



Wednesday 14th October 2009

MEDIA RELEASE

WHERE WILL YOU SLEEP TONIGHT?

This is a serious question many of us will not have to ponder this week, but for too many people in Greater Hobart it is a daily question!

The Lord Mayor of Hobart Alderman Rob Valentine said that many of us are able to go about our daily lives without having to give too much thought to where we're going to sleep, but this is not the case for over 700 people in Greater Hobart.

“According to research by the Chris Chamberlain and David MacKenzie in the Counting The Homeless report, we have seen changes in the types of accommodation people are accessing, but little change in the actual numbers of homeless.”

“ Between the 2001 and 2006 census there was an increase in the number of people in shelters or sleeping rough, but a decrease in the numbers staying with family and friends. This shows a disconnection from the community for an increasing number of people,” said Alderman Valentine.

“This isolation and the struggle to meet basic needs can have a significant effect on the mental health of people. At a recent Australian Social Policy Conference presentation Guy Johnson and Chris Chamberlain presented research that showed only about 15% of homeless people had a mental illness prior to being homeless, most commonly caused by family breakdown. The presentation went on to show that 16% developed a mental illness after becoming homeless. If the repeated misuse of alcohol is included in this list then the percentage of homeless people suffering poor mental health is estimated at about 85%.”

The Lord Mayor said isolation was a key factor in the deterioration of a person's mental health, whether they are homeless or not, which is where an event such as Homeless Connect is helpful. People have the opportunity to reconnect with the community, which is represented by a broad range of services and volunteers, and all this takes place in a fun, safe environment.

Homeless Connect is part of a whole of community response, which can be supported by donations made by community members and businesses for \$10 and \$20 vouchers, which guests of the events will be able to redeem at Argyle Street St Vinnies Store. Support for these vouchers has come from individuals as well as organisations.

Those wishing to participate in the donation opportunity can choose to have their name or their business' name on the voucher or remain anonymous. Donations for these vouchers can be made at the Hobart Council Centre (corner of Elizabeth & Davey Streets) or via cheque to Homeless Connect Donations, GPO Box 503, Hobart 7001 (cheques will need to be made payable to Hobart City Council).

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