

MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
The Hon. Paul Lynch MP**



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Squalor project an early success

A pilot project to help people living in severe domestic squalor is proving to be an early success with a number of agencies in Sydney referring over 200 people to specialist services.

Late last year, Minister for Ageing Paul Lynch and Catholic Community Services launched a 12-month pilot Severe Domestic Squalor Project in central Sydney.

The project features a hotline – 1800 225 474 – to act as a single point of access for agencies involved with clients living in squalor.

“The project is reaching out to people living in severe domestic squalor and working with them to develop long term solutions, this is not just about a quick fix,” Mr Lynch said.

Project co-ordinators are working closely with health, housing, Home and Community Care (HACC) providers and the RSPCA.

Mr Lynch said the advisory service was giving priority to those clients with the greatest need.

The Government provided \$375,000 in funding for the pilot project following a study by Professor John Snowdon from the University of Sydney.

The study found at least one in 1000 elderly NSW people are living in severe domestic squalor – twice as many as previously believed.

New data from the pilot project shows the issue of squalor is not just related to the elderly.

Referrals have been made for people aged from 28 to 94 years, so the issue may be much greater than originally considered.

Mr Lynch said the project was addressing a complex and hidden social problem.

“This project is bringing hope to some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities,” he said.

Mr Lynch said most people living in squalor were reclusive and had little contact with their families, friends or neighbours.

“The 200 referrals to date have poured in from all areas of the community, from both private and public housing,” he said.

“Significantly, all socio-economic groups are represented across the squalor client base and all cases referred present a high degree of complexity,” Mr Lynch said.

According to Catholic Community Services’ Susan Graham, Senior Coordinator of the Severe Domestic Squalor Project, assessment and intervention was a challenging issue for the management of service collaboration, due to the complex nature of each individual squalor case.

“The multitude of contributing factors include undiagnosed health issues and other hidden problems, which in turn present wide-ranging consequences not only for the client but for neighbours and the community,” she said.

“For most people, when they think of squalor they think a clean-up is the solution, yet a clean up on its own will never be sustainable.”

The average cost of a squalor “clean” is \$3000 and can be as high as \$10,000 in the most severe cases.

In the most extreme of cases, squalor cleans can at times amount to \$60,000.

To bring further light to this issue, Catholic Community Services will host the first ever National Squalor Conference in Sydney on 5-6 November, which will be opened by Mr Lynch.

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