

WELCOME

SHSN Networking Forum and Expo

29 October 2025



Welcome Maurya Bourandanis & Chris Reid

Members of the
SHSN Lived Experience
Working Group

SHSN Networking Forum and Expo

29 October 2025

The SHSN & Our Work

Ruth Gordon

Coordinator

Southern Homelessness Services Network
(SHSN)

SHSN Networking Forum and Expo

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**Map of Southern Region Local
Government Areas**

SOUTHERN HOMELESSNESS SERVICES NETWORK Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026



SHSN Strategic Objective 1: Working together to end homelessness

Priority	We will
1.1 Developing strong partnerships with cross sectors	Work with family violence, mental health and other sectors to improve outcomes for people who are homeless.
1.2 Increase authentic Housing First responses in the Southern Region	Increase the shared understanding of Housing First approaches and advocate for an increase in programs with this focus.
1.3 Advocate for a pipeline of low-income housing supply in the Southern region	Work with all levels of Government to elevate the housing needs of the Southern region.

SHSN Strategic Objective 2: Act as a conduit between DFFH and regional services sector to inform policy

Priority	We will
2.1 Develop and maintain a clear communication pathway between the sector and DFFH	Work collaboratively with DFFH and provide quantitative and qualitative data to communicate local needs.
2.2 Work with key partners to use data to inform our priorities	Use existing data and scope additional data sources to support advocacy activities.

SHSN Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen the coordinated homelessness service system in the best interests of clients

Priority	We will
3.1 Strengthen partnerships with other sectors to benefit shared clients at the operational level	Support Functional Zero projects and use other opportunities to further enhance service coordination across sectors to support clients.
3.2 Embedding the voice of people with lived experience (including First Nations and CALD voices) to inform what we do	Explore opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness to contribute to SHSN activities.
3.3 Advocating for Homelessness Service System reform	Collaborate to identify and proactively advocate for service system improvement priorities.

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1. Working together to end homelessness

- Intersection with Family Violence & Mental Health sectors
- Increase authentic Housing First responses in the Southern Region
- Advocate for a pipeline of low-income housing supply in the South

2. Act as a conduit between DFFH and regional services sector to inform policy

- Develop and maintain relationships with peaks, relevant networks, local government and DFFH
- Work with key partners to use data to inform SHSN priorities

3. Strengthen the coordinated homelessness service system in the best interests of clients

- Embedding the voice of people with lived experience to inform what we do
- Forums, newsletter and website
- Online Practitioner Group
- Support for 5 Functional Zero Projects in the South to end rough sleeping

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<https://www.shsnetwork.online/>

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SOUTHERN
HOMELESSNESS
SERVICES
NETWORK NEWS



October 2025

This edition brings you a range of info about homelessness and related issues in the Southern region of Melbourne and beyond.

The **SHSN Annual Networking Forum and Expo** on 29 October is now fully booked out. We look forward to welcoming everyone with an action-packed agenda.

Council to Homeless Persons is running a consultation on **Workforce Development Needs** with Specialist Homelessness Services staff straight after the SHSN Forum at the same venue - see SHSN News section for details.

If you would like to share your news with our growing audience (over 800 subscribers), please email me with any news, updates, photos, events, case studies and success stories from your agencies to include in the next e-news edition at ruth.gordon@launchhousing.org.au. The next SHSN newsletter will come out on 21 November 2025 and the deadline for submissions is 5pm, 19 November.

If you have received this email from a colleague and would like to subscribe directly, please go to our website to sign up <https://www.shsnetwork.online/contact-us>

Ruth Gordon
Southern Homelessness Network Coordinator

In this edition:

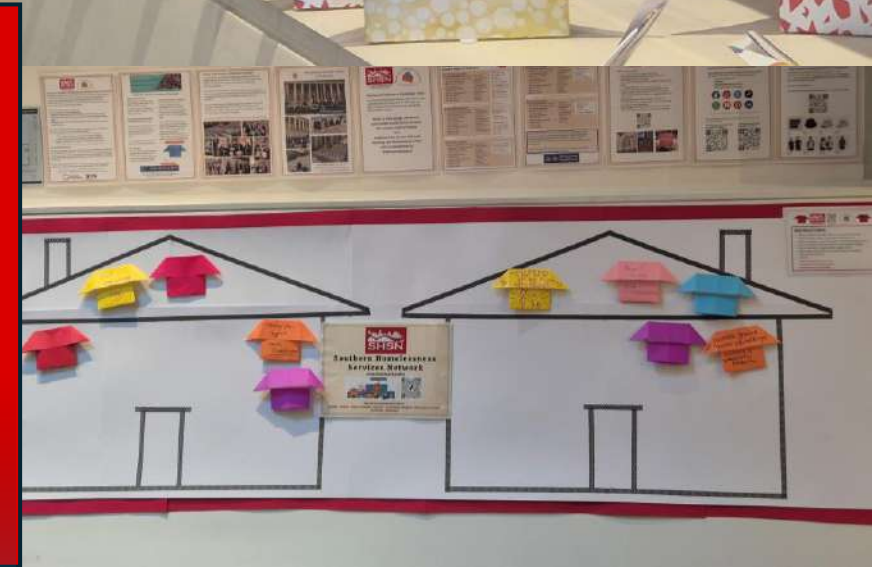
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SHSN at the Victorian Pride Centre *Homelessness Week 2025*





