



## **HOMELESS CHARITIES CALL FOR TARGETS TO HALVE HOMELESSNESS BY 2025**

*Embargoed 00.01hrs Tuesday 24 May*

The largest providers of homelessness services across Australia today joined forces to call on all political parties to make reducing homelessness a national priority.

In a joint letter to the four party leaders, the major charities Anglicare, Mission Australia, Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, UnitingCare Australia and Wesley Mission demanded a commitment to halving homelessness by 2025.

The organisations have also launched a petition to generate public support for the campaign during the Federal Election and invited the party leaders to a forum with their clients in June.

On any given night over 100,000 Australians are homeless – including over 44, 000 children or young people. And each year more than 200,000 people seek help from homelessness services.

The numbers are growing and the organisations say it needs Federal Government leadership to reverse that trend. They've urged each party to commit to expanding prevention and early intervention services. These should include strategies aimed at identified risk factors and population groups including women and children escaping domestic and family violence, young people leaving care, and older people in the private rental market.

**Kasy Chambers, Executive Director of Anglicare Australia** said: "The terrible shortage of secure affordable housing puts far too many Australians at risk of homelessness. People also remain trapped in homelessness because there's neither the support nor the homes available. We can solve the problem, but we need a national plan."

**Catherine Yeomans, CEO Mission Australia** said: "In a prosperous nation like Australia there are adequate resources to ensure everyone has a home. Yet we have unacceptably high, and growing, rates of homelessness.

"We know what works to fix homelessness. Prevent people in high risk groups from becoming homeless, fund evidence-based programs for people who are already homeless and ensure enough homes for people on low incomes.

“We can halve homelessness because we know what needs to be done. But it requires strong leadership, a commitment from all governments to increase funding and to guarantee it over the next five years.”

**Commissioner Floyd Tidd, Territorial Commander, of The Salvation Army Australia Southern Territory** said: “Despite providing support to 57,000 individuals in 2015 through Salvation Army homelessness services, we are dismayed at the increasing numbers of women and children experiencing homelessness due to family and domestic violence. Homelessness has many causes but remains a stark reality confronting too many Australians.

“We call on the Australian Government to help us provide adequate support for those at risk of homelessness or already homeless. Our aim is to assist people to break the cycle of homelessness by helping to change a life, and to promote real change in the way Australia deals with domestic violence.”

**Dr John Falzon, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society National Council** said: “Collectively, our organisations are issuing a challenge to all political parties to commit to halving homelessness by 2025. There is no excuse for a country as wealthy as Australia to accept a situation where people are systematically denied a place to call home.

“Australia urgently needs political leadership to reduce homelessness, backed up by a comprehensive plan of action that tackles the lack of affordable housing, strengthens the social safety net and services on the frontline, invests in prevention and early intervention, and ensures that everyone has a safe and secure place to call home.”

**Martin J Cowling, Associate National Director, UnitingCare Australia** said: “Access to stable and safe housing underpins well-functioning families and communities. Australia has the resources to ensure that everyone experiences belonging in a safe and supportive community, with appropriate, affordable housing.

“Various groups in our community are more vulnerable to homelessness. Many experience barriers to housing that are related to their personal situation, such as domestic violence or mental health issues.

“Whilst solutions may require increased expenditure in the short term, action now will enable governments to avoid the high costs of dealing with the wider effects of homelessness once it occurs. Successfully addressing this issue will require collaboration between different levels of government, and with private and not-for-profit organisations.”

**The Rev Dr Keith Garner, CEO of Wesley Mission** said: “Homelessness requires a whole of government and community approach.

“For too long government and non-government providers have worked in silos. While we need more affordable and social housing, we also need targeted, preventive and integrated services which break the cycle of homelessness and provide lasting solutions.

“Preventing homelessness is more than just providing a meal and a bed. We need more than temporary and episodic solutions but ‘whole of life’ responses buoyed by a strong political will committed to lasting change.”

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