

# The Advocate

Newsletters for supporters and clients of UnitingCare Harrison



Spring 2015

## Homelessness Prevention Week

UnitingCare Harrison assists people to take charge of their own lives.

We have been doing this in Melbourne's Eastern region for more than four decades.

In this current economic climate and rental market, more people than ever are coming to us.

Many of these people are already homeless and in crisis when they walk through our doors.

The generous support of individuals, organisations and corporate supporters enables us to offer both crisis and longer-term assistance to those in need.

Please support our mission with a donation.

Homelessness Prevention Week (HPW), is a nationally coordinated week of events, aimed at raising the awareness of, and working towards solving the problem of homelessness in Australian society. This year's theme was 'Step Up' to prevent homelessness, and ran throughout the first week of August.

During this important week Harrison held an Information Station at Boronia Centrelink to highlight the plight of homelessness and our services within the local area. The Information Station was staffed each day over the week with a member from the Youth Services team and the HOPE program. This was an invaluable opportunity to raise our profile in the local community and provide information about the services we offer to those in need.

In these difficult times, we are constantly challenged to find new innovative ways to meet the needs of our clients. Sadly, the

need is increasing as rapidly as funding is decreasing and represents a significant barrier to assisting people to take charge of their own lives.

Harrison has had great success over the years with our flexible approaches to meeting client needs. We have established working relationships with various organisations such as Inner East Community Health, Centrelink, headspace, Mountain District Learning Centre, secondary schools and other UnitingCare agencies to expand the services we can offer and the locations that we work from.

The projects include HOPE, outreach services with workers collocated at DHHS or headspace, educational projects, community art groups and meal programs. The success of these pilot projects will see joint projects increase in the future as we all work to prevent homelessness.



**Step up** to end homelessness  
On any given night in Australia  
**1 in 200** people are homeless

## New Disability Housing Network

Uniting Care Harrison together with Metro Access City of Knox have established an Eastern Disability Housing Network (EDHN) to address the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in accessing affordable housing.

In addition to a lack of affordable housing, people with disabilities face further barriers such as rental properties not being suitable for their physical needs, difficulty finding an appropriate housemate and the struggle to pay rent, food, bills and have money left to pay for the support services they need to live independently.

The EDHN will work together to look at strategies for people with disabilities to overcome these barriers.

Strategies include exploring the options for creating a website to provide disability housing related information and a register service for people looking for a housemate.

Like us on  
**Facebook**



1012 Little Burwood Highway  
Wantirna South  
PO Box 4503 Knox City 3152

P: (03) 9871 8700  
F: (03) 9801 3134  
E: [enquiries@harrison.org.au](mailto:enquiries@harrison.org.au)  
[www.unitingcareharrison.org.au](http://www.unitingcareharrison.org.au)

ABN: 61 737 393 012



## Your Support Makes a Difference

Without the continuing support of our generous donors we would not be able to provide the assistance to our clients that we do. Donations currently make up more than 60% of our material aid which includes food, toiletries, cleaning goods, blankets and pet food.

A huge thankyou to **Share the Dignity**, a new supporter who recently presented us with a large donation of sanitary products. Their aim is to provide homeless and at risk women nationally with sanitary products to allow a sense of dignity at a time when they need it most.

If you would like to read more about this amazing charity and the work they do or how to support them visit them at [www.sharethedignity.com.au](http://www.sharethedignity.com.au) or find them on Facebook.

We say thanks to all of the wonderful knitters and quilters at **Bedford Heights Retirement Village** and **Lily Patches** for their constant supply of beautiful quilts and blankets. To be given a handmade gift that so much time and care has gone in to is a warm fuzzy moment in an often cold period of someone's life.

Our thanks also go to **Wesley College** students and families, and the members of **Curves Ferntree Gully** for all of the groceries they donated. This year we experienced significant cuts to our funding which meant we couldn't keep up with the need for food hampers. Thanks to supporters such as Curves and Wesley we have been able to provide some food and basic necessities to those in crisis who would have otherwise gone without.

## Never a Typical Day in Homelessness

In mid July, the Team Leader of Homelessness Services received a phone call from a local council representative to advise an excavation collapse had left two townhouses crumbling into a 15 metre deep excavation pit, with early indications suggesting the homes would need to be demolished.

Living in these two townhouses were 12 overseas students who immediately had to be evacuated and placed into crisis motel accommodation, effectively homeless.

Our Homelessness Services team met with each of the students to assess their needs and informed them that UnitingCare Harrison would be able to arrange further motel accommodation if needed, while the students explored longer-term accommodation. Each student was allocated a support worker. Six of the students indicated they wished to remain together, and were very proactive, having obtained a new private rental within a week. UnitingCare Harrison supported them financially from Private Rental Brokerage funds that assisted with rent in advance and obtaining essential household items.

The remaining six students continue to stay with a network of friends whilst we support them to look at their individual housing options, such as long term private rental, share housing and student accommodation.

It is stories like these that challenge the notion we have of homelessness in our community, and how in the right circumstances it could happen to almost anyone.