The Exhibition





VIP Morning Tea





VIP Morning Tea

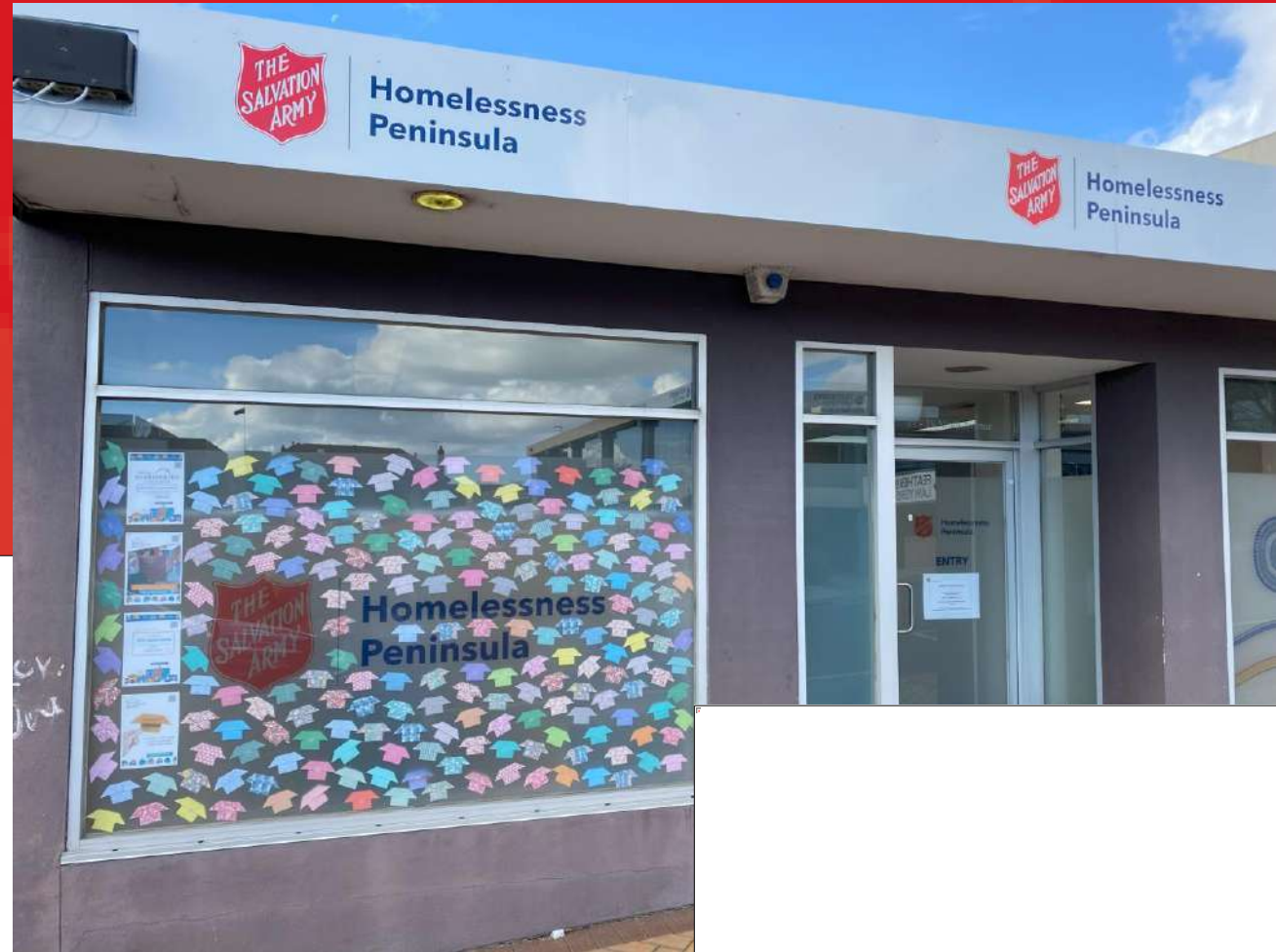
Lived Experience Team



618 houses folded



Homelessness Week Around the South



SEHHA – South East Homelessness & Housing Alliance



NEWS

United front for housing

By Ethan Benedicto

A step in the right direction to tackling hidden homelessness in the southeast has been made as the Southeast Homelessness and Housing Alliance officially launched on Thursday, 31 July. Spearheaded by the City of Casey, Cardinia Shire, the City of Greater Dandenong and a swathe of local community organisations, the event, held at the Lakeside Community Centre in Pakenham, marks a significant milestone not just in addressing the homelessness issue, but also the lack of housing and other resources needed.

Shari McPhail, a speaker from the Alliance and the general manager of homelessness and housing from Ways, led the event by touching on what many community organisations, such as the Casey North CISS, have dubbed 'hidden homelessness'.

Speaking to Star News after the event, she said that "homelessness doesn't stop at municipal borders, and neither should the response".

"That's why service providers, community organisations and councils across Cardinia, Casey and Greater Dandenong have come together to form the Alliance.

"This is a new collaborative initiative focused on long-term coordinated solutions to housing insecurity in our region," she said.

The event was attended by roughly 100 people, many from community organisations, and some from branches such as Victoria Police.

Part of the Alliance were groups such as the Casey North CISS, Ways, Launch Housing, Ermha 365, Southeast Community Links, and Southern Homelessness Services Network.

City of Casey councillors, Kim Ross and Anthony Walter, were also in attendance, reflecting on the launch, Walter said that it was significant,



Members of the new Alliance, alongside the panelists, gathered for a photo to commemorate the launch. (Ethan Benedicto: 493590_15)

and "extremely important and always has, and always will be".

"We need to be proactive and advocate for those who can't advocate for themselves," he said.

For Ross, she said that the Alliance was a "step in the right direction".

"I look forward to working on the actions with the other councillors, and also speaking with the council about this.

"And we're working with the community too; for me it's the focus on the youth, those who aren't safe at home or have nowhere else to go, and for us as a community stepping up for them," she said.

The event also featured a strong panel of speakers, something that McPhail described as a "panel of unlikely partners" due to their different fields of expertise, but the same ultimate goal of addressing homelessness.

