

RESPONSE TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS GREEN PAPER ON HOMELESSNESS

1. RESPONSE:

There is severe lack of affordable accommodation available to the lower socio-economic grouping in the Frankston/Seaford area.

This situation is deteriorating

To highlight the problem, this paper refers specifically to people living in cabin/caravan parks, & those sleeping rough.

It is recommended that SAAP be split into two facilities to be established (refer to Appendix 1);

- i) Regional Supported Accommodation Centre
- ii) Regional Assistance Program Centre

2. BACKGROUND

The Morning Star Conference (Mt. Eliza) of St. Vincent de Paul Society ,through 'home' visits, has been providing assistance to people (requiring food, clothing & furniture) in the following areas for the past 12 months,

- South Frankston
- Frankston and Seaford between the railway line and beach.

For example, during the past 12 months we have distributed \$64,000 in Safeway "E" cards for food assistance; the number of assistance calls were 1314.

During the same time we have visited the Seaford Beach Cabin/Caravan Park (Nepean Highway) 114 times and distributed \$5310 in Safeway "E" cards. 180 Adults and 46 Children.

Units at the park are not caravans, but are older style portable accommodations (cabins) which, although cramped, are the only affordable housing for the occupants (secondary & tertiary homeless).

Many of these 'home' visits are assisting people who are themselves supporting homeless relatives & friends; these Secondary Homeless are not only being supported by the community but account for nearly half the overall homeless numbers. (Figure 1, page 19; "Which Way Home Green Paper")

We were also aware of a number of people spending nights nearby in the foreshore tea-tree (primary homeless).

3. PROBLEM

- i) The caravan park has been sold, with settlement within a few months and its future is uncertain.

- Many neighbouring properties have been developed into high-density, quality accommodation.
 - No planning application has been lodged; however the probability is that Seaford Beach C/P will be similarly developed.
 - Where will these park occupants find affordable housing, if dislocated (primary homeless?)
- ii) People sleeping in the tea-tree were moving around during the day and would often sit during the evening (for warmth) in the Safeway supermarket opposite the beach as there was not accommodation available.
- However, Safeway now closes at Midnight and this winter these homeless people have moved on.

4. PROPOSAL

To split the functions SAAP into 2 basic elements which should improve service delivery;

- Regional Supported accommodation Centre
- Regional Assistance program Centre

The concept of the existing SAAP commendable, & this split should improve the system's ability to meet the needs of the homeless.

5. REGIONAL SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION CENTRE

This Centre would receive & process homeless referrals from the community for the following accommodation requirements;

Rent assistance

Special care

Mentally ill

Crisis

Public housing

Private rental

Aged care

Transitional

'Safe house'

Physical disability

The Centre would also provide the following services;

Assessments for referral to the Regional Assistance Program Centre

Communication point (Mail collection, Electoral roll Registration, Centrelink contact)

Social facility (Drop in Centre, Community room)

Emergency food provisions

Clothing & Furniture

The purpose of this centre is to facilitate access to short & long term accommodation for the homeless by supplying basic needs.

It would also provide Case Managers to ensure that service delivery to the homeless is integrated & timely.

Referrals from the community to this centre would come from Welfare Agencies, Drop-in Centres, Government Agencies, local Council Information Centres, Hospitals, etc.

6. REGIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CENTRE

This Centre would receive referrals from the Regional Supported Accommodation Centre & house expertise in the following areas;

Medical centre

Employment & skill training

Financial management

Family mediation

Training facility (staff, clients, volunteers)

Mental health services

Legal aid

Drug, alcohol, gambling, etc. counselling

Mentoring (baby boomers/living skills)

The purpose of this centre is to provide specific professional assistance so that the homeless can move back into the community & stand alone.

Regarding 'mentoring' there is a possibility that, as well as providing 'baby boomers' with a worthwhile & rewarding activity, & the guidance of the young homeless in life-skills & occupation/employment training. There is the additional possible mutual benefit of the trainee paying rent if the mentor is an 'empty nester'.

May be some of the homeless can take up a Traineeship with the Grey Army etc. The Homeless people need a pathway to fit back into the community.

7. SUPERVISION/MANAGEMENT

It is strongly recommended that Boards or Supervisory Committee be appointed, to oversee the operation of both Centres, to ensure efficiency of operation, but particularly to ensure the Centres are appropriately fulfilling the needs of the community.

This Board/Committee must include a number of community representatives with management skills who will **not** be required to sign confidentiality agreements

Due to the disparate nature of both Centres, & with the variety of expertise & backgrounds involved, it is essential that the top level of supervision/accountability has the capability & drive to meet the objectives of governments & the needs of the homeless & the community..

8. SUMMARY

- At the moment accommodation and support services for the homeless are fragmented over many communities. Under funded, Case Managers workloads too heavy
- The most important point in this paper is the Independent Management Board for the Accommodation and Support Service Centres. To reach set bench marks for service delivery.
- Assist local support organisations, to keep government informed with changing needs, so policy and funding can be adjusted.
- The independent management must speak for the disenfranchised homeless in our community. Especially when the homeless fall off the political agenda and the budget gets tight.
- The question must be asked if the community is looking after the 'secondary homeless' which is approximately half the homeless, *How much of the tax payers dollars are going on service delivery for the homeless? And how effective is this?*

Yours Faithfully,

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Appendix 1

