

Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3 August 2018



Homelessness Week 2018 41% experiencing mental health issues



Homelessness week is 6 to 13 August 2018. ac.care provides the Riverland Generic Homelessness Service and has been providing homelessness services in the Riverland since 2004.

ac.care reports for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 the Riverland Homelessness Service worked with 381 people. Two hundred and forty-six people were new clients. Of the 381 people who requested support, 28% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 22% were young adults 18 to 24, 56% 25 to 34 years of age and 15% were under 18 (counting children in families). Forty-one percent of clients were experiencing mental health issues and this is an increase from last year's 34%. The main presenting issues were 40% inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions and 29% housing crisis (eg, recently evicted). Sixteen percent were rough sleeping and 19% couch surfing at the time they met with an ac.care worker.

The support ac.care has provided to people includes short term, emergency, medium term/transitional accommodation and long term housing. Assistance to sustain their tenancy or prevent tenancy failure, domestic/family violence, child protection, educational, employment and family relationships. Advice and information, advocacy on behalf of the client, laundry/shower facilities, material aid/brokerage, meals, transport. Parenting skills education, living skills/ personal development, child specific specialist counselling services, health and medical services, financial advice and counselling, financial information and a range of other services.

"Everyone needs a home but the current housing system doesn't work for many people who experience homelessness because there is a shortage of affordable housing, compounded by poverty, family violence, mental health and relationship breakdown. If governments, non-government organisations, charities, businesses and the broad community work together we can solve this. Community members can help by donating money or time – perhaps by mentoring a person affected by homelessness or through inclusive activities such as sport, providing work experience, participating as presenters in our Tenancy Education(TED) Program, volunteering, or perhaps becoming a foster carer or respite carer to ensure children have a safe place to live. Landlords could also look at making their rental homes affordable by reducing the rent for people on low incomes. Our staff at ac.care are very interested in your ideas so please contact us" said Shane Maddocks, CEO ac.care.

"Last year 34% of people impacted by homelessness experienced mental health issues and sadly this year has increased to 41%. This again points to a lack of mental health services in the community. As a community we can reduce homelessness statistics if we can get early help for people if they have mental health issues and work across government, agencies, schools and businesses to make this a whole of community strategy to make sure people who live here have access to safe and stable housing, mental health resources, counselling supports with an opportunity to thrive" said Trish Spark, Manager ac.care's Homelessness Services

END

Media Contacts

For interview / comment

Trish Spark, ac.care Manager Homelessness & Aboriginal Services, 8723 0540,
Trish.Spark@accare.org.au

Further information

Anne Hinkly-Tyler, Marketing & Communications Manager ac.care
E: anne@accare.org.au | M: 0401 715 306

About ac.care

ac.care is a non-government organisation (NGO) with charitable status, started by country people in 1986 because there was no teenage foster care service in Mount Gambier, South Australia. Today they provide community services to the South Australian country communities of the Adelaide Hills, Limestone Coast, Murraylands and Riverland.

ac.care has a philosophy of building upon people's strengths and focussing on skill development, early intervention and prevention.

Core services include Aboriginal, foster carer recruitment and support, homelessness services, family counselling and Community Centres in Millicent and Mount Gambier

www.accare.org.au