Among them was Leanne Mitchell, a government worker serving as the panel moderator, and Brian Power, a lived experience advocate who shared his personal perspective on how mental health challenges can lead to homelessness.

Also part of the panel was Sharyn Ling, the community care manager of Fellow Bless Collective, Jack Dinkgreve, a land management professional from Parks Victoria, and Kelly Bendon, assistant principal at Lyndhurst Secondary College.

On a personal note, McPhail said that she felt "invigorated and excited about the fact that these organisations supported by the councils are coming together to try to break the nexus that we have".

"Each of our organisations is doing amazing work, but we need to work together and work more with the community so that we can get real change.

"It's really important to be sharing those stories because the face of homelessness has changed over the decades.

"So, who you might think of as being homeless, or actually who you might see, potentially people sleeping rough, that's only the tip of the iceberg," she said.

She added that there are many who living in rooming houses, in overcrowded situations, and many who are couch surfing and temporary accommodation with no guarantees.

"We know that with our community information support services, we see them as like the canary in the coal mine and we're so pleased that they're in this alliance with us because people who have never experienced this situation before don't know that they need to come to Ways if they're experiencing or at risk of homelessness because they've never had to interact with that before," McPhail said.

Helen Small, from the Casey North Community Information Support Services, was also in attendance at the event.

She said that seeing all the organisations under one roof, in the same alliance with three local councils, "it's just fantastic".

"It's amazing really, the amount of support we've seen in this room, all we can hope is that people will come together and work together to make a difference," she said.

It can 'happen to anyone': Insight into hidden homelessness

By Ethan Benedicto

Brian Power was among five others who spoke to the hundred-strong crowd that gathered at the Lakeside Community Centre in Pakenham for the launch of Southeast Homelessness and Housing Alliance.

Power, as someone who had lived through the struggles of mental health, which eventually led to him being homeless, he was able to provide an insight into what 'hidden homelessness' meant.

"The reason it's so important to share is because, I think like some of you out there, I did

not necessarily speak out about homelessness before," Power said.

"I was rather asked what I thought about it; and so from my perspective, what I can help with is to explain how I got from being part of the community, to living under a bridge".

