

THE FORGOTTEN ONES

The Age Letters, Monday 9 February, 2009

CONCERN over the plight of Melbourne's 10,000 homeless people barely rated a mention during this record hot spell, while we talked about caring for goldfish, pot plants and wildlife. In fact, more concern has been shown about conditions at the city mortuary than for those who are very much still with us, though ill equipped to survive these harsh conditions.

The advice we were given about staying out of the sun, drinking water, or taking a cold shower makes no allowance for the homeless. On the contrary, they were being turned away from public buildings, fast food outlets, toilets and shade and left without access to cold, clean drinking water.

Homeless and marginalised people are often in poor health and at very high risk of dehydration and heat stroke. Having had no shelter from round-the-clock heat, they are now exhausted and struggling to cope.

This past week has shown that Melbourne has no plan for the crisis faced by homeless people during a heatwave. Some simple measures such as access to shade, water and cool could be the difference between life and death for this vulnerable group.

Melanie Raymond, Chairperson

Youth Projects Inc.