



# MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Homelessness Week: lack of options for young people**

We are all familiar through the images we see about what homelessness looks like in Melbourne, but do you know what homelessness looks like for a young person in the communities across the Macedon Ranges?

To many of these young people housing options are limited to couch surfing, sleeping in cars, tents, swags, or caravans and these are not generally visible to the public.

Cobaw Community Health's youth housing program supports young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Experiencing homelessness has profound and potentially long term impacts on a young person's physical and mental health and educational outcomes. Research shows that young Australians experiencing homelessness have significantly higher incidence of mental health conditions such as anxiety and mood disorders as well as higher rates of self-harm and attempted suicide compared to the general youth population. Nutritional deficiencies are common in people experiencing homelessness leading to complications with the digestive system, skin disorders, musculoskeletal issues and chronic disease.

At any given time Cobaw's housing team are working with between 10 and 20 young people. There can be many complex issues that lead to homelessness, but the primary contributing factors are family breakdown and family violence.

Cobaw provides case management support and advocacy which may include referrals for family mediation, counselling services, employment, education and training pathways and Centrelink support as well as discussing housing options.

Cobaw receives many requests for emergency accommodation and affordable housing however there are no appropriate options for young people in the Macedon Ranges under the age of 18, and for those over 18 the options are very limited. Due to the high demand for affordable housing and the limited supply of public, community and transitional housing, the only option for young people wanting to remain in this area is to enter into the private rental market. For those on Youth Allowance and Newstart payments however, this is unaffordable and unsustainable. An increase in the Newstart payment is long overdue and a significant increase will greatly assist in providing a more realistic support payment.

During Homelessness Week Cobaw is focussing on local community needs and to raise awareness of the issues they are inviting people to share a complimentary lunch of soup and bread between 12pm and 1.30pm on Thursday 8 August at the Mechanics Reserve in Kyneton. There will also be music by the Cobaw Ukulele Players.

ENDS

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