

media release



Thursday 30th July 2009

Where do they go? “Hands to Help”

National Homeless Person’s Week – 2nd to 8th August 2009

Close to half of all people experiencing homelessness in Australia are under 25, and nearly a quarter are younger than 18. The best available data reveals that in the Riverland and Murrayland regions of South Australia **620** (Aust. Government Census 2006) people are homeless, living in improvised dwellings, with friends, boarding houses or in Supported Accommodation.

For many, homelessness is characterised by constant movement between different types of accommodation: the street, homeless shelter, boarding houses. Alternatively, it may be from home to a refuge, a family member, or a caravan park.

This constant movement from one location to another is described as “**couch surfing**” and is how most homeless people exist day after day, night after night in the Riverland and Murrayland regions of South Australia.

The homeless population consists of diverse groups:

- Single men and women
- Families with children
- Young people on their own

For some people, homelessness is a short-lived experience, while for others homelessness last more than one year, and some people experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

People become homeless for diverse reasons:

- Teenagers typically experience homelessness following a breakdown in their family situation while for some, family debt mounts and they are evicted from their housing.
- For other people it is a breakdown in their relationships, often involving domestic violence that results in one partner (usually a woman with children) losing their accommodation.
- Some face serious physical as well as mental health issues; these lead to drug and/or alcohol problems that may impact on someone becoming homeless.
- Some in the Riverland and Murrayland regions already on a low income the drought has made finding employment in the region difficult and the ability to sustain appropriate accommodation.

Some of the ways that ac.care helps:

Early intervention is a key investment in the alleviation of homelessness. In rural South Australia ac.care works closely with the State Government of South Australia to provide a high standard of services for people that are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Supported Tenancies assists individuals and families at risk of eviction to manage their household finances, property maintenance, linkage with education, employment and counseling services.
- Supported Accommodation; a number of transitional homes managed by ac.care provide individuals and families that are homeless with affordable accommodation while they wait to move into more stable long-term accommodation.
- ac.care provides qualified and experienced people to help individuals involved in Supported Tenancies and Accommodation to improve their independent living skills, assisting them

with financial management, relationships, employment or education opportunities and challenging emotional issues related to substance addiction or abuse.

During Homeless Person's Week

200 Blankets Appeal – launched during National Homeless Persons Week.

ac.care is appealing to the local people to donate new blankets or money to purchase new blankets for ac.care's Homelessness Programs. Donations can be made at Community Centre's and ac.care regional offices you your area.

View the wonderful banner featuring the artistic work by children from Waikerie Out of Hours School Care showing "Hands to Help" at the Waikerie Community Centre.

End

Information contained within this media release expires 12 noon Thursday 6th August 2009

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Further Comment | Rob Foggo, CEO of ac.care
Available | Tuesday 4th and Thursday 6th August 2009

About ac.care | ac.care was formed in 1985 in the South East of South Australia

With one full-time social worker and an administrator in response to a strong need in the local rural community for "at risk" teenagers to be accommodated in safe, stable and nurturing environments. Today ac.care employs nearly 200 professional, experienced and caring staff providing servicing for people in need across the Upper and Lower South East, Riverland and Murrayland regions of South Australia. More than 60,550 rural people were supported through over 70 different programs (FY08) that fall under one or more of ac.care's 7 goals:...

alleviating homelessness | building communities | promoting learning | reducing poverty | sharing cultures | strengthening families | supporting children.