



Catholic Social Services
Victoria

Catholic agencies highlight long term commitment and need for diversity in meeting needs of homeless

Meeting the needs of the homeless is a focus of a number of Catholic social service agencies in Victoria.

In articles in the April 2008 edition of *Micah*, the journal of Catholic Social Services Victoria, agencies draw on their experience in compassionate service delivery to identify ways in which the unmet needs of so many of the homeless within our community can be addressed:

Efforts that are featured in the April edition include:

- Sacred Heart Mission's CEO, Michael Perusco, highlights the Mission's 'journey to social inclusion'. This journey sees homelessness as one element of exclusion from the mainstream of society. It provides intensive case management for each individual participant in the program, and aims at removing barriers to inclusion, and access to a range of ongoing services. Additional funding is needed.
- The St Vincent de Paul Society's Netty Horton focuses on the increased difficulty experienced in finding alternative accommodation for homeless clients. A current initiative is ongoing work with the Victorian Government to establish a mechanism to make additional land available for this purpose.
- St Vincent's Hospital's Sr Francesca Healy Cottage in Fitzroy provides a unique range of services, addressing the physical health, mental health, social and housing needs of homeless people in the area.

Denis Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, comments:

The homeless are among the most socially excluded in our society, and their needs are complex. As these articles point out, affordable and appropriate shelter is a starting point – money is the main constraint here, and the role of government is to ensure its availability. But money alone is not enough. The homeless need personal support; access to relevant services; and acceptance into a broader community within which they can achieve their full human potential.

The renewed attention to the plight of the homeless by Governments in Australia is welcomed, and these articles are a useful input into policy: "It is simply not acceptable that so many people, of all ages, sleep on the streets and in dangerous and sub-standard accommodation in Victoria", Denis Fitzgerald concluded.

The April 2008 *Micah* is available at <http://www.css.org.au/micah/index.html>

Contact

Denis Fitzgerald 0418 136 372

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383 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002. Phone: (03) 9287 5566 Fax: (03) 9287 5567

Postal address: PO Box 146, East Melbourne, Victoria 8002

Email: office@css.org.au Website: www.css.org.au

ABN 23 709 016 343

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