



Press release
June 10 2009

Vinnies launches report into homelessness in Katoomba

The St Vincent de Paul Society will tomorrow launch its report, *Known Territory: A Study of Marginalisation and Homelessness in Katoomba*

The report examines homelessness and socio-economic disadvantage within the urban-rural nexus of the Blue Mountains' town of Katoomba. Featuring in-depth interviews with people experiencing homelessness in the area, the *Known Territory* report gives a voice to those who often have none.

"This report reveals the severity of homelessness in the region," the report's author, Dr Andy Marks, said. "And it also details the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness and how their perceptions of their situation have changed over time."

Dr Marks, the Society's senior researcher, said poor mental health, addiction and violence were common to all localised homeless populations, including Katoomba.

"However, the *Known Territory* report illustrates how other aspects of homelessness related to environmental, socio-economic and cultural issues are distinct to Katoomba," he said. "Katoomba's exceedingly high proportion of part-time workers, above average levels of unemployment, and low rate of tertiary education uptake place many people at a heightened risk of homelessness. Add to this exceptionally low individual and household income levels and/or health and morbidity indicators and it is clear many people in the region are experiencing pronounced disadvantage".

The average household income in Katoomba is about 60 per cent of the national average, and the town reports significantly higher rates of mental and behavior disorders for young people than the state average.

Dr Marks said that while no two experiences of homelessness were the same, the report confirmed that the trauma of displacement that accompanied homelessness was, to varying degrees, ameliorated by the sense of belonging a place like Katoomba provided.

"When every part of a person's life seems adrift, the importance of 'known territory' cannot be underestimated," he said.

Launch details:

When: Thursday 11 June at 11am

Where: Katoomba Town Square, Katoomba Street

Speakers: Barbara Ryan, president St Vincent de Paul Society; Dr Andy Marks, report author; Trevor Clark, resident and former homelessness person

For further information or to arrange an interview contact;

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