

WALK AIMED TO ASSIST THOSE LIVING ON BALLARAT'S STREETS

In an effort to alleviate the suffering of the homeless, the Ballarat Centacare Homeless and Advocacy Team took part in a street walk on August 8. Beginning at Webster street's Peplow House, the trek ended at Centacare's Head Office, in an event designed to assist some of Ballarat's needy. "There are currently around seventy-five homeless people in Ballarat's CBD. Centacare completes outreach every week to provide support and referral to the homeless," Centacare Homelessness and Advocacy Coordinator Emily Heywood said (pictured front with Tony Fitzgerald and Bishop Paul Bird).

"We had this walk in Homelessness Week to create awareness about homelessness and how the greater community can support them. Access to secure and safe housing is one of society's basic human rights. As a community we need to be aware of the circumstances and situations that people find themselves in that lead to homelessness."

Those involved in the walk gave out winter resource packs to the homeless along the way as well as to businesses that may be able to pass them on and offer support. The packs included items for keeping warm such as beanies, hand warmers, socks and blankets as well as some hygiene products.

Centacare Chief Executive Officer Tony Fitzgerald said assistance for the homeless needs to be initiated at a community level, flagging key areas for the future as innovative homeless solutions, early intervention programs and affordable community housing. "A greater solution to housing affordability is to increase rental stocks in Ballarat through funding that encourages the community housing sector to invest in affordable housing, removing some of the barriers people face when seeking accommodation" he said.

Ms Heywood said that the reality is there is not enough affordable housing to meet the need. "The cost of living is skyrocketing. The market is so much harder to get into," she said. "Centacare has enterprise properties and runs a program for men at Peplow House to assist them in finding long term accommodation."

The Centacare Homelessness and Advocacy Support Team can be contacted by anyone needing support on 5337 8999 or in person at 4-6 Peel Street Ballarat.

