



- › On any given night in Australia, 1 in 200 people are homeless?
- › In Queensland alone, it's estimated that nearly 20,000 people are homeless?
- › 40% of them are between 12-34 years old, and more than 17% are children under 12 years old?
- › Contrary to popular perception, only 3% of them are homeless because of mental health and substance abuse issues?¹
- › The two biggest causes of homelessness in Queensland are financial difficulties and domestic violence and relationship issues.¹
- › The rate of homelessness in Cairns is the highest proportion of Australia's 18 major cities, with an estimated 2,300 people without a home².

DONATE ONLINE TODAY AT
www.amafoundation.org.au



CAIRNS HOMELESS STILL NEED YOUR HELP

Thank you to everyone who has donated to the Foundation's end of financial year Tax Appeal—we're delighted to announce that more than 80 members have donated money towards a new street van for Rosies' Cairns outreach program. We are now more than half way, so don't miss your chance to help provide critical support to those most vulnerable in our community.

Local GP and AMA Queensland Far North Area Representative, Dr Sharmila Biswas, is familiar with the homelessness epidemic reportedly taking over in the city she has called home for 20 years. "It's a very, very complex social challenge", says Dr Biswas. "Homelessness is not just about being without a secure house or shelter, it's an extreme form of social disadvantage and moreover, social exclusion. The impact is not only felt by the individual, but the community as a whole".

For those forced to sleep on the city's streets, survival is knowing where to get a feed or a hot drink, a blanket or a bed, or the savvy to avoid the dangers that surround them out in the open with no shelter or protection. Dr Biswas firmly believes that without the presence of Rosies' street outreach van in Cairns, many of the homeless wouldn't survive. "Neglected and disadvantaged

children would have no food, youth unable to connect with their families would have no-one to talk to, and women who are victims of alcohol and domestic violence would have nowhere to go. Socially isolated men both young and old, the Indigenous peoples far from their homelands, and anyone in need of medical attention exacerbated by hunger would continue to suffer," she said.

Dr Biswas has witnessed first-hand the increasing numbers of those who rely on the van, not only for basic needs such as food, drink, emergency clothing, and blankets, but also to feel some connection with the community around them. "For a short time they feel welcomed rather than shunned, and are treated with dignity and respect. The street outreach van is quite literally a life saver for these people."

The outreach program has been operating in Cairns since 1990, leading teams of volunteers onto the streets to provide vital services, and most importantly a listening ear to those who society excludes. At all times the aim is to encourage self-care and self-determination in all patrons. A new, larger and fully fitted out van will allow the program to continue and grow, enabling them to better support those who need help most. **Q**

¹ Homelessness Australia (<http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics>)
² Australian Government 'State of Australian Cities 2013' report

MDA NATIONAL SUPPORTS THANK YOU DOCTOR CAMPAIGN

Nearly every doctor will at some stage receive a gift from a thankful patient, which can raise ethical and medico-legal issues. This is why MDA National is supporting the AMA Queensland Foundation's *Thank You Doctor* campaign which offers doctors the opportunity to receive gifts from patients without transgressing ethical and professional boundaries, while supporting a worthwhile cause.

CONSIDER THIS SCENARIO

An elderly palliative care patient hands you an envelope containing \$1,000 in cash. You refuse to accept the gift and she gets very upset. She tells you she wants you to have it because she's so grateful for the exceptional care you provided to her over the years. What should you do?

The patient clearly respects and admires you, and feels the best way she can show her appreciation is by a gift of money. However, a cash gift of this size cannot be considered a token gift. If someone in the patient's family raises a concern about the gift, or reports the matter to AHPRA, you could be accused of breaching the Medical Board of Australia's

Good Medical Practice: A Code of Conduct for Doctors in Australia which states:

Good medical practice involves... 8.12.2 Not encouraging patients to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts that will benefit you directly or indirectly.

SO HOW CAN YOU DECLINE A GIFT WITHOUT OFFENDING YOUR PATIENT?

Explain that although the thought is kindly appreciated, you are unable to accept the gift for reasons of ethical and professional conduct. As a constructive alternative, you may also suggest the patient donate the money to a worthy charity you both support.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE THANK YOU DOCTOR CAMPAIGN

Patients can choose to make a donation to the *Thank You Doctor* campaign and request an appreciation letter to be sent to their doctor regarding the donation made to thank them. The Foundation has achieved many successes in supporting doctors' health and wellbeing as well as relieving sickness, suffering and disability among patients. **Q**



RED HILL SS ENJOYING THEIR HOT WHEELS

It is now just over a year since Red Hill Special Needs School received their new bus, thanks to the generosity of Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology and the AMA Queensland Foundation.

Principal Pamela Stack said access to the mini bus through Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology has enabled individual classes to engage in regular programs which support and enhance curriculum, such as visiting the library or the gym, or going to a school camp. **Q**

ABOVE: Weekly horse-riding lessons at the McIntyre Centre which strengthens the students' core muscles, improving their posture and co-ordination and increasing their joint mobility.

DOCTORS DOING GOOD

Do you have a project which needs financial assistance?

Contact Colleen Harper, Foundation Manager:

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