



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

3 NOVEMBER 1988

**JOINT STATEMENT WITH THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND AGED CARE,
THE HON PETER STAPLES**

The Federal Government will increase support for homeless people by an extra \$40 million over the next three years, the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke and Housing Minister, Mr Staples, jointly announced today.

The increased funds will be offered to the States over three years as part of a new Commonwealth-State program to assist the homeless.

"My Government is committed to tackling the major social justice issues in this country and housing the homeless, giving people the means and opportunity to get out of crises and get on their feet, is central to that," Mr Hawke said.

"Assistance to the homeless was identified as a priority area in the Government's Social Justice Strategy announced earlier this year, and through the decisions announced today the Government is addressing that priority."

The new package will replace current arrangements with the States under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), which expire on 30 June 1989.

Mr Hawke said the commitment would bring total Federal Government support under the revised program to about \$220 million over the three years to 1992.

"This new initiative will build on the experiences of SAAP over the last four years and will provide a more coherent and effective approach to the problems of homelessness," Mr Hawke said.

"SAAP was reviewed extensively this year and we've adopted many of the recommendations generated by this process which involved wide consultation with the States and welfare groups."

As well as increased funds, the Commonwealth proposal to the States will include:

- * a five year program of assistance;
- * shared funding and administrative responsibilities between States and the Commonwealth;
- * prominent roles for community representatives in identifying regional needs and priorities for new and expanded services; and
- * a streamlined system for assessing and approving new services under the program.

"The new program will also emphasise a wider range of assistance to those in need by providing better access to training, employment assistance and other government services," Mr Hawke said.

Housing Minister, Mr Staples, who will administer the Program, stressed that no existing services would be disadvantaged by the new arrangements.

"The new program will be more flexible, more efficient and more effective in meeting the needs of homeless people," Mr Staples said. "The existing support networks and co-operation between services will continue."

Mr Staples said that he would be advising State welfare Ministers and community representatives on details of the new program. Legislation is expected in Parliament in the Autumn session next year.

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