THE HON JULIA GILLARD

Acting Prime Minister

THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

8 January 2009

$3 MILLION FUNDING SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS OLDER AUSTRALIANS

The Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot today (January 8 at 9.30am) announced a $3 million grant to Wintringham, a Melbourne-based organisation that provides affordable housing and support services to frail, elderly homeless people.

The $3 million grant will expand the service by assisting with the construction of a 60-place residential aged care facility for homeless older people in Dandenong, Victoria.

Wintringham has been operating for 20 years and now provides aged care and housing services to more than 800 people in Melbourne each night, including nearly 200 people in its residential facilities.

Additional facilities that can offer appropriate services for older people who have been homeless are a real need in Australia.

This Government has today committed to funding aged care places and infrastructure for the people that need it most.

The Australian Government has contributed more than $10 million to Wintringham including a $3 million grant to assist in the facility's construction.

In addition, the Australian Government would provide at least $1.5 million annually to help with operational costs.

The new accommodation to be built in Dandenong will be known as the **Eunice Seddon Aged Care Facility**. It will provide both high and low care residential aged care services for older people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

Wintringham under the leadership of Bryan Lipmann has a proven track record in this field.

Today's announcement highlights this government's commitment to aged care and homelessness.

In addition Mrs Elliot today further detailed the Rudd Labor Government's plans to respond to the special needs of homeless older Australians as part of its White Paper on homelessness. The details include:

- Amending the Aged Care Act 1997 to include homeless older people as a “special needs” group to formally recognise their unique requirements;
- Allocating aged care places in future Aged Care Approval Rounds – to allow aged providers with a proven track record in the field of homeless older people to apply for specific beds; and
- Providing capital funds for at least one new specialist facility for homeless older people a year for the next four years to 2012.

The White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home,* was launched by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek on December 21.

The White Paper outlines a plan for reducing homelessness in Australia by 2020, with specific goals to – halve overall homelessness; and provide accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it.

Older homeless people have more complex health needs and requirements as they have been ‘living rough’ and they also do not have the family and social support networks of other older Australians.

The White Paper on Homelessness builds on the Australian Government’s Assistance for Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA), which helps to link older people who are homeless and those in insecure housing to care and accommodation. Currently, the program helps about 3,000 older people a year.

Over the next four years, the Australian Government will provide funding of $18.4 million to help existing ACHA providers to help more people obtain housing and community care services and for new providers to expand ACHA into new regions.

The average age of people using the ACHA service is 67.

ACHA providers work closely with state government housing authorities to help people receive better accommodation options. ACHA services include:

- Identifying frail older clients with support needs;
- Linking clients to suitable care options;
- Linking clients to housing services; and
- Linking clients to other relevant services, such as Aged Care Assessment Teams.

Building new aged care facilities dedicated to older homeless people is part of the Australian Government’s commitment to halving homelessness by the year 2020.

About Wintringham

Wintringham is Australia’s largest provider of high quality aged care services to elderly homeless men and women. Commencing in 1989, Wintringham today provides a wide range of both residential and community based services to frail and vulnerable aged people who struggle to access mainstream aged care services.

It is located at 79 Swallow Street, Port Melbourne.

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