



## **HEAT FATAL FOR HOMELESS**

Saturday, 7 February 2009

A Melbourne welfare agency is calling on retailers and the public to remain vigilant and consider the homeless and disadvantaged who have few options to escape today's searing heat.

With 10,000 homeless people on Melbourne streets daily the dangers of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are very real and potentially fatal.

During last week's heat wave, homeless clients of the not-for-profit agency Youth Projects reported being moved on or turned away from anywhere air conditioned including Melbourne Central, the State Library, fast food outlets and public toilets. Even in shaded areas, homeless people reported being questioned by police.

"If we hang out in the shade, police harass us for our names and address so we are not even able to try escaping the heat in the shade."

"If they want us not to hang out in public spaces, then they should give us somewhere to go."

The Youth Projects Living Room, a primary health care service based in Hosier Lane, usually only operates from Monday to Friday but will today open its doors to provide respite to those in need offering cold water donated by MFB and Coca Cola, cold showers, sunscreen and an air conditioned place to rest.

Melanie Raymond, Chairperson of Youth Projects said it's important to remember homeless people may not have family or friends to call on for support.

"These people are exhausted after last week's relentless heat. They have had no reprieve and the risks of dehydration and heat stroke are extremely high and potentially fatal," she said.

"While we know this is only a stop-gap measure, until the government is prepared to provide a cool and safe place for homeless people during such extreme weather, everyone in the community needs to be vigilant and supportive," she said.

The Youth Projects Living Room is located at 7-9 Hosier Lane, Melbourne and will be open from 1pm until 4pm Saturday 7 February for basic heat relief. Usual primary health services will not be operating during this time.

**ENDS**

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