



MEDIA RELEASE

6 August 2019

Homelessness is growing among older people on the Gold Coast - Vinnies

Vinnies is sounding alarm bells at an increase in older Australians turning to its services for help in the last quarter on the Gold Coast.

Twenty-seven per cent of referrals to its Cornerstone Homelessness Prevention Service in June alone were people over the age of 55, prompting the charity to speak out about the worrying trend ahead of National Homelessness Week August 4 – 10.

Among those currently receiving support to avoid homelessness are a couple in their late 70s, and a 66-year-old.

“Unfortunately, we have seen too many older and even elderly residents who are either homeless or on the brink of homelessness, especially over the last few months,” Vinnies Gold Coast Executive Officer Kris Martin said.

“Many of them are older women, which is a real concern, and the problem is getting worse.

“We’re also seeing increasing numbers of referrals for people between the ages of 46 and 55, with 15 in the quarter to 30 June.”

A 2017 report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows a 52 per cent rise in older women contacting homeless agencies since 2011 and Vinnies believe those figures are similar to what they are seeing on the glitter strip.

“There are a number of factors contributing to the rise in homelessness among people over 50, including the rising cost of living, the low rate of Newstart and the pension, but more importantly a serious lack of affordable and social housing,” Mr Martin said.

“That’s the biggest thing, there just isn’t enough housing available that is affordable for a single older person on Newstart or a pension.

“Older women are particularly vulnerable to homelessness later in life due to factors such as low superannuation funds, financial dependence on the pension, and domestic and family violence.”

“The death or illness of a partner who has been the primary earner can easily push older women to the edge of homelessness.

“We are in the process of finalising plans for six units of accommodation in Arundel which will be specifically for the group and we are committed to establishing more housing going forward.

“The units for older women would not have been a reality without public and corporate support and events like our CEO Sleepout.”

Mr Martin said the Cornerstone service which has helped 384 people to avoid life on the street in the past year, could house more vulnerable residents with greater support from the corporate sector and the public.

“Our Cornerstone program doesn’t receive any government funding, we are funded by entirely from Vinnies funds,” he said.

“We have a proven track record of success, but we could help so many more families and individuals that need a hand-up with more assistance from community.”

ENDS.

Media contact: Joshua Paterson – 0408 675 567