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MEDIA RELEASE

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MORE PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

Speaking to the Annual General Meeting of Coast Shelter, newly re-elected President Gavin Shepherd, reported that, although Coast Shelter had provided fewer overnight beds than in the previous year, it had received one hundred more requests for accommodation than in 2008/09.

“Our biggest problem is in obtaining rental accommodation for our people. If we can’t find housing to allow our homeless families to move on from our refuges, it means that we have to turn away anyone coming to us for help, no matter how dire their circumstances” Shepherd stated.

The shortage of rental accommodation for those on low incomes remains our greatest problem.

Shepherd went on to say that although Coast Shelter had suffered a serious down turn in its fundraising activities for the year, particularly in the first half of 2009, it was able to maintain all of its services, ending the year with a deficit of \$62,000.

“The biggest drain on our resources is the Donnison Street Restaurant”, Laurie Maher, Executive Officer of Coast Shelter reported. However, he remained optimistic that the Government, as part of its Homelessness Strategy, would see the value of a Community Centre, which incorporated a restaurant providing two hundred meals a day, a No Interest Loan Program to help disadvantaged families, facilities to provide counselling and legal advice, and in the future a hope for facility to provide medical advice.

“With so many families doing it tough on the Central Coast, a Community Centre, offering a broad range of support right in the middle of Gosford will be a wonderful addition to our social infrastructure”, Maher said.

Already, with the assistance of the Central Coast Hotels Association and Gosford City Rotary Club, the new Community Centre boasts a Men’s Shed in the CBD, which is already up and running two days a week.

“Our biggest concern as we commence a new year is that, following media reports that the economy is improving, the community might draw the conclusion that the homeless problem is all over. We still have a Nation in which, by conservative estimates, 105,000 people are homeless every night and the biggest percentage of the figure is made up of mothers and children”, Maher stated.

“Even with the millions now available for housing, for low income families, it will take many years to catch up on the number of houses needed”, Maher concluded.

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