



australian  
alliance  
to end  
homelessness

Australian Alliance to End Homelessness media release

**Friday 31 July 2020**

## **Calls on federal government for a HomeSeeker package as rough sleepers start falling back into homelessness.**

*On any given night, approximately 8,200 people are sleeping rough in Australia – during the COVID-19 response, an estimated 7,000 people have been temporarily sheltered.*

Ahead of Homelessness Week, the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness is calling on the Federal Government for an urgent comprehensive and nationally coordinated [Rough Sleeping Homelessness Pandemic Response Plan](#) - or put more simply a HomeSeeker package - to end rough sleeping homelessness in Australia for good.

Chief Executive Officer of the AAEH, David Pearson, said that the efforts we've seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is evidence that we can end rough sleeping homelessness on a national scale, but we need urgent action to prevent them from tipping back onto the streets.

"We now know that many hundreds of rough sleepers who were temporary sheltered have started falling back into homelessness for a variety of reasons including a lack of support and/or permanent housing options," Mr Pearson said.

"It is not normal to see people sleeping on the streets and in parks. Our response to COVID-19 shows that we do not need to accept it and can end rough sleeping homelessness. If we implement both Housing First and a Zero Approach to Homelessness across the country, we will be able to eliminate this pressing issue for good."

The plan provides an integrated, coordinated response across all levels of government and a number of sectors, namely social services and health, to ensure that all Australians

experiencing or at-risk of homelessness have access to appropriate supports needed to help them break out of the cycle of rough sleeping homelessness.

Chair of the AAEH and CEO of Micah Projects, Karyn Walsh said that an integrated service model is essential to help Australians break out of the cycle of homelessness.

“COVID-19 has demonstrated that we need to work together to end homelessness. Never before have we seen the impact of integrated health care with our homelessness services on such a large scale. Since April, we’ve worked with over 10,000 people in our COVID-19 response across health, housing, corrections, mental health, substance abuse, child protection and domestic abuse and family violence,” Ms Walsh said.

“Our vision to have homelessness as a solvable problem where the service system can make homelessness a rare, brief and non-reoccurring event rather than a repetitive event that people are stuck in – in some cases for many years.”

Yesterday the AAEH presented to the Inquiry into homelessness in Australia with three Australians who have been supported into temporary and permanent housing – showing the positive impact that supports can have for Australians who are sleeping rough.

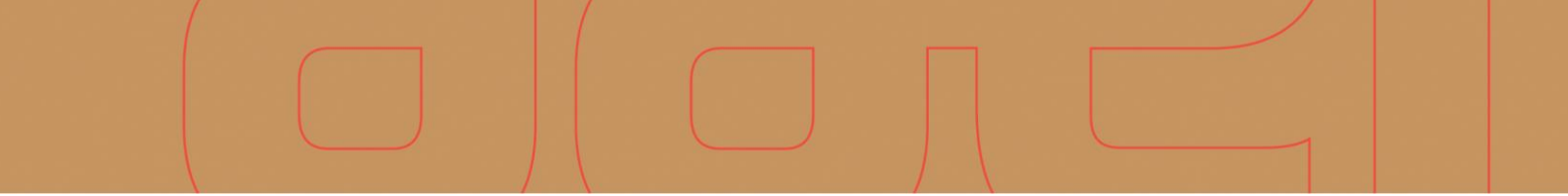
Scott Richards told the Inquiry that he first entered the cycle of homelessness in 2011 after a marriage breakup which saw him leave the family home. Seeking a number of shelter options, including private rentals, Scott ended up rough sleeping for 7 months couch-surfing, on the streets and in parks. He was rough sleeping and living with an addiction until his incarceration in 2014.

Here, Scott overcame his addiction – after failed attempts at rehabilitation before – and studied a free education program at TAFE. Through this, he was able to build his social confidence and skills which had been lost during his rough sleeping experience.

Scott is now in stable secure housing and works with Adelaide’s Street to Home program, using his personal experience to help people sleeping rough in the Adelaide CBD to find and maintain sustainable housing.

The Inquiry also heard from Michelle Swindle who has been rough sleeping since April this year. She cares for three of her six children who have all faced their own challenges in homelessness.

Until Micah Projects supported her family into temporary motel accommodation, Michelle had to separate her children to stay with family and friends while she was rough sleeping in her car. The family have struggled to maintain schooling, with her children sometimes missing



school for weeks due to the challenges they face outside of stable, secure housing. They have also transitioned through at least six schools due to the uncertainty they face.

However, things are starting to look up, with her children attending school and temporary housing and supports to help the family into secure, sustainable housing.

**For more information or to arrange interviews please contact:**

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**About the Alliance to End Homelessness**

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (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, we 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.