



## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE – NSW Minister for Ageing and Disability Services Paul Lynch and Catholic Healthcare Managing Director Chris Rigby**

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### **New pilot for squalor solutions**

A new service to bring hope to people living in abject squalor has been launched by Catholic Healthcare and the Rees Government.

Catholic Healthcare Managing Director Chris Rigby, Minister for Ageing Paul Lynch and Member for Heffron Kristina Keneally launched the pilot program at Waterloo in Sydney.

Catholic Healthcare will establish a 12-month pilot Severe Domestic Squalor Project in central Sydney with \$375,000 from the NSW Government.

Mr Lynch said the project featured a hotline – 1800 225 474 – to act as a single point of access for agencies involved with clients living in squalor.

“The advisory service will give priority to those clients with the greatest need,” he said.

“Long-term case management services will also be co-ordinated through the advisory service to assist clients maintain acceptable living conditions,” Mr Lynch said.

“This new project will bring hope to those living in abject squalor, as well as to the wider community in its search for a solution to a growing but hidden social issue,” Mr Lynch said.

The launch of the pilot follows a study by Professor John Snowdon from the University of Sydney, which found at least one in 1000 elderly NSW people are living in severe domestic squalor – twice as many as previously believed.

Ms Keneally said the pilot would help address a complex and serious social problem.

“The launch of the pilot today should help raise awareness of situations where people are living in abject squalor, and the options which are available to help them,” Ms Keneally said.

“A blind eye should never be turned to people living in abject squalor. We’d hope that if people notice someone in their community living in this situation, they’d do the right thing and help us put them in touch with the support which is available.”

Mr Rigby welcomed the Government’s commitment to the project.

He said the new approach to squalor would have far reaching benefits to both clients and the community.

“The Government has been most receptive to Catholic Healthcare’s proposed model of squalor support and we thank the government for addressing this important and largely hidden social issue,” Mr Rigby said.

“This project brings hope to some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities,” he said.

“Most people living in squalor are reclusive and have little contact with their families, friends or neighbours,” Mr Rigby said.

“The offer of help is often met with suspicion and, in many cases, fear,” he said.

Mr Rigby said the new service addressed two long-standing obstacles to providing effective responses to squalor: a lack of co-ordination of the various services involved in squalor support and a lack of funding to meet the extraordinary costs which could be involved in assisting squalor clients.

“The average cost of a squalor ‘clean’ is \$3000 and can be as high as \$10,000 in the most severe cases,” he said.

“In the most extreme of cases, squalor cleans can at times amount to \$60,000,” Mr Rigby said.

“There is also the human cost to consider in terms of the impact on the individuals living in squalor, their families, neighbours and the wider community, which often includes landlords, the police and the RSPCA,” he said.

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