



Media release – 13 September 2017

## Therapy dogs for the homeless, Aboriginal homelessness, and Ireland's success in driving down youth homelessness: Victorian Homelessness Conference 2017

More than 400 homelessness workers, policy makers, and heads of homelessness agencies will gather at the Melbourne Town Hall on 13 & 14 September for the Victorian Homelessness Conference. The conference is a biennial event hosted by the Council to Homeless Persons.

Follow @CHPconf2017 or #CHPconf2017 on Twitter for live updates.

A selection of topics that may be of interest to media are below:

### Wednesday 13 September

- 10am – **How Finland eliminated chronic homelessness.** International expert, Professor Eoin O'Sullivan
- 2pm – **Using music therapy to engage homeless youth.** Includes an interactive music activity for workers to learn how to use music to help vulnerable youth
- 3.30pm – **When the family violence perpetrator is the child.** How do we support young people who are both victims and perpetrators of violence?

### Thursday 14 September

- 9am – **Ireland has drastically reduced youth homelessness** by changing their legislation so that young people leaving State care avoid homelessness. In Australia, up to half of all young people who leave state care each year become homeless when they are 'exited' at 18
- 10.45am – **Aboriginal homelessness:** Why are 10% of all Victorian homelessness clients Aboriginal when Aboriginal people only make up 2-3% of the population?
- 12.50pm – **"I couldn't sleep in my new bed."** Moving people who have been long-term homeless into a house can bring its own challenges: loneliness, unresolved trauma, difficulty adjusting to the idea of home. A panel of people who have all been homeless share their experience of becoming 'housed'
- 2pm **Therapy dogs** help kids experiencing homelessness: Trained animal therapist at Melbourne City Mission will introduce youth workers to a therapy dog, and discuss how animal therapy can be used to reduce aggressive behaviours and build resilience in homeless youth.
- 2pm **Ending rough sleeping.** Tony Nicholson, Chair Coordinating the Victorian Strategy on Rough Sleepers will outline progress on the statewide response to rough sleeping. Salvation Army, Sacred Heart Mission and Royal District Nursing Service will discuss efforts to tackle rough sleeping in the inner city and CBD, as well as increasing prevalence of rough sleeping in outer suburban and regional areas.

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