

Media Release

1 August 2019

First safe night spaces open for rough sleepers

Two of Perth's leading homelessness agencies, UnitingCare West (UCW) and Ruah, have joined forces to trial a bold new initiative to tackle rough sleeping during Homelessness Week (4-10 August 2019).

According to 2016 Census figures, around 1,000 people sleep rough in Western Australia every night. Anecdotally, around 600 of those people are estimated to be sleeping rough on the streets of Perth.

The week-long trial will combine the resources and expertise of the Ruah Centre and UCW's Tranby Centre to offer 24/7 support to people experiencing homelessness in Perth, including two dedicated safe spaces to rest at night.

With City of Perth approval, Tranby Centre on Aberdeen Street in Perth will be open 24/7 for men and women sleeping rough, while the Ruah Centre on Shenton Street in Northbridge will be open at night, from 7pm to 7am, to provide a safe night resting space to women.

Those experiencing homelessness will be offered a warm, comfortable place to rest, refresh and recharge in a safe environment with dedicated support services.

"UCW and Ruah are expanding our current drop-in support services during the week to trial the safe night spaces model to provide those sleeping rough in Perth with a safe space to rest," said UCW Chief Executive Officer Amanda Hunt.

"We know that having a safe place to rest can improve physical as well as mental wellbeing outcomes and we look forward to seeing the results we can achieve during Homelessness Week."

Ruah Chief Executive Officer Debra Zanella said it was important to continue to innovate and improve the system to address rough sleeping in Perth.

"This is a first, very practical step in relation to creating safe spaces that we can take to try and achieve real change, for a growing issue in our city," said Ms Zanella.

"Homelessness Week is the ideal time to demonstrate this model and to show how it could work. We hope it will lead toward a more permanent measure to help address what is a very complex issue.

“We’re working for this to be part of a comprehensive solution. Both Ruah and UCW are part of the WA Alliance to End Homelessness, which is doing even more to reduce homelessness in Perth.”

Through both the WA Alliance and the Ruah-led *50 Lives 50 Homes* campaign – a collaborative project aimed at providing long-term housing and supporting 50 of the most vulnerable people who are sleeping rough in Perth – the partners have already achieved results by working together.

That collaborative initiative has housed more than 215 people in 174 homes since it began in 2016.

ENDS

Media contacts

Ren Adams, Lead - Communications & Engagement, UnitingCare West

M: 0422 146680 E: ren.adams@unitingcarewest.org.au

Kym Patterson, Communications Consultant, Ruah Community Services

M: 0434 447 160 E: kymp@millswilson.com.au