

# STREET RIGHTS

Victorian election edition



newsletter of the pilch homeless  
persons' legal clinic

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# Which policies affect you?

## Victorian State Election: Saturday, 27 November 2010



On 27 November 2010, we'll get the chance to vote for the next government of Victoria. It's important that the next government recognises that we must work together to end homelessness, which starts with halving homelessness by 2020.

In this edition of Street Rights, the three biggest parties were asked if they commit to halving homelessness by 2020, and how they would do it. Their responses demonstrate that they are committed to addressing homelessness, and we thank them for their contributions. However, we need more than great ideas and policies; we need action. We look forward to the next Government of Victoria taking real action to end homelessness.

**T**he Brumby Labor Government has led and shaped the national agenda on homelessness and housing over the past 10 years through the 2002



Victorian Homelessness Strategy. The Gillard and Brumby Labor Governments have committed to unprecedented levels of investment and reform in the housing and homelessness assistance system.

Labor has worked hard to address decades of underinvestment in public housing which occurred under successive Liberal Governments at the State and Federal level. While in Government, Labor has:

- Invested \$510 million for social and affordable housing – the largest amount ever committed by any State Government.
- Introduced integrated family violence strategies with an emphasis on police, justice, legal and human services working together to respond to family violence.
- Initiated Creating Connections, a youth homelessness action plan which focuses on early intervention, providing accommodation and support and better access to services for young people with complex needs.
- Opened Elizabeth Street Common Ground Supportive Housing in partnership with the not for profit sector and private industry. This development will house and support some of the most disadvantaged people in our community.
- Commenced rooming house reform to improve rooming house standards and support vulnerable Victorians. These reforms include a \$77.2 million investment to boost

the supply of quality rooming house accommodation and stricter regulation of operators.

- Completed the \$99.2 million Nation Building repairs and maintenance program (in partnership with the Gillard Labor Government). This has resulted in upgrades and maintenance benefiting more than 9100 existing homes, exceeding the Australian Government target of 5,600 homes.

In partnership with the Gillard Labor government, a re-elected Brumby Labor Government will continue to deliver 4,500 new dwellings by 2012. A further 8,500 rental properties will be delivered through the National Rental Affordability Scheme which ensures those properties are rented at 20% below the market rent.

In September 2010, Premier Brumby launched A Better Place: Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy, which builds on our strong record. The Strategy places a greater focus on prevention and early intervention to help address the causes of homelessness. Under a future Brumby Labor Government, \$42 million in funding will implement six, four-year flagship projects, an employment program and a private rental brokerage fund.

The Strategy ensures a whole of government approach is taken to address homelessness. Labor will ensure that it is overseen by an intergovernmental committee including Housing, Health, Community Services, Education and Justice with a Ministerial Advisory Committee made up of sector representatives to provide advice on broad homelessness issues and assist with the development of partnerships across sectors. - **Richard Wynne MP**

**The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition** agrees that homelessness is a problem demanding urgent attention from state and federal governments. We are firmly committed to reducing the incidence of homelessness and will work with the Commonwealth to achieve the goal of halving homelessness by 2020.



The Coalition acknowledges that in order to achieve this goal, in addition to state government funding, the Commonwealth will need to continue to provide significant funding for homelessness programs, and public and social housing.

Labor has allowed a revolving door phenomenon to occur. In many instances, homeless people are only being provided with short-term housing assistance that fails to address underlying issues such as family breakdown, mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

The Coalition believes a proactive approach is needed to prevent homelessness from occurring, and we will better co-ordinate Victoria's response to homelessness.

The Coalition believes there is room to expand the Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy and will work with the sector to regularly update and strengthen the strategy.

The Coalition believes the prevention of youth homelessness is critical. Investment in this area can help to break the cycle and prevent these vulnerable young people from entering into recurring homelessness and long term unemployment.

The Coalition believes in a "child first" approach for homeless families. It is imperative these families are able to maintain connections to local communities, support networks and schools to prevent any further disruption to children.

The Coalition believes the benefits of investing in the prevention of homelessness can be far-reaching and extend as far as alleviating pressure on health and emergency services. We are committed to a proactive and preventative approach to homelessness and will work with the sector and the Commonwealth towards a shared vision to halve homelessness by 2020.

The Coalition will be releasing its policies regarding housing and homelessness in the lead up to the state election.

- **Wendy Lovell MP**

**The Victorian Greens** endorse the elimination of all homelessness. We are acutely aware of the housing affordability crisis currently engulfing the state with close to 60,000 Victorians waiting for a space to open up in one of the 65,000 public housing dwellings.



