

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Mercy Foundation commits to ending homelessness among Asylum Seekers in Australia**

As part of its commitment to end homelessness in Australia, the Mercy Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Sydney, is extending its support to Asylum Seekers across New South Wales.

The Mercy Foundation is currently in a partnership with the House of Welcome (HoW), an organization which provides housing and support services for Asylum Seekers in New South Wales. The two organizations are working closely together to find homes for women and families, as well as promote awareness of the ordeals Asylum Seekers face in Australia.

Currently, 70% of Asylum Seekers in Australia meet the federal government's definition of homelessness, including women and young children who are forced to live on the street or in emergency accommodation such as "back-packer" hostels.

Asylum Seekers come to Australia seeking a better life but instead, find themselves homeless due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, most Asylum Seekers cannot speak English which minimises their chances of finding employment in Australia. Without any income, they are unable to sustain housing for themselves or their families.

Until they are granted permanent residency in Australia, Asylum Seekers are also denied access to Centre-link and other benefits which do not extend to people on Temporary Protection Visas. The waiting process to convert their visas into residency can even take as long as half a year, during which they are left on their own without any money or a place to go home to.

The impact of homelessness can add significantly to the severe trauma Asylum Seekers are already facing. Many of them still carry the emotional baggage from being forced to leave their homeland and having to travel the long distance to Australia where they find themselves in an uncomfortable state of uncertainty.

Some Asylum Seekers even endure months of homelessness only to find themselves deported.

Since 2008, the Mercy Foundation has collaborated with the House of Welcome through exchanging research on homelessness and providing grants to fund the HoW's 12 "safe-houses" which are used to house Asylum-seekers and their families. This money is also used to provide a range of services which include, the provision of food parcels, English lessons and counselling.

The Mercy Foundation recently hosted the House of Welcome on 29 September at the Poche Centre in North Sydney, where the two organizations led a seminar on the issue of homelessness among asylum seekers.

This is one of the many projects the Mercy Foundation is initiating in its fight to end homelessness in Australia.

For more information about the Mercy Foundation and its joint projects with the House of Welcome, please contact:

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