

Article: Warming to a challenge

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WARMING TO A CHALLENGE

Homeless people are just as homeless this winter as they were when Kevin Rudd declared war on homelessness in 2007. But where government fails, private initiatives are helping the estimated 20,000 people who sleep rough on Sydney streets each night.

Sydney businessman David Scarf has come up with a novel solution — a sleeping bag that works like a coat.

He designed it according to specifications from Matthew Talbot Hostel clients in Wolloomooloo, including a pocket on the inside to hold a bottle.

Scarf distributes the coats through Catholic charity The Knights of Malta, with donations funding 4000 over two winters.

A similar initiative, Swags for Homeless, is a roll-out bed in a backpack designed by Melbourne entrepreneur Tony Clark.

More than 3000 have been distributed to both charities and homeless shelters.

With National Homeless Persons Week starting on Monday, there are plenty of opportunities to help.

Mission Australia holds its annual Sydney Sleepout next Saturday in Centennial Park, which follows Vinnies' CEO Sleepout in June which raised more than \$5 million.

Homelessness will never be eradicated.

But we can all help to make it less painful.