

Media Release

Monday 22 May 2017



The new face of homelessness

St Vincent de Paul Society NT has launched the 2017 Darwin CEO Sleepout, and is urging business leaders and the community to rethink homelessness.

With housing affordability in Darwin at unsustainable levels, more people than ever before are turning to Vinnies in search of safe and secure housing.

People like Samantha, who fled a violent family situation with two small children but struggled to find affordable housing. She and her children were in a private rental, but her savings quickly disappeared. It's a situation faced by many, with the 2017 Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot finding there were no affordable properties in Darwin for a single parent receiving a Newstart Allowance.

Samantha turned to Vinnies, and found a place to call home at the Ted Collins Village in Darwin. The village offers housing for families and individuals who are at risk of homelessness, providing relief from crippling rents, over-crowding, couch surfing or rough sleeping.

With the average rental cost in Darwin at \$483 per week, Vinnies says the demand for affordable housing like the Ted Collins Village far outstrips supply.

"With 1 in 17 Territorians homeless, and many more at risk due to unaffordable housing, we're seeing a housing crisis. The affordable housing we have available through the Ted Collins Village and other programs just isn't enough," according to Vinnies NT Executive Officer Edwina Wagland.

Fay Gurr, St Vincent de Paul Society NT President, said it's more and more common to see young families like Samantha's in dire need of accommodation.

"The stereotype of old men sleeping on the park bench just isn't the face of homelessness in this day and age," said Ms Gurr.

In the Northern Territory, 15,479 people are homeless each and every night. But of those, 27% are children under the age of 12.

"It's unacceptable that nearly 4,000 children are without a place to call home in the NT. Our homelessness rate is 15 times higher than the national average, and that's a statistic we need to do something about," said Mr Gurr.

Samantha and her family are thriving, with her son excelling at school and her daughter winning a scholarship with the Defence Force in Queensland. But for many families without a safe place to call home, the future is not as bright.

Funds raised at this year's CEO Sleepout will be used to support Vinnies housing and homelessness services, where it's hoped many more families just like Samantha's will be able to find safe, affordable accommodation.

The CEO Sleepout is being held Thursday 22 June at the Darwin Waterfront parklands. Business and community leaders are being urged to show their support for the fight against homelessness and participate.

To register or donate, go to www.ceosleepout.org.au

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Interview opportunity: St Vincent de Paul Society NT Executive Officer, Edwina Wagland

St Vincent de Paul Society NT President, Fay Gurr

Vision opportunity: Vinnies representatives and participants at the Sleepout location, cardboard in hand

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