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MEDIA RELEASE

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Central Coast Homelessness

“It was ‘quite wonderful’ that the Prime Minister has given to the issue of homelessness in Australia the priority it deserves” said Laurie Maher, Executive Officer of Coast Shelter.

“The national statistics for the whole of Australia are an absolute disgrace” he said.

“To think that more than 100,000 Australians slept rough on Christmas night and this in a country where the economy is said to be booming is a real contradiction” Maher said.

“National statistics show that 57% of those who are homeless were turned away from shelters and refuges, however the figures on the Central Coast are much worse” Maher said.

Coast Shelter, the largest provider of emergency accommodation on the Central Coast, was forced to turn away 2,007 homeless families including children during 2006-07.

That is 75% of those needing accommodation compared to the national figure of 57%.

“It’s great to see the new Prime Minister instructing his new Federal Members of Parliament to visit a refuge or shelter in their own electorate” Maher said.

“Perhaps the housing needs of the Central Coast might get the attention it rightly deserves” he said.

Homelessness is a complex issue, however the thought that a homeless person was an older man on a park bench in no way is typical.

“Of those who were turned away nationally from refuges when they sought accommodation, 75% were couples with children while the situation on the Central Coast is a bit different” Maher said.

The greatest need for accommodation is for single men and men with accompanying children. Since the closure of St Jude’s Refuge at Woy Woy, there is only one Men’s Refuge left and that can only accommodate nine single men.

“To have one small men’s refuge for the whole of the Central Coast makes our 300,000 people the worst resourced in NSW” Maher concluded.

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