

## BALLARAT ENDURES TWO 'CODE COLDS'

Centacare Ballarat has launched new winter packs for outreach to the city's rough sleepers. Rough sleepers in Ballarat have endured two "code colds" so far this winter where temperatures dropped below zero three days in a row. The most recent code cold was at the turn of the month, when temperatures dropped to minus 4 degrees overnight. The new alert system was introduced by the state government this year.

Homelessness and advocacy coordinator Emily Heywood said Ballarat had no refuge for

homeless people in cases of extreme weather so services were forced to help them make-do as best they could. "Ballarat doesn't have anywhere people can drop in and stay the night if it is cold," she said. "There are so many people in crisis we need more houses, more crisis beds. At the moment we're just trying to make people warm and comfortable as much as we can where they are."

This Homelessness Week Centacare will seek to educate shop keepers on how they can work together with agencies when they see somebody sleeping rough. "We are looking to put a focus on that, if you see someone, you can actually help," Ms Heywood said.

"You can refer to an agency. Don't just move people on, refer them to an agency that may be able to give support. Give them some information. We can go out on our assertive outreach and attempt to engage with that person and see if they would like some assistance."

This year Homelessness Week runs from August 7 to 13. The service's staff will walk from Peplow House on Webster Street to their head office handing out winter packs and speaking to businesses about how they can provide support.

"This isn't just an issue that is a homelessness issue. This is a greater issue for the entire community and to stamp it out we need to really work together," Ms Heywood said. "I think there can be change if we really work together. Nothing can be achieved with just one person or one group."

"If people don't contact us or refer to us we don't know that there is an issue in that certain spot so it only takes a phone call and we could be making visible change in that area."



Article courtesy of the Ballarat Courier, text by Jessica Black and picture by Kate Healy.

Picture: Centacare Housing Chair Dan McGlade, Centacare Chief Executive Tony Fitzgerald and Services Coordinator Emily Heywood.