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For immediate release

HOMELESS AUSTRALIANS NEED A VOICE

It's time for our political leaders to find answers for the tens of thousands of homeless Australians who have no safe place to sleep each night according to Uniting Church National President, Rev. Dr Dean Drayton.

Rev. Drayton said homeless people were among the most marginalised and disadvantaged in Australia and had no voice in the political landscape.

“For homeless people simply finding a clean, safe place to sleep each night is a struggle. Everybody deserves a secure and reasonable standard of housing but for these forgotten people this is not the case.

“In a political landscape where security is at the core of our leaders' rhetoric, we must remember that there can be no real security without justice for the tens of thousands of homeless people who come to organisations like the Uniting Church for help day after day,” Rev. Drayton said.

UnitingCare Australia National Director, Lin Hatfield Dodds, said UnitingCare agencies across Australia provide emergency relief and a range of other support to homeless people.

“In recent years we have seen more and more people coming to our services with a number of problems at once. These include homelessness, unemployment, mental health problems and drug and alcohol dependency.

“People who are homeless are more likely to experience poverty, are far more likely to suffer violence and frequently go without basic food and health requirements,” she said.

“Political leaders should develop a national housing strategy targeting homelessness and providing more affordable housing for low-income households.

“A national housing strategy must be backed up with a commitment to extended funding for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program so that homeless people have access to safe and secure housing.

“Cooperation between State Governments and the Federal Government is required to increase the availability of public housing and address the shortage of affordable rental housing across Australia's major cities,” Ms Hatfield Dodds said.

“Now is the time for the Federal Government to take leadership on this issue.”

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