



Dear supporters,

**Thank you for your ongoing interest and support of our work. It is hugely appreciated and makes a very real impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our community.**

We're continuing to grow and evolve in what is a precarious and rapidly changing environment. Our ability to respond in a flexible and agile way ensures we continue to provide the best service we can to people experiencing homelessness.

In this edition you'll find a range of stories about how your support truly matters to the thousands of people experiencing homelessness who we support every year.

Our team on the ground are reporting an increasingly hard struggle to get people into affordable rental properties. We have been looking closely at the data over the past few months, and it has become abundantly clear that we are in the middle of a perfect storm of economic and social factors that are putting a huge strain on housing affordability. This is not only making it more difficult to find housing for our clients, but it is likely that it is

playing a big part in driving them into homelessness in the first place.

We have already seen an increase of **74% to the numbers of people rough sleeping in the Melbourne CBD area over the last two years**, a fact that is sadly very obvious to anyone walking through the city, and has been the subject of much controversy recently, as governments grapple with how to respond in a caring and respectful way.

More of our clients are on unemployment benefits (Newstart) and Commonwealth Rent Assistance than before, and as recently released government data shows, this income is simply too low to afford rent in the private market.

There is a heightened sense of urgency across our programs, and it is with renewed determination that we work with you, our valued partners to improve things for our clients and community.

**Tony Keenan**, Chief Executive Officer

## THANK YOU!

**Thank you to everyone who donated during the festive season in support of people like Shane (pictured). Shane was keen to make sure that the money raised helped other people who went through what he did.**

Since we shared his story with you, Shane has reported that he is happier, healthier, more positive and much more confident, which was wonderful to hear.

Thank you for supporting people experiencing homelessness in your community. Your donations go directly to the thousands of men, women, young people, children and families we support every year across Melbourne. Thank you again for your generosity and compassion.



## Lindel's story: Life at an Education First Youth Foyer

Lindel is 22 and a student at one of the two Education First Youth Foyers [www.launchhousing.org.au/service/education-first-youth-foyer](http://www.launchhousing.org.au/service/education-first-youth-foyer) we've opened in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence [www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au) - Holmesglen Foyer, based at Holmesglen Institute's Waverley campus, and Kangan Foyer, based at the Kangan Institute, Broadmeadows.

Funded by the State Government of Victoria, the Foyers are the first in Victoria to be co-located with TAFEs. Their aim is to help address the fact that of the 4,000 young people who are homeless on any given night in Victoria, over 50 per cent are not involved in education or employment.

By providing and combining affordable accommodation, education, training and employment, Education First Youth Foyers help break the cycle of homelessness, create opportunities and help young people lead independent and fulfilling lives.



### This is Lindel's story

"In 2016, I had to leave my residence at the age of 21. I contacted a youth homelessness service and was fortunate enough to be placed in three crisis refuges. My worker at the refuge informed me about the Foyer program and that I would be suitable for it. I went through two interviews and after a week, I found out that I was accepted. I was overcome with gratitude at being given the chance to experience stability in my home.

I've been living at the Foyer for around five months and am currently waiting to start a course in either Bachelor of Human Services at Monash or Certificate III in Childcare at Kangan.

The Bachelor of Human Services focuses on helping disadvantaged communities and the childcare course is about creating nurturing environments for young, developing minds. I'd like to work in the health or childcare sector because I love helping people and I like studying anatomy and physiology.

During term-time a typical day for me consists of getting up early, completing self-directed study and assessments or going into uni and attending classes and lectures.

When I'm not studying, I like to keep a routine that involves anything from catching up with friends, shopping or reading, to being a part of activities at the Foyer.

Eventually I hope to find stable living arrangements outside of the Foyer, be engaged in part-time work in the health or childcare sector and be completing my studies to ensure I have a secure future.

For me, the Foyer is my home. Sometimes my life is challenging, but I've received so much support and encouragement to help me achieve my goals. I'm just happy to be here where I'm safe and guaranteed stability."

"For me, the Foyer is my home. Sometimes my life is challenging, but I've received so much support and encouragement to help me achieve my goals. I'm just happy to be here where I'm safe and guaranteed stability." **Lindel**

## How many people sleep rough?

Australia

**Population**  
**24,310,031**



**6,813**

People are rough sleeping on any given night



That's

**0.03%**  
of the population!

From 2014-2016 rough sleeping increased by

**74%**



and

**4.3%**  
of all housing is social housing

England

**Population**  
**54,786,300**



**3,569**

People are rough sleeping on any given night



That's

**0.007%**  
of the population!

From 2014-2015 rough sleeping increased by

**27%**



and

**17%**  
of all housing is social housing

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness; Department for Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping Statistics, Autumn 2015, England. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Percentage of Australian Households in Social Housing 2006 to 2015; Office of National Statistics Housing Summary Measure Analysis 2015

## Frequent Service Users Project: 12 month report

**Launch Housing currently delivers numerous programs that specifically support people who have experienced long term homelessness or are currently sleeping rough.**

In 2015 when we merged the databases of the two former organisations that created Launch Housing we found that there was a group of frequent service users – people who used our services regularly, but for some reason were unable to sustain housing and kept returning to the homelessness system.

