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MEDIA RELEASE

HOMELESS PERSONS' WEEK

3 Aug 2005

"150,000 people slept rough last night in Australia and about 40,000 of those were under the age of 12" Laurie Maher of Coast Shelter said, in announcing that this week is Homeless Persons Week.

Most of us are unaware of the magnitude of the problem of homelessness, but the number of homeless persons in Australia is a population larger than Wyong and slightly less than Gosford's 169,000.

"With a third of Gosford's wage earners taking home \$300 a week or less and with house rental over \$200 per week, it's no wonder that the waiting list for Public Housing in Gosford is 12 years and in Wyong 15 years" Maher said.

Affordable housing for low income residents of our community is an issue yet to be appropriately addressed by Governments at every level.

"Last year, Coast Shelter provided more than 34,000 overnight accommodation to homeless men, women and children on the Central Coast, but that's of little comfort to the man who slept under cardboard in Donnison Street Gosford on Sunday night, or the lady who slept on Wyong Station on Tuesday night" he said.

In 2004-05, Coast Shelter increased its capacity by 6%, but it still had to turn away, or refer to other services 2,285 needy people. Unfortunately, most of these services were full to capacity as well.

"The problem of homelessness is not going away" Maher said, but at least Homeless Persons Week gives us an opportunity to bring it to the community's attention.

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