



MEDIA RELEASE

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Stemming the Tide of Homelessness

Trying to break the cycle of homelessness for 77 people in Sydney wasn't easy.

Between these 77 people, they had experienced 149 separate episodes of homelessness.

"These experiences reflect the recurrent nature of homelessness for many people" said Janis Redford, General Manager Catholic Community Services.

These individuals were already in housing, but were at risk of losing that housing, and unfortunately for many this is a recurring cycle.

Trialling a new approach over the last two years, Catholic Community Services established the Housing Support Program working with each client to support them to stay out of homelessness.

The Housing Support Program aims to prevent the revolving door scenario through a holistic approach to case management. The Program works alongside clients, advocating for them and assisting them to navigate through the many complex and challenging processes involved in housing and independent living. The program differs from others in that it has provided outstanding results at an average cost of \$7,000 per client. This is a cost effective approach to addressing homelessness. The flexibility of the program has also contributed to its success in that the program is not constrained by the types of issues that are covered, the age of the participants or the length of support required.

By taking this approach and working closely with these 77 clients, a success rate of 78% was achieved, as shown by the evaluation conducted by the Australian Catholic University. There was an even greater success rate for individuals who had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness.

"Without the Housing Support Program we would have an additional 60 homeless people in NSW" said Janis Redford.

The issues placing people's tenancy at risk and putting them at risk of homelessness were varied and often interrelated. Some of the key contributors were health issues (physical and mental), cognitive impairment, dementia, squalor, disability, domestic violence, and substance issues. For clients with mental health issues that were supported by the Housing Support Program, there was a 100% success rate in securing stable housing.

For clients in the program, the experience was a truly life changing event, though to others some of the changes may seem small.

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As one client said "It's enabled me to communicate with other people, and I'm feeling joy for the first time in many years - I didn't realise until now that I had forgotten what joy feels like".

Catholic Community Services is talking with both State and Federal Government in order to gain support to continue this successful model that has already helped 60 people in NSW stay in secure housing and out of crisis.

Case Study

Jack*, 66-year-old male client of Catholic Community Services Housing Support Program

Jack was facing eviction from an unlicensed boarding house when a Catholic Community Services Housing Support Coordinator became involved.

For more than a year, Jack had been residing in extreme domestic squalor, resulting in a dramatic deterioration of his health and wellbeing.

Jack had a history of previous episodes of sleeping rough when necessary, and his mental health condition had been undiagnosed for many years. He was estranged from his family and had no close supports.

Catholic Community Services' Housing Support Program allowed for the provision of independent advocacy and was the catalyst in enabling Jack to be assessed and subsequently admitted to hospital to receive appropriate support and intervention.

As the program is not time limited, it allowed the coordinator to maintain and further develop a relationship with Jack during his stay in hospital. Consequently, housing options were provided by Catholic Community Services' Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged program, with Jack submitting an application to NSW Department of Housing areas of his choice.

While awaiting his accommodation, Jack resided in one of Catholic Community Services' 10 Transitional Housing units, through which he was linked to social support services. He was registered with a local GP and Community Mental Health and is currently on a Community Treatment order. Further work was carried out alongside Jack to assess what type/level of ongoing support he would need to maintain his independence and quality of life within the community.

Jack has now moved on to reside independently in his own bed-sit accommodation in a local Department of Housing building. He receives a Community Aged Care Package specifically for someone who has previously experienced homelessness, tailored to his individual needs. In this he receives a home visit by a community worker four times a week to enable and assist with personal care, domestic assistance and to attend to other tasks of daily living.

Jack continues to participate in Catholic Community Services' Community Connections Day Centre where he has made a new network of friends and enjoys the various activities. Jack also maintains frequent contact with the Housing Support Co-ordinator for ongoing support to ensure that the risk factors that contributed to his previous tenancy risk and homelessness are managed appropriately.

"It's the loneliness that's a killer; I think I will be alright now" said Jack.

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About Catholic Community Services

Catholic Community Services provides a diverse range of services in the home, in the community and in day centres to the elderly, people with a disability, people with a mental illness and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our clients live in metropolitan, regional and rural NSW.

Catholic Community Services is a division of Catholic Healthcare.

More information is available at our website www.catholiccommunityservices.com.au