

MEDIA RELEASE – WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2016

Young mum to deliver petitions from 40,000 Australians calling on the Federal Government to prioritise homelessness funding and reform to avert looming crisis

A delegation led by a 24-year-old mother with a ten-year history of homelessness will deliver petitions comprising over 40,000 signatures from Australians who are concerned the Federal Government is not meeting its responsibilities to the most vulnerable members of our community.

Hayley Van Summeren, who started the petition at the last federal election, will be joined by the heads of Homelessness Australia, National Shelter and ACOSS, who will meet with MPs and Senators throughout the day.

A number of federal MPs and state and territory housing ministers have already expressed support for urgently resolving the funding uncertainty around the soon-to-lapse National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) and allowing around 180 services to continue providing their services.

Ms Van Summeren said 'I first became homeless when I was 14. It has been the biggest struggle of my life, to stay safe when I was homeless, to get a roof over my head, to get a job, to deal with the trauma from that time and to be the best mum I can be. Without the support I received, my story would be a completely different one. No-one deserves that.'

The cuts would see \$115 million of Federal Government funding lost and that, along with matching state funds, would see 80,000 Australians missing out on crisis support and housing each year. Nearly all of the 180 services would face closure.

The delegation's visit coincides with the first meeting of Federal Parliamentary Friends of Homelessness, which will see politicians raising the profile of this issue within parliament and their party rooms.

National Shelter CEO, Adrian Pisarski, said 'Increased investment in public and community housing has to remain a central plank in our nation's efforts to turn around rising levels of homelessness and housing crisis in our capital cities and regional communities.'

Homelessness Australia Chairperson, Jenny Smith, said 'Australia is at an unprecedented crossroads right now with one-third of the entire homelessness support system at risk if the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness is not urgently renewed. The result would be catastrophic for governments, communities – and most of all for the individuals who would be left without support.'

ACOSS CEO, Dr Cassandra Goldie, said 'Lack of access to secure and affordable housing and homelessness services are issues strongly connected to policies over which the Federal Government has control, including negative gearing, capital gains tax breaks and Commonwealth Rent Assistance. We need to secure NPAH and see national action on these fronts to stem the tide of millions of people living with the stress of not having a home they can call their own.'

Interviews: Interviews are available with Hayley Van Summeren, Adrian Pisarski, Jenny Smith and Dr Cassandra Goldie through the contact below.

Press welcome to the formal petition delivery at the Parliamentary Friends of Homelessness and Affordable Housing event Wednesday 9 November, 5:00 - 6:30 Senate Courtyard 28J (speeches from 5.30pm).

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