



## Media release

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# Don't blame the individual when lack of housing is the real problem

Attention sparked this week as protestors in Melbourne's City Square have been calling for more long-term housing, following disrespectful media portrayal of beggars and people sleeping rough in Melbourne's CBD.

The city council and welfare agencies are working to assist the group to move on, however the only way to end and prevent this and future protests, is to establish a pipe line of low cost housing in Victoria, says Jenny Smith, CEO Council to Homeless Persons (CHP).

Ms Smith added, "The evidence shows that housing that people can afford and the support needed to keep it, is the only solution to long-term homelessness.

"Time and again evaluations of programs, both internationally and locally, have demonstrated that with safe housing and the right support, people with more complex needs can live successfully as part of the community, even in the most difficult circumstances.

"We are in the midst of a homelessness crisis, where there are very few options to house people, particularly those with mental illness or chronic ill health, including addictions.

"While availability of safe housing options is so limited, the few available are mostly prioritised for families. Single men, like many who are protesting, are most often referred to rooming houses or turned away from services without accommodation.

"We know that in 2014-15 Victorian homelessness data identified that at least:

- 530 people exited inpatient mental health care into homelessness; up 50% per cent from 2013-14, and
- 2,174 people entered the homelessness system from correctional facilities.

"And yet resources are not allocated to address these issues. In two years between 2013-14 and 2015-16 the Victorian Government increased spending on prisoner supervision and support by \$273.5 million, and decreased spending on housing and homelessness by \$14.3 million.

"The last state budget included some welcome increases to address housing issues that are primarily focused on women and children exiting homelessness, but a far greater investment into permanent supportive housing is needed to properly address these issues," Ms Smith said.

[Ends] **Media enquiries:** contact Eddie Staltari on 0431 638 113 or [eddie@chp.org.au](mailto:eddie@chp.org.au)  
Jenny Smith, CEO Council to Homeless Persons is available for interview