. This will ensure Launch Housing gets meaningful feedback to help service improvement.

We know that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness experience exclusion; a profound sense that they no longer belong or are entitled to the rights enjoyed by other community members. We recognise that it is not only the work we do but the way in which we do it that will contribute to

consumers' experience of inclusion and empowerment.

Launch Housing is fully committed to building an organisation in which people with a lived experience of homelessness are supported to participate in and contribute to all decisions that impact on their experience of the range of services offered, and to research and advocacy initiatives that Launch undertakes.

To find out more about the Launch Housing Consumer Participation Group contact Claire Coxon on 03 9288 9800 or at Claire.Coxon@launchhousing.org.au



Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Launch Housing was recently fortunate enough to have Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick visit from the UK for a range of engagement events in Melbourne.

In her role as Professor of Housing and Social Policy in the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Environment and Real Estate (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University, she specializes in research on homelessness and housing exclusion.

While in Melbourne, Suzanne presented on "Rough Sleeping: causes and solutions". As much of her work has an international comparative dimension, it was highly applicable to an Australian context. The presentation focused on recent evidence from England on rough sleeping and the complex needs of those who experience it. She also discussed some successful models such as Housing First as effective solutions for rough sleeping.

Suzanne also led the development of the UK Homelessness Monitor, a unique research and policy influencing tool that Launch Housing is planning to develop in Australia.

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 or free call **1800 720 660**.

Contact us

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Crêpes for Foyer students

Launch Housing recently entered into a partnership with Crêpes for Change to provide support for students leaving the Education First Youth Foyers.

Launch Housing provides continued support for students for six months after their exit from the Foyer through a Transition program. This includes a high level of support through Transition Readiness Workshops, featuring local experts covering topics including rental options and applications, tenants' rights and responsibilities and budgeting.

This new partnership will build on that support through a new Post Foyer Flexible Fund. Crêpes for Change have donated \$20,000 to support young people exiting the Youth Foyers by subsidising their rent for one year through the Fund.

This subsidy model means that in the first four months, Crêpes for Change contributes 60% of their rent while the young person pays 40%. In months 5-8, they pay 40% whilst the young person pays 60%. Then in months 9-11, it drops to 20% and the young person pays 80%. In the final month of the program, the young person transitions into full independence managing 100% of their own rental costs.

The step-down model of rent over the period of one year has proven to be an effective way of allowing a young person to gain and maintain their

independence and break the cycle of youth homelessness. During this period of a year they may be studying or working, whilst receiving support from Launch Housing.



Crêpes for Change aim to eliminate youth homelessness through their non-profit crêpe van and felt Launch Housing's values closely aligned with their own. Their goal is to be able to employ, train and support young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and allow them to find long-term employment and prosper on their own.

Launch Housing has a new website

Launch Housing has a new website, still at the same address launchhousing.org.au. It features comprehensive information on all our programs and services, a comprehensive library of our research and publications, policy and advocacy and a new blog, so you can stay up to date with all the latest news.