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MEDIA RELEASE

23 December 2008

Federal Government Christmas Present for the Homeless

The Federal Government White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home*, A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness released by the Prime Minister and Minister for Housing Tanya Plibersek, sets out a national approach to reducing homelessness with a target of providing housing and support to 50,000 or half of the 105,000 homeless people who sleep rough in Australia every night, Executive Officer of Coast Shelter Laurie Maher said.

With \$800 million to be spent on preventing and reducing homelessness and a further \$400 million to increase the amount of affordable and supported housing, Christmas had come early for those in need, Maher said.

While detailed implementation plans are yet to be released, this is a wonderful opportunity for our Regional Federal Parliamentary representatives to take leadership and establish a Regional approach, to address our Central Coast chronic homelessness problem.

The White Paper refers to the very successful regional programs in the USA and this is surely an opportunity for the Central Coast to develop its own response.

The Central Coast has really been left behind in the provision of social infrastructure over the years, Maher said and with the gloomy predictions for the economy and in particular, unemployment in 2009, Mr Rudd's announcement is very timely.

A coordinated regionally focussed response to early intervention, improving and expanding services and breaking the cycle of homelessness, based on sound data is the way to go Maher stated.

There are quite a number of support programs on the Central Coast, but with this new funding, a comprehensive regionally coordinated program will make all the difference and the importance of this cannot be emphasised enough, Maher concluded.

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