“We wanted to find out the characteristics of this group and, importantly, establish why existing services had failed to sustain them in housing,” said Launch Housing CEO Tony Keenan.

We also wanted to look at the best evidence-based approaches to supporting them.

With the generous support of the McNamee Foundation, we were able to trial a new service response, targeting clients who have accessed Launch Housing services the most over the last sixteen years.

It is clear that this group of people require a different approach and, we were keen to use philanthropic funding to try something new.

**“A recent 12 month review of the Project indicates overwhelmingly positive results to date, importantly revealing that the Project has met its aim of providing safe and secure housing for most of these clients.”**

We found that this group of clients were struggling with multiple disadvantages, including mental and physical ill-health, disability and alcohol and drug issues and a history of trauma, and often challenging behaviours.

However, through intensive case management and seeking to prioritise access to housing we have been able to achieve some excellent results for this group.

“A recent 12 month review of the Project indicates overwhelmingly positive results to date, importantly revealing that the Project has met its aim of providing safe and secure housing for most of these clients. As at December 2016, 19 out of 25 had secured or maintained stable housing,” Mr Keenan added.

The Project has produced invaluable evidence to inform and improve Launch Housing’s practices and services for people at risk of or experiencing long term homelessness. Importantly, it also provides some evidence for the broader service system, particularly for those people who need a more intensive response.



## Program spotlight

### ATO ruling gives tax break to landlords who list with HomeGround Real Estate

Our social enterprise HomeGround Real Estate has achieved a class ruling from the Australian Tax Office (ATO) that enables a tax break for landlords who lease their properties through HomeGround Real Estate.

The ATO ruling was handed down in 2016, and provides a great incentive to landlords to help make rentals more affordable in Melbourne.

Launch Housing is increasingly providing assistance to low income earners who are priced out of the rental market as a result of the housing affordability crisis. We think private landlords can make a huge difference and help us open up more affordable housing in Melbourne.

### How does it work?

Launch Housing is able to provide landlords who agree to rent their properties at below market rent (regardless of how much the discount amounts to) with a donation receipt for the amount of the rental reduction.

Imagine you have a two bedroom rental property in Preston where the market rent for a property such as yours is estimated at around \$350 per week. Now imagine you own that property outright or have a low mortgage and don't really need to receive the full \$350 per week in rental income. You can ask HomeGround Real Estate to manage the property for you and charge \$250 per week.

Now a woman and her child who are escaping family violence can afford to rent the property so they gain the security of a new home. At the end of financial year you will be able to claim a tax deduction of the gap between the market rent and the affordable rent you accepted. In this example that will amount to a \$5,200 deduction from your taxable income.

Perhaps you are only able to afford a \$50 reduction in the rent but this will provide you with a donation receipt from Launch Housing for \$2,500 and you will know that you have helped a family or individual in need gain access to affordable housing.

HomeGround Real Estate is the only not for profit agency in Melbourne who can deliver this tax benefit to landlords.

If you have a property you are currently renting or you're in the process of buying an investment property please consider listing it with us and help us in our mission to end homelessness. Even a small deduction in rental can make a difference to someone in need.

Get in touch today and find out more about making your rental property management count by phoning **(03) 9288 9600** and ask to speak to one of our property managers.

Please note that Launch Housing is not a credit provider and does not provide personal financial or professional advice or credit assistance. The information published in this newsletter is of a general nature only and does not consider your personal objectives, financial situation or particular needs. The information published should not be relied upon as a substitute for personal financial or professional advice. Launch Housing strongly recommends that you seek independent advice before you apply for any product or service, which is described in the newsletter.



**Launch HOUSING** IT'S TIME TO END HOMELESSNESS

### Launch Housing's first Annual Report is now available.

Read about the incredible first year of our organisation online at [www.launchhousing.org.au/publications](http://www.launchhousing.org.au/publications) or contact our office on 9288 9600 to request a copy.



## Launch Housing's blog

Have you been following Launch Housing's new blog?

Learn about our latest research, hear from our staff and volunteers, and keep up to date with the latest policy changes.

Visit [www.launchhousing.org.au/blog](http://www.launchhousing.org.au/blog)



## Permanent Supportive Housing research

**Launch Housing has been involved in a new study conducted by researchers from Royal Melbourne Hospital highlighting the benefits of permanent supportive housing in ending homelessness for people living with a psychotic illness and reducing their use of mental health inpatient units.**

The findings are from one of the first studies to test this innovative approach to housing in Australia. The study focused on people who were living in or had recently moved out of Elizabeth Street Common Ground (ESCG) with serious mental illness.

