



McAuley Community Services for Women

A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

MEDIA ALERT/ PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

WHEN: Thursday 7 August

TIME: 1pm

WHERE: Federation Square (on Flinders Street opposite St Paul's Cathedral)

WHAT: Couch surfing to raise awareness of homelessness and women

McAuley Community Services for Women will 'couch surf' this Thursday to symbolize the difference between homelessness for men and women, as its contribution to Homeless Persons' Week.

Jocelyn Bignold, CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women said: "Women are largely out of sight, out of mind when we think of homelessness".

"On the whole they do not sleep on the streets, instead they couch surf from family to friends' places, live in cars or in accommodation provided by specialist homelessness services like McAuley."

She said McAuley was calling for a gender lens to be applied to homelessness funding, policy and programs at a Federal and State level.

"Most women tip into homelessness because of family violence and/or mental health. Family violence is in the spotlight at the moment but the link between violence and homelessness is not."

Well known artist Julie Shiels has embroidered a cushion specifically for the event, with the words: 'Will it always be like this?'

"This is the type of question a child might ask her mother or a woman who is homeless might ask of herself," Ms Bignold added.

McAuley Community Services for Women is one of the few homelessness support services in Victoria that concentrate solely on women. It runs Victoria's only 24/7 safe home for women and children escaping family violence, five refuges, a house for women who are homeless plus outreach service, a Jobs Ready program and social enterprise. It supports over 600 women and children a year.

On Thursday McAuley will have their choir and a couple of women who are happy to talk to the media (photographs are ok but not showing faces). CEO Jocelyn Bignold will also be at Fed Square.

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