

MEDIA RELEASE
9 September 2013

New Government: new policy and funding needed for women who are homeless

The new Coalition Government has been urged to spell out its vision to combat the causes of homelessness today by McAuley Community Services for Women (McAuley).

CEO Jocelyn Bignold said the Coalition had not committed to signing another four-year National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness next year despite promising to combat the causes of homelessness.

“McAuley is concerned about the silence in the lead up to the election on homelessness and the general lack of understanding about the particular needs of women who are homeless,” said Ms Bignold.

“Homelessness is experienced differently by women and men. Women are at increased risk of homelessness as a result of their greater exposure to poverty, inequality and violence. Family violence is the most often cited reason given by women presenting to specialist homelessness services for seeking assistance.”

McAuley is calling for a gendered analysis of the funding and outcomes of all homelessness programs, increased funding to develop suitable housing and support models for women who are homeless as well as increased funding to evaluate women-specific research.

Of concern to McAuley is the focus on housing rough sleepers, which discriminates against women who are homeless as they are less likely to be sleeping rough as well as the focus on high-density housing developments that are less likely to meet the needs of vulnerable women who are concerned about personal safety.

The most recent Census (2011) found that:

- Of the 105,237 people who were homeless in Australia on Census night, 56 per cent were men and 44 per cent were women, representing a 19 per cent increase in women who were homeless between 2006 and 2011.
- Of the 22,789 people who were homeless in Victoria on Census night, 57 per cent were men and 43 per cent were women. The 31 per cent increase in the homeless population between 2006 and 2011 was evenly distributed between women and men.

Each year in Melbourne’s west, McAuley provides accommodation and support for over 500 women and children, who have experienced homelessness, mainly due to mental illness or family violence. The organisation also helps women find or maintain employment, and provides specialist support to children who have experienced family violence.

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