



MEDIA RELEASE

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Bringing more awareness to the issue of homelessness and housing stress

Two Huon Valley residents shared their story about severe housing stress as part of a multimedia art project that highlights the reality for people experiencing homelessness and housing stress in Tasmania.

After years of living in precarious housing situations, Tom is now safe, warm and comfortable in his social housing unit at Dover.

Cherie and her daughter Hollie had been living in their house for ten years when they were told their lease wouldn't be renewed. Cherie found herself in a dire situation - house rents were at an all-time high, and there were very few vacant houses available.

"If it wasn't for my Mum and Dad, I don't know what I would have done," she said.

Cherie hopes by telling her story more will be done around the issue of safe and affordable housing.

The 'I Am Somebody' project is facilitated by the City of Hobart, created in coordination with members of the City's Housing with Dignity reference group as well as local support services such as City Mission and the Salvation Army. The project was extended this year to incorporate Clarence, Glenorchy, and Huon Valley Councils.

City of Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds said, "The expansion of this program highlights the growing issue of homelessness in our region and that the reality this is something that we all need to tackle together."

Acting Mayor Sally Doyle said like many communities throughout Tasmania, the Huon Valley has been impacted by the pandemic and positive population growth continues to apply additional pressure to the availability of housing.

Communications & Media Officer

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"The Huon Valley is considered a desirable place to live and as access to local housing stock becomes competitive, local housing rents and prices have increased dramatically.

"We hear that many local residents can no longer afford to purchase or rent in their local community."

One of the action areas in the Huon Valley Health and Wellbeing Strategy is affordable secure housing for everyone.

"We know that appropriate affordable housing that is dry and warm in winter and cool in summer is a significant contributor to health and wellbeing.

However, for some groups in the valley, comfortable housing can be hard to find," Acting Mayor Doyle said.

"Council manages several retirement villages across the Huon Valley and we have noted a significant increase in the wait lists with many applicants meeting the guidelines for hardship entry.

"As stated in the strategy we will continue to advocate for the availability of affordable housing as well as explore viable, creative, innovative and alternative housing options."

Council works with Shelter Tasmania and housing service providers to develop and deliver community awareness raising programs around the issue of homelessness and severe housing stress. The programs aim to destigmatise homelessness, raise local awareness of need, advocate for and promote services.

"The pressure on the availability of affordable housing is mounting but Council is continuing to liaise with local social housing provider, CentaCare Evolve, and government housing support services, including Housing Connect, to address the issue.

"Council supports The Right Place in the Huon Valley. The Right Place member networks provide information about housing services. Our Huon Valley Hub is the 'home' of The Right Place and a drop in information centre for people seeking support."

Centacare Evolve has recently built and tenanted new homes in Dover and they will be providing homes in Cygnet, Geeveston and Ranelagh.

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“One of the storytellers in the I Am Somebody project was recently provided one of the houses in Dover and he is very happy. He is 75-year-old gentleman and his living situation prior to moving into the Centacare housing was dire. If you listen to his story you will hear how relieved he is to have been provided a secure and warm home to live in.”

Acting Mayor Doyle said over the coming year Council will be engaging with the wider community to develop a long-term vision for the Huon Valley which will incorporate strategic plans that include land use and consideration to the management of residential land.

“The issues affecting the availability and access to affordable secure housing is complex and it requires a multifaceted response across all levels of government and community.

“We will continue to advocate for social and affordable housing in the Huon Valley and continue to work with both government and nongovernment housing providers to explore all possible solutions to this growing problem.”

To hear the stories please visit www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au

For more information: Acting Mayor Sally Doyle (03) 6264 0300