



aaeh

australian
alliance
to end
homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

29 March 2021

The Australian Health, Housing & Homelessness Network (A3HN) to host inaugural national forum about COVID-19 impacts on people sleeping rough

In its inaugural national forum on Friday 23 April, the Australian Health, Housing & Homelessness Network (A3HN), supported by cohealth in Victoria and Micah Projects in Queensland, will explore the impact of COVID-19 on people sleeping rough, what action is being taken and what more needs to occur.

COVID-19 has challenged our society to think differently about many things. One of the lessons that our response to the pandemic has taught us is that ending homelessness is possible.

In Australia, there are an estimated 8,000 people who sleep rough on any given night – but ultimately, there is no way of knowing the exact amount. In response to COVID-19, governments across Australia provided temporary accommodation to roughly 20,000 people who were sleeping rough, marking an incredible achievement for the nation.

However, a year on from the start of the pandemic in Australia, the number of people sleeping on the streets of our cities is rising again.

“One of the key lessons from COVID-19 is that we need to treat homelessness, particularly rough sleeping homelessness, as much as a health issue as a housing or social welfare issue,” said CEO of cohealth and Chair of the A3HN, **Nicole Bartholomeusz**.

“We know that a single hospital presentation whilst homeless is enough to double a person's likelihood of premature death. Homelessness kills and is as much a public health emergency as it is a housing crisis,” Ms Bartholomeusz continued.

A3HN's upcoming event will feature insights and a panel conversation with national experts on health, homelessness and housing, including Western Australian GP **Andrew Davies**, Micah Projects CEO **Karyn Walsh**, cohealth Executive Lead of Services **Caz Healy** and Australian Alliance to End Homelessness CEO **David Pearson**.

“The way state governments responded to the pandemic demonstrated that ending homelessness is entirely possible – what it takes is commitment and funding,” said Mr Pearson.

Karyn Walsh added: “Despite sheltering a record number of people in response to COVID-19, we know that **only 32% were able to transition into longer-term affordable housing**. This is because of a lack of appropriate housing and support, like mental health services, primary healthcare and other health supports.

“COVID-19 and our response to it has shown that we can end homelessness, but to do so requires the housing and health equity to do it.”

The A3HN was established in 2020 to promote collaboration among the healthcare, homelessness and housing sectors and drive innovative responses to support a health-led end to homelessness in Australia.

Register to attend the online event here:

<https://events.humanitix.com/the-health-housing-and-homelessness-covid-national-update-forum>

Upcoming webinars:

- April 29 – Introduction to the Advance to Zero Homelessness Methodology Training
- July 15 – Ending Veteran Homelessness Webinar: Key Issues in Veteran's Homelessness

All webinars are open to the public and can be registered for online. Find out more:

<https://aaeh.org.au/events>

-ENDS-

MEDIA CONTACTS:

- Dasha Romanowski on 0416 144 959 or dasha@fiftyacres.com
- Alexandra La Sala on 0466 258 343 or lex@fiftyacres.com
- Jo Scard on 0457 725 953 or jo@fiftyacres.com

About the Alliance to End Homelessness

[The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness](https://www.aeah.org.au) (AAEH) is an independent champion for preventing and ending homelessness in Australia – starting with rough sleeping homelessness. The AAEH supports Australian communities to individually and collectively end homelessness. Specifically, they work with local communities at all levels to ensure everyone has access to safe and sustainable housing services and that any incidents of homelessness that do occur are rare, brief and non-recurring.