

VICTORIAN INVENTION – SAVING THE LIVES OF HOMELESS TURNED AWAY FROM SHELTERS



SWAGS FOR HOMELESS IS THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN ORGANISATION, AND THE FIRST CHARITY GLOBALLY, TO WIN THE INTERNATIONAL RED DOT 'BEST OF THE BEST' PRODUCT DESIGN AWARD FOR ITS BACKPACK BED. MORE THAN 4,000 PRODUCTS FROM 60 COUNTRIES COMPETED IN THESE AWARDS.

In January 2011, the Suncorp Life Confidence Index figures revealed that 3.7 million Australians are on the verge of financial collapse, having only two weeks of savings. With recent east coast natural disasters this summer, many believe 74,000 new homeless will join Australia's existing 104,000 plus homeless this winter. Australia will experience a homeless crisis never seen before with, once again, more lives needlessly being lost due to hypothermia.

The most frightening aspect of homelessness is that it could happen to anyone. Common reasons range from accidents at work, sickness, addiction, divorce, and more recently, as a result of natural disasters. From solicitors and five-star

chefs to ASX CEOs, – the events leading to homelessness do not discriminate.

Melbourne-based national not-for-profit charity Swags for Homeless partners with over 100 homeless agencies across Australia to distribute the life-saving Backpack Bed – with 3,000 manufactured last year alone.

The Swags for Homeless Backpack Bed has been designed to save the lives of street sleeping homeless people turned away from shelters. With a built-in fire retardant mattress, the fully functioning backpack converts into a fire retardant all weather, full body, mosquito protected bed. The popularity of the design has also enabled the Backpack Bed to be developed into a retail product, with all profits reinvested into Swags for Homeless.

The first step to helping the homeless back on their feet is dignity. The Backpack Bed is proven to give dignity and self-esteem, improve health, and above all, save lives.

An October 2010 study showed 21 per cent of street sleeping homeless in Sydney and 16 per cent in Melbourne had a cold weather injury, including trench foot, frost bite and hypothermia. The reality is that paramedics frequently pick up dead homeless bodies off our streets – commonly due to hypothermia.

St. Vincent de Paul Aged Care and Community Services believe every rough sleeper in Melbourne and Australia should have access to this form of humane crisis bedding.

Swags for Homeless is seeking donations to save the lives of the street sleeping homeless Australians. At this point in time, \$2.1 million is needed to give one Backpack Bed to every street sleeping homeless person turned away from shelters. Never before has every street sleeping homeless person in an entire country, turned away from a shelter, been helped before. This is our opportunity to help make it happen in Australia. ■

For more information about Swags for Homeless, contact Tony Clark, Founder and Chairman, on 0411 455 779 or visit www.swags.org.au. To purchase your own Backpack Bed online, visit www.charity.org.au.

ABOUT RED DOT

The red dot awards commenced in 1955 and is the world's largest, most distinguished product design competition. Past 'Best of the Best' recipients include Rolls Royce, Apple Inc. and Samsonite.