



Friday 31st July 2015

Homelessness Prevention Week

Homelessness Prevention Week (HPW) will be taking place across Australia starting on the 3rd August 2015. Shelter Tasmania, the peak body for housing and homelessness in the State, is pleased to promote the events and activities around Tasmania as part of HPW 2015. This year's theme is 'Step Up to End Homelessness'.

'The aim of HPW is for everyone in the community to work together to raise awareness and identify solutions around the problem of homelessness in Australia, and in particular Tasmania. One of the significant ways we can 'step up' is to combat the stereotypes and stigma of homelessness', Shelter Tas Executive Officer, Pattie Chugg said.

'It is important to remember that homelessness can be hidden from the wider community and is much more prevalent than people might think. A common misconception is that homelessness just means sleeping rough, but in fact this is true of only 6% of the homelessness population. It goes far beyond these stereotypes, people who become homeless are just like you and me – they can be young or old, they might be working or in school, they might be families', Ms Chugg said.

The last Census in 2011 reported that 1,579 people were experiencing homelessness on any given night in Tasmania. The major causes of homelessness include financial issues, unaffordable rent, job loss, health issues, domestic violence and family breakdown. 'These are challenges that can happen to anyone, and sometimes they push people into homelessness. Staying with friends or 'couch surfing' is a really common experience for people, but it isn't secure accommodation, and it isn't a stable base to build your life on', Ms Chugg said.

To mark HPW 2015, a number of organisations around Tasmania will be holding events to raise funds or awareness for homelessness, including:

- The H.E.L.P film festival (a film competition for high school students, 16 films with the theme 'Who is Homeless?' will be screened) to be held in Devonport on Monday 3rd August.
- An event with Australian of the Year and family violence campaigner, Rosie Batty. Organised by Anglicare, this event will be held in Launceston on Monday 3rd August.
- 'Step Up with us to end homelessness' is a walk to raise awareness about homelessness and support HPW. Housing Connect have organised the walk from North Hobart to Franklin Square on Monday 3rd August.

For more information on these events and other activities planned during the week, see the HPW edition of Shelter Tas eNews, which will be released today.

Shelter Tas congratulates all the organisations involved in HPW 2015 as well as the valuable work services in Tasmania undertake every day to help prevent homelessness.

For more information and comment, please contact Pattie Chugg (Shelter Tas Executive Officer) on 0419 536 100 or eo@sheltertass.org.au.