



## 16 Days of Activism - Homelessness

The Homelessness Action Group is an initiative of the Townsville Women's Centre and was born out of the frustrations of the workers being unable to accommodate women and Children in desperate need (usually escaping from domestic violence).

It was decided that 16 days of Activism would be a good opportunity to raise awareness around the issue of homelessness and move toward bringing about some much needed change to address the matter.

The 16 days Campaign has been used as an organising strategy by individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. It was felt the theme of homelessness apt, as the major causal factor for women and children is domestic violence. Also, those women who do suffer from homelessness are particularly vulnerable to all forms of violence.

Our goals are:

- to raise awareness around the issues of homelessness – debunking myths and misconceptions,
- to get homelessness on the political agenda and keep it there,
- to give those who are suffering from homelessness a “voice”.

We strive to do this from a human rights perspective.

### Politicians Meet the Homeless BBQ

Our major event was a BBQ lunch on Thursday 6th December 2007 for people who are currently suffering or have suffered homelessness and some of our local politicians and City Councillors and their representatives. About 100 people attended and it is hoped that this gave our local homeless people a “voice”; a chance to speak with those who may be able to bring about change.

### Advocating for Political Change

We circulated petitions requesting both the State and Federal level of politics address the ever increasing issue of homelessness.

### Challenging the Myths of Homelessness

We developed a brochure about the myths and facts of homelessness as well as a banner with several

key messages about homelessness.

Several calico banners were created and hung at various major intersections displaying statements such as:

“Housing is a human right.”

“Booming for some... crashing for others”

“Homelessness IS an Issue”

‘Homelessness is NOT a choice’

### Information Booths at Shopping Centres

The Homelessness petitions and information Booth made a tour of local shopping centres, markets, hospital foyer and Centrelink during 16 Days of Activism to promote the issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing within our local community. The response from the public was very supportive and many people signed the petition.

### Media

Media coverage is important to create more public awareness of the issue of homelessness, and we thank Channel Ten, Nine and Seven + Sun Newspaper for their interest.

### Home is... project

*“A house is built of walls and beams”*

*“A home is built of love and dreams”*

Realising that “home” means more than a shelter from the elements we asked people to express what “home” means for them.

People wrote poetry, drew pictures, made sculptures an used collage. Some schools became involved and the “home is...” project was displayed at the Townsville, Thuringowa and Aitkenvale Libraries and one of the Art galleries.

### Chalk Statements

Several statements regarding homelessness were written on the cement at The Strand.

- *Housing is a Human right!!*
- *Homelessness is not a choice!*
- *110,000 people are homeless in Australia on any given night*
- *26,000 people are homeless in Queensland on any given night*
- *over 100 people are homeless in Townsville on any given night*

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