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australian
alliance
to end
homelessness

Australian Alliance to End Homelessness media release

17 April 2020

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness is joining with Welcoming Australia and organisations from all over the world to demand the protection of people experiencing homelessness everywhere — refugees, migrants, and people who are ‘unhoused’. They must be protected to save lives and stop the spread of #COVID19.

We are proud to stand in solidarity with this global coalition of organisations demanding that people who are unhoused be prioritised for protection, testing and housing.

Join us in demanding that countries and @UN #ProtectTheUnhoused in the #COVID19 response by signing the petition here: <https://covid19-protecting-screening-rehousing.com/>

Only when our most vulnerable are safe, are we all safe. Refugees, migrants, and people experiencing homelessness must be prioritised in the #COVID19 response. We are calling for:

Protection of the homeless public

In order to ensure the protection of the homeless and vulnerable public in general, it is crucial:

- » To promote access to safe accommodation (respecting the standing standards of hygiene) that allows for the isolation of vulnerable groups, to control the potential transmission of the disease (impossible today in collective housing);
- » To guarantee primary needs, including access to food and hygiene;
- » To provide the necessary risk reduction equipment (masks, gowns, etc.) for both residents and employees;

- » To provide access to counselling and support in view of the closure of services and reception centres;
- » To protect homeless people from punitive measures by the police in the face of the lack of safe alternatives to public space.

Proactive and systematic screening policy

For an obvious public health reason, it is urgent:

- » Covid-19 testing is urgently needed in homeless and migrant shelters and support services, to separate positive users from those who are not, in order to control the spread of the virus;
- » To test caregivers working with these vulnerable groups on a daily basis.

Keeping people in housing

Faced with the economic impact of the crisis, it is necessary:

- » To maintain housing for vulnerable people;
- » To put in place structural solutions for access to housing, which has become, more than ever, a public health imperative.