



LEADING HOMELESSNESS AGENCIES ANNOUNCE INTENTION TO MERGE

18 November 2014

Two of Melbourne's largest and most respected housing and homelessness services are set to join forces to boost capacity and strengthen the response to growing demand on their services.

HomeGround Services and Hanover Welfare Services will create a single organisation with a single, unambiguous focus - to end homelessness in Melbourne and beyond.

The Chair of HomeGround's Board of Directors Neil Chatfield said that both organisations are determined to make a real change to the unacceptable number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. "We can't tinker at the edges when housing affordability is at an all-time low and we see more and more children and adults homeless." He said this desire to make an absolute difference is the driver to create a stronger organisation that could better meet needs but also influence the community and government to do something about homelessness.

"We are excited by the merger with Hanover because it means we can better serve the people who need housing, but also work with clients, government and the community to change the drivers of homelessness. The new organisation will combine the best of both organisations and improve housing outcomes for the tens of thousands of people we assist each year," he said.

The Chair of Hanover, Geoff Nicholson, said the merger with HomeGround built on the important legacy, mission and values of both organisations and remained clearly focused on addressing homelessness.

"Both organisations have a great history of not just providing service but of influencing change. There is a clear alignment in the values of Hanover and HomeGround and at the core of those values is the belief that everyone has a right to a home. By combining resources we can transform our vision into a reality."

Mr Nicholson said the new organization will deliver services to around 20,000 households each year from 15 sites across Melbourne. In addition to housing and support, the new organisation will continue the important role of research and policy development, its cutting edge not for profit real estate agency, as well as education, employment and training services and a broad range of health services.

Neil Chatfield will be the new Chair of the new organisation. Mr Chatfield announced today that the new Chief Executive will be Tony Keenan. "Tony Keenan brings extensive experience as the CEO of Hanover since 2006. Under Tony's leadership, Hanover has substantially strengthened its reputation as both a leading provider and influencer around homelessness services and policy. Tony's leadership in the development of employment services and Youth Foyers is of particular note and we are delighted to announce that he will lead the new organisation."

Mr Chatfield said the new Deputy CEO would be Dr Heather Holst. "We are delighted that Dr Holst has agreed to take on the position of Deputy CEO. Currently CEO of HomeGround, Heather brings great

strengths in leadership, strategic thinking and advocacy to the new organisation. Under her leadership, HomeGround has strengthened its position as a leading provider, staunch advocate and developed cutting edge, innovative new programs such as HomeGround Real Estate.” Mr Chatfield said.

Hanover and HomeGround are both registered specialist homelessness not for profit agencies with no structural links to religious organisations or governments. Following consultation, it is expected that work to merge both organisations will begin in early 2015.

Ends.

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