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MEDIA RELEASE

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Central Coast Homelessness Increase

“Statistics and expert reports regarding homelessness seem to be the flavour of the month”, Laurie Maher, Executive Officer of Coast Shelter said.

Unfortunately this can lead to confusion regarding the extent of the problem in our community. In one article we read that homelessness in Sydney CBD is down by 10% and in another article that the number of people seeking immediate assistance with housing has increased by 7,600 for the year or an increase of 643 people per month over the previous year.

According to Sue Cripps, CEO of Homelessness NSW, even these figures are outdated and do not take into consideration the long-term homeless people who have not presented for assistance. “On top of the usual number of homeless people, there is now a whole new group of people who are in crisis - people who you would never have thought of as being homeless” Sue Cripps said.

“It is extremely difficult to get accurate figures on the number of homeless persons because homeless persons often do not register, while others stay in unsuitable accommodation ranging from squats, rough sleeping, staying with friends and families, to boarding houses and crisis refuges”, Maher explained.

The reality is with the cost of rental accommodation, the global economic downturn and the consequent increase in levels of unemployment, homelessness is on the increase.

“Whatever the situation is in Sydney, anecdotal information and direct experience in helping those in need here on the Central Coast, clearly demonstrates that the problem of homelessness is getting worse”, Maher said.

While it is really great that homelessness is finally on the political agenda, it is important that accurate figures of the number of people who are homeless in our communities are provided to our political masters. Funding flowing from the White Paper needs to be directed to efficiently address the problem rather than being wasted on inaccurate assessments of the problem.

“The Federal Government is to be congratulated on its initiatives and I hope that they are able to direct them to the real problem” Maher concluded.

A whole new policy response is needed and it is hoped that the new initiatives adopted by the Government can address the situation.

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