

Thursday August 3, 2023

MEDIA RELEASE



Client numbers show extent of homelessness in central-western NSW

A CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes team worked with 621 clients who were homeless or at risk of homelessness in central-western NSW in the past year.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) in Forbes, Parkes, Lachlan, Cowra and Weddin local government areas (LGAs).

The program supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including those experiencing domestic or family violence.

In Forbes, the program also operates a women's refuge for women escaping domestic or family violence, and other program supports across locations include short-term or emergency and transitional accommodation.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes has released the program's statistics for the most recent financial year ahead of Homelessness Week, August 7-13, to bring awareness to the struggle to find safe and sustainable accommodation in the regional communities it serves.

The 2021 census recorded 117 people homeless across the Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Parkes and Weddin LGAs, but CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Safe Homes portfolio manager Kimeaka Bermingham said homelessness was often underreported in the census.

"Our SHS team provided support to 621 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the 12 months to June 30 in the Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan and Parkes and Weddin LGAs, demonstrating the extent of the issue," Ms Bermingham said.

Homelessness has a variety of forms, including rough sleeping, as well as the less visible couch-surfing, short-term or temporary accommodation, and severe overcrowding.

"Only one person identified in the 2023 Department of Communities and Justice Annual Street Count of people sleeping rough in the Parkes LGA, proving how much of a hidden issue homelessness is, in so many of our communities," Ms Bermingham said.

Natural disasters had made the past 12 months a difficult time in western NSW. "During this time, floods affected many of our clients leaving a proportion of them homeless and without safe and secure accommodation," Ms Bermingham said.

"Some local rental properties were also affected during this time, limiting options for people to secure safe accommodation."

The goal of the SHS program, which is funded by the NSW government, is for people to have safe, secure, sustainable and long-term housing, with resources that supports and enables and maintain independent living.

This is achieved through case management and case coordination, for example, assistance in completing rental diaries, helping clients understand processes and understand some of the jargon and requirements from housing providers, educational sessions, for example, how to manage or maintain a tenancy or safety sessions, and advocacy and awareness.

The theme for Homelessness Week this year is 'It's time to end homelessness'.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes will host events to mark Homelessness Week at Condobolin, Cowra and Forbes, and encourages the community to attend.

Homelessness Week events

- Morning tea at Condobolin: Tuesday August 8, 2023, 10.30am, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes Condobolin office, free morning tea, lucky door prize for attendees
- Morning tea at Cowra: Wednesday August 9, 2023, 10.30am, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre, free morning tea, lucky door prize for attendees
- Family fun day at Forbes: Thursday August 10, 2023, 11am-1pm, Nelson Park, jumping castle, coffee van, free barbecue, popcorn, children's activities, information and resources, lucky door prize for attendees

Ends.....

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides social services, caring for the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging



- Mental Health
- Parent Child Services
- Family Relationship Services
- Financial Counselling & Capability
- Accommodation & Housing Support

Supporting individuals, families and communities in western NSW