

Media Release

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STREET SLEEPING IS SOLVABLE:

GOVERNMENT, TECH & NGOs TEAM UP TO END ROUGH SLEEPING

This week in Sydney a team of volunteers and professionals hit the streets of Sydney in the early morning hours and late at night to collect the personal stories of people sleeping rough.

The stories of people sleeping on the streets are being collected for Connections Week, an initiative hosted by a collaboration of local and state governments and some of the city's largest NGOs. The aim of Connections Week is to help those on the streets today to find a safe home, and also help NGOs and governments change the systems that lead people into homelessness in the future.

Convenor of the End Street Sleeping Collaboration, the Hon Graham West said the personal histories collected during Connections Week in the Sydney Local Government Area will be the foundation for a NSW wide project that aims to realise Premier Berejiklian's commitment to halve street sleeping by 2025 and work toward ending it all together by 2030.

The first step toward ending homelessness is knowing the people on the street and what caused them to be street sleeping. Connections Week is where we make a start on collecting the stories of these rough sleepers and offering them emergency assistance. One shared by-name list that is updated in real-time will mean homelessness services are up-to-date and will minimise the frustration and mistakes that happen when people have to repeat their stories to many different service providers.

Co-chair of the End Street Sleeping Collaboration and CEO of Mission Australia, James Toomey explained, 'We will be working collaboratively to get to know people who are street sleeping by name and better understand and collect their stories and this will contribute to the evidence needed to prevent people rough sleeping in the first place. This innovative approach has been applied successfully in Adelaide and in several cities around the world, proving that street homelessness is actually a solvable problem.'

Collaborators who have joined the End Street Sleeping Collaboration include the NSW Government, City of Sydney, Mission Australia, Wesley Mission, St Vincent's Health, CatholicCare, Vinnies and Jewish House as well as several homelessness sector peak bodies.

The homelessness sector is being supported by global tech giant Microsoft. Street sleepers' stories will be collected using Microsoft's custom designed, secure data capture and geolocation technology. Steven Worrall, Managing Director of Microsoft Australia said, 'To achieve NSW's goal it's critical to be able to identify people in need and then connect them to service providers. Previously this process has been largely conducted manually with pen and paper and with service providers comparing notes. This means information has often not been fully shared and cascaded, or been available in real time. The platform we have developed will simplify data collection and it will make that available securely and in near-real-time to service providers so that they are able to act fast and help people in NSW who are doing it tough.'

Mr Toomey said, 'The End Street Sleeping Collaboration is in its early days. Our aim is to engage the whole homelessness sector, community housing providers, corporates and philanthropists as well as regional governments with this innovative model for ending rough sleeping. We are being guided by the Institute of Global Homelessness in our work and we're emboldened by the successes of cities like Chicago which has decreased its street sleeping populations by 20% in the last few years using this model.'

Mr West added, 'At the heart of this project is a belief that no one in our communities should sleep rough. No one should have their voices excluded from decision making, especially decisions that impact directly on their physical and mental wellbeing; no one should be dying decades earlier than the rest of us because street life has sapped their health, resilience, strength and dignity.'

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<https://www.acttoendstreetsleeping.org/>

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OUR COLLABORATORS

