



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Centrelink announcement moves White Paper reforms forward

Homelessness Australia, the national peak body working to prevent and reduce homelessness, welcomes Centrelink's announcement today that it will appoint 90 specialist staff nationally to assist people experiencing homelessness.

Centrelink's Community Engagement Officers will work in partnership with homelessness assistance services to provide face-to-face, one-to-one assistance with Centrelink matters to people experiencing homelessness, in various outreach settings such as refuges, shelters, boarding houses and psychiatric hospitals.

"Dealing with Centrelink can sometimes be a complicated and frustrating experience, particularly for people experiencing the insecurity and anxiety that accompanies homelessness", Homelessness Australia Executive Officer Simon Smith said today.

People who are homeless, and particularly young people, are more likely to be 'breached' by Centrelink, and to endure short or longer periods of non-payment. This can compound the difficulty of resolving homelessness.

"Community Engagement Officers will meet with people experiencing homelessness in safe environments. This is a better way to assist people who are homeless to resolve important issues relating to Centrelink payments.

By taking services directly to where people are, it will ensure timely access to the kinds of support that Centrelink can provide with applying for payments or managing debts. Hopefully it will mean issues can be resolved on the day without the need for additional appointments".

"Along with reforms of Centrelink breaching policy already implemented this year, this is a very positive step forward for one of our government agencies. It demonstrates a commitment to improving the quality of service offered to people who are homeless. It will significantly assist progress toward the 2020 goal of halving homelessness set out in the *Road Home* Homelessness White Paper released in December 2008".

For more information and media comment:

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