

Media Release

Election 2016 – putting an end to homelessness

The Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) is seeking an election commitment from the Coalition, Labor and the Greens to adopt a housing first approach to ending homelessness across the nation.

“We want all of the parties running in this election to commit to implementing a housing first policy that makes permanent housing and matched support a priority to ensure every person in need has a clear pathway out of homelessness,” said Karyn Walsh AAEH Chair and CEO of Brisbane based Micah Projects.

“We know that providing homes and support for people is ultimately the right thing to do in a civilized society but it is also cheaper than funding programs that tinker at the edges without providing long term housing.”

The housing first approach has succeeded in ending homelessness for over 100,000 people in Canada and the United States in recent years. It has also worked to end chronic homelessness in major cities in Australia where it has been trialled but a major barrier remains a lack of long term affordable housing.

“A growing number of communities are proving the housing first approach works in Australia. Individuals, families and children experiencing homelessness can have their homelessness ended with housing and appropriate support,” Ms Walsh said. “We have the evidence that this approach works we simply need funding redirected into more long term housing and tailored support – with these resources we can end homelessness not just apply temporary solutions.”

Mercy Foundation CEO Felicity Reynolds said “the data driven registry week methodology adopted by some communities in Australia is achieving great results in supporting and housing some of the most vulnerable homeless people sleeping rough.”

“We use a vulnerability index to prioritise offering support and housing to the people who are sleeping rough. This type of homelessness creates appalling health problems and even early death. It is also very expensive to keep providing outreach services to people on the streets and have them using emergency services repeatedly,” Ms Reynolds said.

A recent evaluation carried out by researchers at the University of Queensland found it cost state government services \$48,000 for each person homeless on the streets for a year. Comparatively, it cost \$35,000 to provide those same people with permanent housing and ongoing support.

“So basically we can save taxpayers \$13,000 in relation to each person we assist – solving the problem rather than keep servicing it. We are already spending the money, let’s spend it more effectively,” Ms Walsh said.

The Alliance partner organisations include the Mercy Foundation in NSW, Micah Projects in Queensland, Launch Housing in Victoria, Common Ground Adelaide and RUAH in Western Australia.

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