He added that he thought volunteers do the sort of work they do, helping the homeless, because it "resonates" with them.

Not only was it a direct helping hand, but also a way to show the importance of taking care of one's health and mental health.

"I grew up in a culture where you had to

toughen your heart and mind up, and I never, ever shared how I was feeling," Power said.

"That was right up until I got put in the hospital; that was the first time I sat down with a group of psychologists... that's when everything turned around for me.

"Young people now are lucky because they are welcomed, and it's open to discuss how they're feeling, and the fact that it's become a discussion in schools, is really important."

He further reflected that as the times have changed, so too have each generation's understanding of mental health, and how added sup-

port to that can be one of the pillars that prevent many from a similar pathway to his, of homelessness.

"It's the fact that anyone out there can go from being a six-figure international sales guy to nothing," Power said.

Time and perseverance were the factors that proved to be key to helping Power regain stability.

As of now, he is part of the Alliance, continues to manage his own mental health, and speaks to help break the stigma around mental health and homelessness.

Thousands of homes missing from supply: Nine quick stats

By Ethan Benedicto

- 409 → the number of people the Salvation Army 2025 Stocktake estimated to be experiencing homelessness in Casey.
- 76.2 per cent → of residents identified housing affordability and homelessness as major community issues.

- 34.3 per cent → identified homelessness and affordability were issues they personally face.
- 2500 → the number of dwellings according to the Stocktake to meet current unmet housing demand in Casey.
- 5600 plus → number of affordable homes missing from Casey's housing supply, according to the council's National Housing and Homeless-

- ness Plan submission in 2023.
- 10,200 → the number of households the above figure could rise to by 2041 if nothing is done.
- Second and third place → Casey's rank (respectively) for women and children accessing homelessness services.
- Rental stress, lack of one-bedroom dwellings → major local drivers, especially in growth areas

- where new housing fails to meet the needs of lower-income earners and smaller households.
 - Mental health → top personal issue and second-highest community issue according to the Stocktake.
- Statistics taken from the Salvation Army's 2025 Stocktake and the City of Casey's 2023 National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

LEWVG – Lived Experience Working Group

- Re-established March 2025
- Four lived experience members, chaired by Lived Experience Member, Sim Crawford
- Reps from member agencies working on LE
- Main action is to develop a Lived Experience Plan to guide the SHSN and our members
- Provide opportunities for learning and development so LE members can contribute & support agency staff working on LE



Priority 3.2
Embedding the voice of people with lived experience (including First Nations and CALD voices) to inform what we do

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Redevelopment of the Public Housing Towers



Other highlights

- Housing First Online Conversation Series (Statewide)
- Housing First Practitioner training for SHSN members
- Working with the Family Violence Sector to develop and deliver the Family Violence and Homelessness Community of Practice
- Two online SHSN Practitioner Groups sessions
- Regular meetings with Homes Victoria and Council to Homeless Persons
- Support for 5 Advance to Zero projects in the South

Coming up...

- Statewide Entry Points Snapshot
- Housing First Practitioner Training 2026
- Annual Report – release and advocacy
- Census 2026

Housing First Scholarship Presentation

Zach Biggin

Coordinator, Melbourne Street to
Home, Launch Housing

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Community Safety and Criminalising Homelessness

Jess Richter

Legal Director, Southside Justice

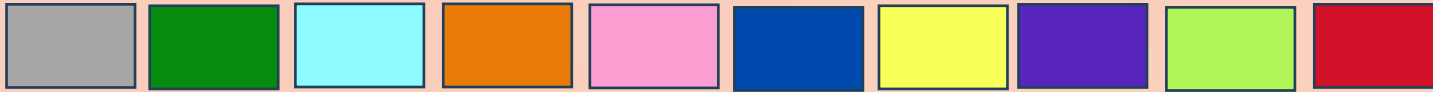
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Speed Networking

1

- Go to the colour sign that matches your name tag



2

- You have 5 minutes to talk to each person in your group
- Talk to as many people as possible

Questions

- Name
- Agency and Position
- Briefly explain your work
- What is the best thing about your work (highlight)?
- What is the worst thing about your work (lowlight)?

Workshops – choose one

- **Housing First**
- **Aboriginal Homelessness**
- **IAP/Entry Points Issues**
- **Health & Homelessness**
- **Lived Experience of Homelessness**
- **Rough Sleeping/Advance to Zero**
- **Family Violence & Homelessness**
- **Mental Health & Homelessness**
- **Young People & Homelessness**
- **Transitional Housing & Support**

Evaluation

<https://forms.office.com/r/nYbkZChX2M>

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