



## Newsletter May 2011

### Ending Homelessness in Canberra based on the Common Ground model

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter of the Canberra Housing Proposal to end homelessness in Canberra.

#### **What is the project to end homelessness in Canberra based on the Common Ground model?**

Our project aims to end homelessness in Canberra. The Common Ground model of supportive housing has been successful overseas and around Australia by developing permanent, high quality, supportive, and safe housing for the most vulnerable homeless people.

We have an opportunity to provide similar outcomes in Canberra.

We are currently waiting for approval to license the name "Common Ground" from Roseanne Haggerty, founder of Common Ground in New York. In the meantime, we have an interim title: "A Canberra Housing Proposal".

In our last newsletter we explained that the project aims to house a 50:50 balance of people on low incomes

with formerly homeless people. The safety and support for all residents will be provided through a 24/7 concierge, social workers on site who can link people to the services they need, and a strong sense of social inclusion.

Design issues are still being finalised, but under consideration is a complex of up to 85 units, with space for counselling and health support, community activities, and training as well as the development of a community garden. All this in a contemporary and vibrant architectural setting.

#### **In-principle agreement for Land**

We have in-principle agreement with the Parish Council of St John's Anglican Church in Reid for the land required to build the first project in Canberra based on the Common Ground model.

This is a major step forward for the project.

Talks are also continuing with the ACT and Federal Governments about funding, while donations and services



are also being sought from the community, business sector and philanthropic-minded individuals.

### **ACT Government Support**

In the 2011/12 ACT Budget, the initiative received \$150,000 for a feasibility study into the proposal. This is exciting news and will allow us to undertake further assessment of the benefit from a Common Ground model of support for homeless people.

### **In the Media**

A Canberra Times article in late December launched the project in the media. Here is an excerpt:

“St John's Anglican Church in Reid has given the group in-principle support to rent space on the western edge of its land on a peppercorn lease arrangement. The proposal has won the support of Chief Justice Terence Higgins AO and former first lady Therese Rein, patron of the Australian Common Ground Alliance.

If the plan goes ahead it would follow projects either complete or underway in South Australia, Victoria, NSW, Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland.

Victorian homelessness agency Home Ground was instrumental in establishing the state's first Common Ground project in August”.  
Source: Bianca Hall, 31 Dec 2010  
[http://www.canberratimes.co](http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/plan-to-give-units-to-homeless/2036973.aspx)

[m.au/news/local/news/general/plan-to-give-units-to-homeless/2036973.aspx](http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/plan-to-give-units-to-homeless/2036973.aspx)

### **Awareness Raising Function**

An awareness raising morning tea will be held in May to help develop a greater understanding of the project and to alert Canberrans of ways they can help. The details are as follows:

10:30am, Tuesday 24 May  
Canberra Business Events Centre  
Regatta Point

Please put the event in your diaries, we would love to see you there. Formal invites have been sent out. If you would like to come and you have not received an invitation, please contact David Mathews whose details are provided at the end of this newsletter.

### **Federal Minister's Speech on Common Ground**

Mark Abib, Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness, delivered a speech in Federal Parliament on 17 November 2010, providing encouraging answers to a question about homelessness.

“...the government is extremely serious about tackling homelessness. We are passionate about this. We have set some very ambitious goals to reduce homelessness – halving homelessness by 2020 and offering supported accommodation to all those rough sleepers who seek it”.

“...there are some very good programs underway across the



country. Last week I had the opportunity to visit Common Ground in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, in which the Australian and Victorian governments have invested around \$46 million for development". He said he had been shown around the site and it was "hugely impressive.

It was established using the model of New York's Common Ground, which is based on the principle that you need to put people who are experiencing chronic homelessness into stable, permanent housing, coupled with onsite, wraparound support services, including health, counselling and vocational training. As we know, tackling homelessness is not just about providing housing; it is also about critical support services. That is why Common Ground is such an important program."

### **What can I do to help?**

We need many people involved who wish to see our homeless and low income people safely housed in their own home in Canberra.

This project is very meaningful and will be hugely rewarding. It is already attracting a large number of people to be involved. Why not you?

Donate to the Canberra Housing Proposal Fund through GreaterGood

- Cash
- workplace give,
- establish a named fund,

- leave a bequest

Join one of our working groups:

- Fundraising
- Construction
- Project management
- Communications & marketing
- Financial management

Give time, share marketing ideas, write stories, assist with resources, letter box drop, or simply help spread the word to others in the Canberra community!

For further information, please contact the following Board members:

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