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MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2007

Homeless Persons' Week 2007

In acknowledging Homeless Persons' Week (August 5-13), Laurie Maher Executive Officer of Coast Shelter, recognised the practical Affordable Housing Strategy by the Federal Opposition.

"The commitment of the Federal Opposition of 500 million to address the housing needs of our community was indeed a welcome step forward", he said.

"To see Federal politicians finally acknowledging the need to address the national disgrace of the levels of homelessness in Australia is truly quite exciting", Maher said.

"Homelessness here on the Central Coast has been a growing social cancer", Maher said. Each year services which provide accommodation and services for the homeless face increasing pressure as they attempt to meet the ever-increasing numbers within our community who find the cost of housing further and further beyond their reach.

It is now recognised that a family income of \$100,000 per year is necessary to purchase a house and it's almost a bidding war to obtain rental accommodation.

Vacancy rates in the rental field are extremely low and particularly for cheaper rentals.

"More and more families are suffering housing stress", Maher said.

Whereas in the past if families spent 30% of their total income on accommodation they were considered to be in housing stress, now, increasing numbers of families are spending up to 50% of their total income on housing.

"No wonder emergency accommodation services on the Central Coast are turning away so many homeless families, men, women and children because they simply do not have the room to accommodate them", Maher said.

While refuges are able to accommodate the same numbers of homeless persons as in past years, the shortage of rental properties has meant that those in the refuges are spending longer time there.

Hardly an ideal situation for families and children. On any one night some 105,000-150,000 persons are homeless in Australia and this includes up to 50,000 homeless children.

It's almost "third world".

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