

**Referral** (02) 4324 7239

**Office** (02) 4325 3540

**Fax** (02) 4324 7876

**ABN** 174 7048 6295



**Address** Rear, 97 Donnison Street

(PO Box 1234) Gosford NSW 2250

**Email** [admin@coastshelter.org.au](mailto:admin@coastshelter.org.au)

**Website** [www.coastshelter.org.au](http://www.coastshelter.org.au)

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Anti-Poverty Week 14-20 October

In the “Lucky Country”, poverty and hardship affect more than a million Australians.

“The number of Australians living in poverty has increased over the past ten years” Coast Shelter Executive Officer, Laurie Maher said.

“A new report has indicated that by using an international benchmark, the number of Australians in poverty has increased from 7.6% of the population to 9.9%, or in real terms, that is now almost two million people”, he said.

It’s even worse if we compare Australia to England or Ireland and use their benchmark, the numbers for Australia are even worse.

“How the Government or the community can be smug or even satisfied with their repeated budget surpluses when the level of poverty in our Country is increasing at such a rate, I don’t know”, Maher said.

Australia is now ranked fourteenth out of eighteen on the UN Poverty Index behind most of Western Europe.

And when we look at housing affordability, the situation is worse in Australia than in any other English speaking country in the OECD.

“The gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” continues to increase. If we take just two consequences of poverty, namely dental care for the general population or the life expectancy of our Aboriginal population and compare them to our neighbour New Zealand, the comparison is shameful”, Maher said.

Unfortunately, life on the Central Coast reflects the situation in the rest of Australia, so it’s no wonder that welfare agencies are being swamped with requests for assistance.

“Surely when both Parties in the lead up to the election are promising money almost with gay abandon, they can put in place policies which ensure that the benefits of Australia’s economic prosperity can be shared more evenly across the community”, Maher concluded.

Laurie Maher is the Executive Officer Coast Shelter which provides far more than crisis accommodation to one hundred homeless families each night. With the assistance of local Churches and community groups Coast Shelter also serves more than two hundred and fifty meals to the needy in our community each day.

**-ENDS-**

**For further details on this media release contact Laurie Maher  
Phone: 02 4325 3540 Mobile: 0418 439 179**