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Media Release
January 29, 2024

Homelessness: New Homes to Support at risk older Tasmanians in the North West

Key points

- **New building concept - first of its kind**
- **Project focused on older people at risk of homelessness**
- **Funded by the SAA Trust**
- **Trust is calling on action from all levels of government**

The Supported Affordable Accommodation Trust (SAA Trust) is well known in Tasmania for providing supported, independent accommodation for people with a disability.

Now it has partnered with Family Based Care Tasmania in a lead tenant model to offer permanent homes in Burnie to older people living at risk of homelessness.

It's a new building design concept with a layout that specifically caters for older people, who are at risk of homelessness, to live safely and have access to aged home care services in a supported, independent shared living model.

The building project has been funded entirely from the resources of the Supported Affordable Accommodation Trust which is hoping federal, state and council authorities will take notice and start urgently funding such initiatives themselves.

Older people are vulnerable to homelessness because of reasons such as the death of a partner, lack of acquired financial assets, divorce, and abuse. Women, in particular, can find themselves at risk of homelessness in their older years.

“It's an unacceptable situation in a country such as Australia,” says Bob Gordon, Chair of the SAA Trust. “Since its inception, the Trust has been committed to providing homes for vulnerable people. Until now, our focus has been supported accommodation for people with a disability. This new project extends our reach beyond people with a disability to other vulnerable Australians.”

Six people will be housed by Family Based Care Tasmania at the new home while an additional independent living home for a further six people is being built next door at Shorewell Park.

“This project illustrates what can be done, but the SAA Trust’s resources are finite, and we would implore all three levels of Government to either support us, or implement their own programs for providing homes for vulnerable Australians.

The units at Shorewell Park will increase choice and control for older north-west Tasmanians, allowing them to continue to live independently. Doug Doherty, CEO of Family Based Care, said that in his experience there are many older people along the Coast who are at risk of homelessness.

“In Shelter Tasmania’s most recent report it was revealed that the third largest group of people experiencing homelessness were over 54. Older women are more highly represented in this cohort than men.

“Family Based Care have a long history of highlighting the plight of the homeless on the NW Coast. Through our annual Community Sleep Out, we raise much needed funds for organisations like St. Vincent de Paul Society. However, we felt we needed to do more, that’s why we asked the SAA Trust to build this particular mix of four single units along with a two bedroom unit for Tasmanian’s over 65 and at risk of homelessness in the one building with options to interact and share resources as well as access support as required”

Bob Gordon, said the Trust’s previous building designs had been adapted to meet the specific needs of older people who were vulnerable to homelessness. “The design provides an optimal blend of independent living and communal living with spaces to provide required support services, in a 6 star energy rated building that is easy to access, clean and cost efficient”

The 1.2 hectare site at Shorewell Park allows for further affordable permanent accommodation options in the future that will be able to cater for a number of ‘at risk’ vulnerable Tasmanians.

“The Trust is very thankful to the Burnie Council for making the acquisition of this public land possible. If more councils could look at releasing excess public spaces for this purpose, it would go a long way to meeting the shortage in available affordable housing. The SAA Trust would love to continue building on this site and others but desperately require further funding to continue our building program – ideally through a government grant”

The SAA Trust committed to this first building at Shorewell Park using loaned funds. However, higher interest rates make this very costly and direct investments and grants are needed to be able to continue to construct a further 3 buildings (supporting a further 18 residents) on this site.

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