In the private rental market, inadequate supply is driving up rents, with over three-quarters of low-cost dwellings occupied by higher income tenants. This forces people with the least means into inappropriate housing options or even worse – they end up homeless.

The Greens realise that the longer we wait for the market to 'correct this problem', the more intense the problem becomes. While government's role to nudge the property market through programs such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme is welcome, the Greens are also committed to direct government intervention to dramatically boost the supply of public housing in the short-term.

We support the construction of 29,000 low-cost dwellings so that it makes up 5% of all housing stock by 2014. The Greens would then commit to constant investment so that low-cost housing never falls below 5% again. We would combine this direct funding with amendments to the Victorian Planning Provisions, requiring a proportion of affordable housing to be established in any new housing development.

In the next Parliament, the Greens will also reintroduce our legislation to set minimum standards in all rental properties to prevent people living in squalor. We will fund the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in low-income houses so that occupants will save money on their energy and water bills. Finally, our federal party will push for reform to negative gearing and capital gains tax in line with the Henry Tax review, so that housing benefits occupants – and not investors. - **Colleen Hartland MLC**

# CAG Chronicle November 2010: Family Violence Intervention Orders - and what this has to do with homelessness

Future Governments that want to stop the cycle of sexual abuse that predominantly occurs by someone known to the victim, often a family member leading the victim to homelessness, need to be vigilant not to enforce violent crimes such as sexual assault to remain a family problem.

Future Governments need to demonstrate that we are using the research and recommendations such as the Sexual Offences Final Report (2004) by the Victorian Law Reform Commission, and the review of how effectively the related new laws were implemented in 2006 through to now, 2010. The review has been completed and its results will be available to the public in approximately two years. A lot of time and money has been provided to these projects and future governments will need to show that they are responsible and accountable for policies and laws that have not been effectively implemented.

Related reports can be sent to a address for free or downloaded - just visit [www.lawreform.vic.gov.au](http://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au). Don't let the system's failures keep you uninformed, use your voice and show that abuse is more than just a family problem. There needs to be more funding provided for training for the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse police Unit (SOCAU) and Court Judges that assists limiting the bias that has been demonstrated through recent history within Justice Systems towards violent criminal behaviour. SOCAU needs to be able to assist more of its consumers through obtaining intervention orders or at a minimum provide effective referrals to legal support. Lets make the Justice, Health and Welfare Systems work within the principles of Social Justice.

- Anon CAG member

The HPLC Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) is made up 8 members, all of whom have experienced homelessness. The CAG is based on the principle that every person has the right to contribute to policies and decisions that affect them. The role of the CAG is to provide guidance and advice to the HPLC to enhance and more effectively target its service delivery, law reform, advocacy, education and community development activities.

## Subscribe

Please contact 1800 606 313 or [hplc@pilch.org.au](mailto:hplc@pilch.org.au) to subscribe, or to have your say.

The HPLC provides free legal advice at these locations and times:

Melbourne Citymission  
214 Nicholson Street  
Footscray 3011  
Mon: 10:30am - 1:00pm  
Footscray train station - Tram 82 (Droop St)

Ozanam House  
179 Flemington Rd  
North Melbourne 3051  
Tues: 10:00am - 12:00pm  
Flemington Bridge train station  
Trams 55, 59, 68 (Flemington Rd)

Urban Seed (Credo Café)  
174 Collins St, Melbourne 3000  
(Approach via Baptist Pl, off Little Collins)  
Tues: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

St Kilda Crisis Contact Centre  
(for women and their accompanying children)  
29 Grey St  
St Kilda 3182  
Tuesdays 12pm - 2:00pm  
Trams 79, 96, 112

Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation  
9 Roden St,  
West Melbourne 3003  
Tues: 1:00pm - 2:30pm  
North Melbourne train station - Tram 57  
(Victoria Street)

Salvation Army Life Centre  
69 Bourke Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Tues: 12:30pm - 2:00pm

Hanover Southbank  
52 Haig St, Southbank 3205  
Wed: 1:15pm - 3:00pm  
Southern Cross train station - Tram 112  
(Clarendon Street)

HomeGround Housing  
1A/68 Oxford Street  
Collingwood 3066  
Thurs: 12:00pm - 2:00pm  
Collingwood train station - Tram 86 (Smith Street)

VACRO  
116 Hardware Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Thurs: 1.00 - 3.00pm  
Melbourne central station  
- Tram 19, 57 and 59 (Elizabeth Street)

Northside Geelong  
92 Cox Rd, Corio  
Thurs: 12:00pm - 2:00pm

The Big Issue  
148 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Fri: 2pm - 3pm

St Luke's Anglicare  
175 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo  
First Friday of the month, 10am - 12pm

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