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MEDIA RELEASE

Street count highlights urgent need to act on housing affordability

Results from of the latest City of Sydney Street Count showing record numbers of people living on the streets in inner Sydney highlights yet again the urgent need to address housing affordability in NSW.

NSW Federation of Housing Associations CEO Wendy Hayhurst said the report from the City of Sydney Street Count released today show there were 486 rough sleepers in the City of Sydney LGA on February 23 – the highest figure in since the count began in 2010.

“Homelessness is the extreme result of spiralling rents and a chronic lack of social and affordable housing, particularly in Sydney,” Ms Hayhurst said.

“The latest street count shows the situation is not going away – it’s getting worse every year. The fact that so many people of all ages and walks of life volunteered to take part in the count shows just how strong the groundswell of concern is out there about housing affordability and homelessness.”

Ms Hayhurst said people sleeping rough in Sydney had different paths to being on the streets.

A survey of 516 rough sleepers, undertaken from 30 November–2 December last year, found the majority of the current homeless population simply need housing they can afford with short-term support to get them back on their feet.

“There were very, very, young people living on our streets on the night of the street count and older people who should be guaranteed safety and security in their old age.

“City of Sydney’s Street count brings to life the human stories of homelessness and hopefully reminds decision makers that housing affordability is not about numbers, it is about people.”

Ms Hayhurst said the supply of more social and affordable housing must be an urgent priority for the state and Federal Government in 2016, through:

- Government investment in more public housing;
- The expedited transfer of more existing public housing to community housing over two years;
- State and Commonwealth government support for new financing models to encourage large scale investment in social and affordable housing by financial institutions; and
- Changes to the NSW planning system, including new 30 per cent targets for social and affordable housing in all new developments.

“The NSW Government has started to address the issue through its Future Directions strategy for public housing and the \$1 billion Social and Affordable Housing fund,” Ms Hayhurst said.

“But so far these programs will only add about 9,500 extra social or affordable homes, which is less than a third of what’s actually needed. The City of Sydney’s Street Count highlights the need for action from all levels of government to tackle the problem head on.”

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