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MEDIA RELEASE

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Homelessness and Unemployment

The investment of \$6 billion for social and public housing by the Federal Government is the largest single investment in affordable housing in the last fifty years.

“However notwithstanding this rescue package during this global and national economic crisis, unemployment remains the greatest threat to the economic health of the Central Coast” Laurie Maher Executive Officer of Coast Shelter stated.

For years we have been aware of the critical shortage of public and social housing on the Central Coast with waiting lists of more than ten years. However most would not be aware that over 62% of public housing tenants do not participate in the labour force at all.

While the \$4 billion decline in funding for public housing during the Howard years did not help, it is unemployment which has remained as the residual problem in terms of our community’s economic health.

“Only 24% of our youth have full time jobs on the Central Coast and many of our youth have grown up in families which have had, at most, sporadic involvement with the labour market” Maher said.

The most recent predictions are that unemployment will reach 8% nationally, however the Central Coast has already reached this figure and if full time employment was the benchmark, then our unemployment figures are much much higher.

Most ordinary working people are struggling to find affordable housing in a market in which rents are increasing, family investment in home ownership is compromised by the ever-present threat of unemployment.

“Economists and social commentators will continue to guess the levels which unemployment will reach, however the answer continues to stare government in the face” Maher said.

It's in funding infrastructure that the answer for unemployment lies.

"It's not just roads and bridges" Maher stated, "but it is in the building of playgrounds, sportsfields, cultural facilities etc, all of which will remain as a lasting legacy for future generations".

"And if it's lack of confidence that is holding back private sector investment, then it's surely Government investments in basic infrastructure that will turn this around" Maher claimed.

"I would like to believe that we have bottomed in this economic crisis, but it is only with the support of the Federal Government and infrastructure that this terrible situation can be turned around" Maher concluded.

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