



MEDIA RELEASE

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A new approach to Squalor

Catholic Community Services will hold the inaugural National Squalor Conference “Pathway through the Maze” in Sydney on 5-6 November 2009

With a focus on enabling clients, such as building independence and community connectedness, Catholic Community Services is investigating further ways to support people who live in squalor.

People who live in squalor can come from all backgrounds and be of all ages. They can reside in their own homes, rental accommodation or public housing. These clients may have a mental illness, memory loss or confusion associated with dementia or a disability. The person may live alone or with someone who, through their own health or disability, requires support to maintain a clean and safe environment. Clients in this situation are the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities.

In order to bring a greater focus to this issue, Catholic Community Services will host the **National Squalor Conference – Pathway through the Maze** on 5-6 November 2009. This 2-day innovative national conference, to be held at the SMC Conference Centre in Sydney city, is the first of its kind to be held in Australia.

The conference will focus on sustainable long term interventions, through exploring the experiences of severe domestic squalor within the following themes:

- Social isolation
- Societal Structures
- Sustainable Housing
- The Moral Cost
- The Collective Impact
- The Need for Collaboration
- A Clinical Red Flag
- What We Know

Catholic Community Services has a strong and long standing commitment to working with clients living in squalor, having worked with Professor John Snowdon (psycho-geriatrician and leading academic) and others on the development of the NSW Squalor Guidelines which were released in 2007.

Recognising the need to provide comprehensive support for people living in squalor and those affected by this, the NSW Government through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in 2008 provided Catholic Community Services with funding to develop, implement and evaluate an effective service model for squalor. This service model was developed after researching best practice nationally and internationally.

Catholic Community Services

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The core elements of the Squalor service model include:

1. An Advisory Service - 1800 number as single point of access for advice
2. Early identification - training for community service providers e.g. Housing, Councils, Community Health Workers
3. Comprehensive assessment to ensure that any intervention is sustainable
4. Case coordination leading to collaborative response from all community agencies
5. Squalor clean
6. Ongoing support

The level of demand for the service since it commenced has been overwhelming, with well over 200 referrals since the inception of the program 10 months ago. Over 680 practitioners have also attended training and information sessions on squalor, increasing the awareness and subsequent opportunities for early intervention, with further sessions planned each month.

The importance of a collaborative multi-agency approach has been recognised by Housing NSW, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health with the development of the Domestic Squalor and Hoarding Accord Agreement as part of the Housing NSW and Human Services Accord Agreement.

For further information about Catholic Community Services' squalor program please call 1800 225 474.

More information on the National Squalor Conference is available on the conference website www.nationalsqualorconference.com.au

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About Catholic Healthcare

Established in 1994, Catholic Healthcare provides aged, healthcare and community services across New South Wales and south-east Queensland. With a vision of creating sustainable and vibrant ministries of care, Catholic Healthcare supports sick, frail, elderly and marginalised people in residential aged care, seniors living, hospitals and through a diverse range of Community Services.

About Catholic Community Services

Catholic Community Services provides a diverse range of services in the home, in the community and in day centres to the elderly, people with a disability, people with a mental illness, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and children, youth and families. Our clients live in metropolitan, regional and rural NSW.

More information is available at our website www.catholiccommunityservices.com.au