



Media release

Connecting app users with the hidden faces and places of homelessness

29 July, 2016: The faces and places of Melbourne's 'invisible homelessness' will be revealed in a popular smartphone app in an effort to highlight the hidden homelessness that exists in cars, rooming houses, motels, couch surfing and caravan parks.

The community education campaign, called *Homelessness Happns*, will be launched to coincide with Homelessness Week (1-7 August) and will appear in the most unexpected of places – a dating app called Happn.

"Contrary to the stereotype of someone sleeping rough, 95% of people experiencing homelessness are invisible to us; they are women who've slept in their car with kids, young people couchsurfing because there's trouble at home, families in motels who've been evicted because they can't pay their rent," said Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons.

"Homelessness is much more than rough sleeping. We catch the tram with people experiencing homelessness, and we wait in line at the supermarket together, yet we probably wouldn't even know it. *Homelessness Happns* is a campaign that shows that homelessness can happen to anyone at any time regardless of their age, gender, or employment status," she said.

As people pass by unexpected locations where someone has experienced homelessness, the stories of real people who have couchsurfing, slept in their cars, stayed in crisis accommodation and rooming houses will appear as profiles, allowing Happn users to learn more about the different ways that homelessness exists, and asking them to take action to end homelessness.

Jody, an ex-Australian Defence Force employee who slept in her van for 3½ months after being forced from her rental due to the sale of the property said, "Every day whilst I was homeless I interacted with people who had no idea what I was going through. With so many Australians experiencing homelessness at least once in their lifetimes, we're all crossing paths with homelessness and don't even know it. It's time that people knew the truth."

As well as breaking stereotypes of homelessness, the campaign will call on the Federal Government to extend critical national homelessness funding which is soon to expire. The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) funds about 180 programs nationally and assists 80,000 people each year.

"By understanding the true scale of the problem, and the different forms it takes, we can unite as a community to solve the problem. But we need the will of Government to end homelessness for good, and the NPAH funding is a critical piece of that," said Ms Smith.

To find out more and to take action, go to: homelessnesshappns.com.au

[Ends]

Media enquiries: Lanie Harris, 0418 552 377 or lanie@chp.org.au – vision/interview opps next page

Media event

Date: Today, Friday 29 July

Time: 10.30am

Location: Park on Corner Peel St & Oxford St, Collingwood, Melbourne

Contact: Lanie Harris, 0418 552 377 or lanie@chp.org.au

TV vision opportunities

An unremarkable back street in Collingwood is one of the places where Jody slept in the back of her van whilst experiencing homelessness, and is one of the locations that will appear in *Homelessness Happns*.

Interview with:

- Jody, an ex-veteran of Australian Defence Force, who lost her job after illness and was forced from her rental property into homelessness
- Jenny Smith, CEO, Council to Homeless Persons

About Happn:

- Every time you cross paths with another Happn user in real life, their profile shows up on your timeline. If you wish to learn more about them, you can click through to their profile. The idea is to connect users with others who go to the same cafes, schools, and spend time in the same areas.
- Read more: happn.com/en/

How does *Homelessness Happns* work?

1. 6 different people with 6 different experiences of homelessness will be profiled, and each of their stories will connect to a location that they once slept while homeless. For example, sleeping in a parked car in Collingwood, Melbourne.
2. Each time a Happn user passes by one of these specific locations, the profile of a real person who experienced homelessness will appear on their timeline.
3. The engaged Happn user is then invited to learn more about that person's experience by going to: homelessnesshappns.com.au, there visitors will be able to take action by signing a petition to extend homelessness funding.

Fast facts:

- Of the 23,000 people who are homeless in Victoria, just 5% of them are 'rough sleepers'
- In 2015, 1,426 Victorians who sought help from homelessness services were sleeping in caravans
- 1,952 people sleep in their cars – double the number from five years ago
- 2,000 people sleep in rooming houses every night – a 40% increase compared to 5 years ago
- 32,000 people are waiting for public housing in Victoria
- The funding of The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) is about to expire. The NPAH funds around **180 vital programs and services** for people who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. These programs assist **80,000 people** each year