



MEDIA RELEASE

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Common Ground gets off the ground in Canberra

A \$500,000 pledge from the Snow Foundation will support an innovative evidence based housing model aiming to end homelessness in Canberra.

Speaking at a special morning tea to update the community on the progress of the Common Ground project, Chief Executive Officer of the Snow Foundation, Georgina Byron, said Common Ground was a solution for chronic homelessness based on a successful model in the United States.

“It is a permanent supportive housing model, and it ends people’s chronic homelessness via provision of long term independent housing with appropriate support services,” Ms Byron said.

“Common Ground is already operating successfully in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and soon in Brisbane, made possible by strong collaborations between Government, businesses and communities.

“With the Snow Foundation’s focus on social welfare, basic needs and relief, we support activities that provide people with the opportunity to change their lives. Common Ground has proven it can do this in other places. It is time we had one in Canberra. Let’s work together and bring it to life.”

Ms Byron said following an initial \$10,000 grant to fund a feasibility study in 2010, the Snow Foundation would commit an additional \$500,000 over four years to assist with initial capital works and ongoing operating costs, once the ACT Government commitment to the project was finalised.

“We recognise that the project needs to be much larger in scale than the successful Home in Queanbeyan which the Snow Foundation also supports, and that significant ACT Government support and funding is critical to Common Ground Canberra becoming a reality. This pledge demonstrates the belief and trust we have in the model and the people behind it, and how much it is needed.

“The feasibility study funds were used to conduct consultations, confirm demand, prepare a schematic of what the project would comprise, and establish a formal structure including the registration of a company. As of today, the Steering Committee is established, a business plan completed, options for land determined, and this work was the catalyst for the Government to do its own detailed study, costing \$150,000.”

Ms Byron said Common Ground in other cities had complexes of up to 130 units, with half the residents being low income workers. The mix of tenants was a very important component of the model.

Common Ground key principles include:

- Permanence: there is no time limit on leases for formerly homeless tenants.
- Safety: a 24-hour concierge restricts entry to the building.
- Support: social services are provided on site at no cost to the tenant.
- Integrated social mix: house a mix of both formerly chronically homeless tenants and low income earners.
- Affordable: rent is charged to all tenants at less than 30% of income.
- Quality: buildings incorporate sophisticated design and high environmental ratings.

The Snow Foundation is the creation of brothers Terry and George Snow, who established it in 1991 to help the disadvantaged community in Canberra and the surrounding areas. The Foundation has distributed more than \$4.3million since it started, including more than \$1million to 36 charitable organisations and 25 individuals in 2011. A full list of 2011 grants is attached.

For more information contact Georgina Byron on 0417 227 506