

Big boost to supported accommodation for rough sleepers

Saturday 18 September 2021

The City of Melbourne's Make Room project has taken a giant step forward with a registered housing provider now secured, and a \$1 million philanthropic grant.

The project will see a \$7.45 million Council-owned building at 602 Little Bourke Street converted into safe and supported housing for people experiencing homelessness.

Unison Housing will refurbish and manage the former electricity network building, which will include up to 50 studio apartments, communal living areas and a social enterprise for some of Melbourne's most vulnerable people.

The City of Melbourne will also partner with the Victorian Government to deliver the bespoke accommodation, which will include housing and homelessness services, and tailored, wraparound support for residents to assist with their wellbeing and transition to long-term housing.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has provided a \$1 million grant towards the \$20 million project, and discussions with other potential donors, supporters and partners are continuing.

The project will create more than 70 jobs in construction, and dozens of ongoing roles when the accommodation is open.

Works are scheduled to begin early next year, with accommodation and services open by mid-2023.

Attributable to Lord Mayor Sally Capp

"We've reached an important milestone for this project today, and we're thrilled to be working with Unison and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation in delivering this important work," the Lord Mayor said.

"Through the Make Room initiative, we're stepping up to provide support to some of Melbourne's most vulnerable people, and creating a new pathway out of homelessness.

"Homelessness is a huge challenge that we're committed to tackling, because every Melburnian deserves access to safe and secure housing.

"I want to extend my gratitude to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for its contribution to this extremely worthy cause."

Attributable to Health, Wellbeing and Belonging portfolio lead Councillor Dr Olivia Ball

"In the City of Melbourne alone, around 300 people are experiencing homelessness, including up to 90 people sleeping rough, without a roof over their head," Cr Dr Ball said.

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“Housing is a human right, but there simply isn’t enough public, social and affordable housing in Melbourne.

“If we don’t act now, 60,000 people could be without safe housing in Victoria by 2040, which is why it’s critical we take the lead in delivering this supported accommodation now.”

Attributable to Unison Housing CEO James King

“We’re excited to be part of this exciting project, which will reduce disadvantage and social exclusion, and deliver benefits to the entire community,” Mr King said.

“When people find safe accommodation, they require less healthcare, are less likely to be victims or perpetrators of crime and are more likely to go back to study or find employment.

“We want to give those sleeping rough the helping hand they need to get their lives back on track.”

Attributable to Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation CEO Dr Catherine Brown OAM

“Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and preventing entry into homelessness in Greater Melbourne,” Dr Brown said.

“The Make Room project is part of our Affordable Housing Challenge Initiative, which is demonstrating that cross sector partnerships between philanthropy, local government, state government and not-for-profits can have great outcomes.

“We are pleased to be the philanthropic partner in the Make Room development and partnering with City of Melbourne and funding Unison Housing to provide the safe and secure housing needed to prevent homelessness.

“We welcome tax deductible donations to Make Room via our website at lmcf.org.au.”

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