

A message from Shane Austin, Leader Community Strategy

I would like to thank this year's Melbourne Road Home Forum speakers and panellists for their perceptive contributions. I also appreciate the commitment shown by the 300 attendees on the day. Without you, Forum III would have not been such a success.

In the year ahead we will collaborate on developing new projects and greater support and hold the Forum IV event.

I look forward to seeing you there so that we can all share our insights, review our progress and plan our next moves in tackling this vitally important community issue.



Shane Austin

MELBOURNE'S ROAD HOME FORUM ISSUES A CHALLENGE

'What can we do to help?' This was the challenge put to the 300-strong audience at Melbourne's Road Home Forum III on Thursday 26 August. The annual event was hosted by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, which supports the Melbourne's Road Home initiative that focuses on homelessness. Leaders from a broad range of organisations, including community service providers, business organisations, research institutions and state government, showed their support by participating.



Wayne Kayler-Thompson

Introducing Forum III, Mr Wayne Kayler-Thompson, the CEO of VECCI (Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry), called on Melbourne to lead the world in mitigating homelessness and to be proud of its efforts, saying: "Today we have the opportunity to work together towards this vision."

NO 'ONE SIZE SOLUTION' FITS ALL HOMELESS

This year's strong line-up of speakers highlighted homelessness issues through the prism of life stages, from youth through to old age. Their presentations emphasised that a 'one size fits all' approach was not effective when developing policies and programs to help homeless people. Speakers advocated early interventions, encouraging innovation and designing



services and programs that responded to clients' needs as being more productive in addressing this complex area.

Sharing their insights as presenters and panellists were: Associate Professor David MacKenzie, Swinburne University; Mr Bryan Lipmann AM, Wintringham; Mr Danny Blay, No to Violence; Ms Janet Jukes, Youth Development Australia; Mr Andrew Pegler, Andrew Pegler Media; Ms Claire Nyblom, Department of Human Services.

SALVO'S 24/7 PROGRAM OFFERS NEW INSIGHTS

One of Australia's foremost researchers on homelessness, Swinburne University's Associate Professor David MacKenzie, presented new statistics emerging from the Salvation Army's 24/7 outreach program – information that is providing a more accurate profile of who is 'sleeping rough' on Melbourne's streets. Fully funded by a Signature Grant of \$876,000 from the Foundation, the 24/7 program provides a crisis response which includes a hotline and continuing support for the homeless person in need of help.



David MacKenzie

He said 24/7 had helped 136 rough sleepers over its first 11 months. "Our research from 24/7 challenges the commonly held stereotype that most homeless are either young or over 50," he said. "Sixty per cent of people rough sleeping are aged between 21 and 40 years, and 70 per cent are male."

He said 40 per cent of people had been sleeping rough for up to three months, suggesting the need for a policy response aimed at early intervention which reconnected them with family and their communities. Associate Professor MacKenzie said the new research identified varied groups, which reinforced the need for sophisticated policies that responded in a variety of ways to their needs.

LIFE STAGES MARK NEEDS OF HOMELESS

"Society should always be judged by how it cares for its weakest." This measure of community integrity came from Mr Bryan Lipmann AO, the CEO of Wintringham, a secular, not for profit welfare company that provides high quality residential, community-based and residential services to elderly homeless people.



Bryan Lipmann

Mr Lipmann advocated the need for cultural change in characterising and tackling these issues. Instead of viewing issues as being about the "homeless aged", he said, "These guys are aged and homeless – they should be part of the aged care system." In its 21 years of operation, Wintringham had accessed mainstream aged care funding, and in doing so was credited with expanding funding to the aged care system.

The role of men as contributors to homelessness through domestic violence was the subject of Mr Danny Blay's presentation. The Executive Officer of No to Violence, the Male Family Violence Prevention Association of Victoria, Mr Blay explained how the objectification of women in advertising and other media shaped male attitudes towards women in ways that could foster domestic violence. He highlighted the many different forms of domestic violence and the need to reach out to men through initiatives such as the Men's Referral Service offered by his organisation.



Danny Blay

The need to coordinate health, justice, housing, education, training and other support systems to improve approaches to youth homelessness was raised by Ms Janet Jukes, Executive Officer of Youth Development Australia. Providing housing was not enough, she said. Program packages should also integrate housing with casework support, employment, education and training, and community participation. "We need all of those things," she said. "It's not rocket science. It's common sense." Ms Jukes also spoke of the need to fund innovative programs, such as that offered by Youthworx Productions, which trained young homeless people in professional media production.



Janet Jukes