The findings of this study were that residents of ESCG were far less likely to use mental health inpatient units than they had prior to being housed.

The study also found that people who were housed in ESCG were admitted to mental health inpatient units at half the rate of those who had left. Those who left ESCG were more likely to

have additional complexities, including diagnoses of personality disorder, substance use disorder or significant links to the criminal justice system.

In addition to a decrease in the use of inpatient units, the study found that being housed did not lead to increased use of mental health services over and above what had previously occurred; a somewhat surprising finding.

The reduction in mental health admissions is likely to be a result of housing stability which supports the development of long term, trusted relationships between clients and clinicians, and this means that residents

of supportive housing are more likely to stick with their treatment plans. Most people in this study were very happy with the quality of their housing, indicated by their high wellbeing scores shortly after moving in to ESCG.

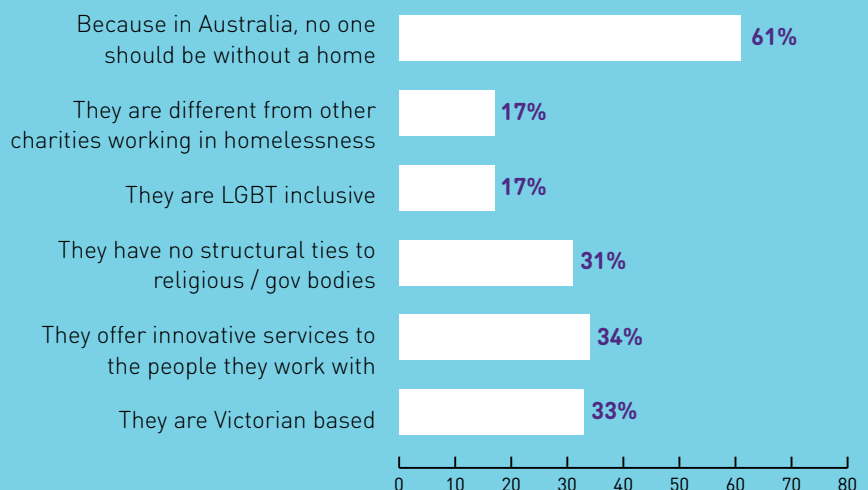
The findings suggest that maintaining treatment in a setting that the person enjoys living in improves their mental health. This was further enhanced by the support provided by a team of workers based on-site who were able to develop long-lasting relationships with individuals.

Find out more about our research at [www.launchhousing.org.au/latestresearch](http://www.launchhousing.org.au/latestresearch)

### Your feedback

You may recall that we included a feedback survey in our last (Spring 2016) edition of *Launch News*. Many thanks for your responses, which are very useful in continuing to build on our engagement with you. It is clear from the volume and quality of responses, and the encouragement we have received from you that we are very fortunate to have such a committed and generous group of people supporting the work of Launch Housing.

#### Reasons for Past Support



## Portable Housing project to take off in Melbourne's West

**In a first of a kind collaboration, 57 new affordable one bedroom homes will be located on vacant land in Melbourne's inner west, providing stable housing for people who have been priced out of the private rental market.**

The unique partnership between major philanthropic donors Geoff and Brad Harris, Launch Housing, VicRoads, and the Department of Health and Human Services, will add much-needed affordable housing stock to the Melbourne market.

Launch Housing Deputy CEO and Director of Services Dr Heather Holst said the partnership would benefit a growing number of single adults and couples who are at risk of homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing in Melbourne.

"Single adults are one of the largest group of people currently experiencing great difficulty accessing and maintaining affordable housing right now. This new partnership will allow us to offer accommodation to people who really need a break. They can't get into private rental due to the high costs and often don't qualify or have to wait up to a decade to access public housing," said Dr Holst.

"This project with VicRoads has the potential to grow and extend to other government and non-government bodies who hold blocks of vacant land that can be used to create high quality, relocatable housing to dramatically reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Melbourne," Dr Holst added.



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VicRoads will allow Launch Housing to develop nine parcels of vacant land in the inner western suburbs of Melbourne (Footscray and Maidstone) creating 57 new affordable homes.

Brad and Geoff Harris have provided a major philanthropic donation of \$4 million to fund most of the building costs.

Brad Harris said growing levels of homelessness in Victoria is a serious




concern that requires a whole of community response.

"We hope to encourage other private donors to see social housing as a sector that really needs more private funding assistance. We will all benefit from working together to end homelessness," Mr Harris said.

## We'd love to hear from you

We're always interested in your thoughts, compliments and feedback on our newsletters, appeals and website. If you would like to share some feedback please contact our Communications and Development team at [supporters@launchhousing.org.au](mailto:supporters@launchhousing.org.au) or free call **1800 720 660**.

### Contact us

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