

MEDIA ALERT

1 August 2018

National Homelessness Conference to examine Australia's homelessness crisis

The National Homelessness Conference 2018 is on next week (6 and 7 August) at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, launching Homelessness Week 2018.

Why media will want to attend

The latest Census shows a 13.7 per cent spike in the number of people experiencing homeless.

How does Australia tackle the task of getting everyone into safe and secure housing? How do we support the diverse groups of homeless Australians—people fleeing domestic and family violence, those with mental health issues, older people who have found housing unaffordable as they struggle on the age pension? What are the solutions and how do we pay for them?

The voices of many different groups will be heard at the Conference including those with lived experience of homelessness—young people, older people, people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, people from the LGBTIQ and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, together with prominent researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

These are the stories that the 2018 National Homelessness Conference will share.

Internationally renowned keynote speakers available for interviews

The Conference presents insights from three dynamic international keynote speakers, all of whom are available for media interviews before and during the conference.

- Only one European country has successfully reduced, and almost eradicated homelessness: Finland. A key driver behind that country's great success is Conference international keynote speaker, **Juha Kaakinen**, CEO of Y-Foundation, who will reflect on the similarities between the current situation in Australian and that faced by Finland when it set out to systematically tackle homelessness. The success of Finland's commitment can be seen in new targets to halve the population of the 'hidden homeless'—that is people in precarious situations such as living temporarily with friends or relatives.
- Professor **Marah Curtis**, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is exploring how poverty and intersecting vulnerabilities impact on housing security and homelessness in the US. Professor Curtis's research is grounded in the recognition that housing is imperative in securing the health and functioning of families. This is particularly the case for low-income urban families in the United States, who contend with relatively high unemployment rates, tight rental housing markets, aging housing stock, high rates of incarceration and complex family structures.

- Professor **Nicholas Pleace**, Director, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (UK), has been part of the European Observatory on Homelessness since 2010. Professor Pleace has a wealth of experience in understanding how Europe faces up to its homelessness crisis. His work has focused on the critical evaluation of strategies, programmes and individual service models designed to prevent, reduce and end homelessness.

A wealth of important and interesting stories for media

Two sessions that will be of particular interest to those in the media are:

- **Beyond the criminalisation of inner-city homelessness** – hear from the new Lord Mayor of Melbourne, the Right Hon. Sally Capp, and an expert panel on how our major cities can move beyond law enforcement approaches to people who are sleeping rough to offer real solutions.
- **Changing attitudes to homelessness** – with the second series of the SBS documentary ‘Filthy Rich and Homeless’ to air shortly, this panel session puts series Writer and Producer Jacob Hickey alongside prominent journalists Patricia Karvelas, RN Drive and Tom Elliott, 3AW Drive to examine how the media reports on homelessness—surely guaranteed to be a provocative discussion!

The Conference features a diverse array of sessions spread over the two days on topics highly relevant to all Australians including homelessness and the NDIS; ageing with no address; Aboriginal homelessness; and effective private sector investment and donation strategies.

In particular, the voices of people actively experiencing homelessness will resonate in the ‘Never about us without us’ session exploring what it is truly like to deal with homelessness services and structures when you’re living without a home.

The full conference program is available at www.ahuri.edu.au/program

When: Monday 6 August and Tuesday 7 August 2018.

Time: 9:00am to 5:00pm

Where: Melbourne Cricket Ground

For media enquiries, to obtain a media pass to attend or arrange interviews with conference speakers, please contact:

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