



2 May 2012

PRESS RELEASE

AWGA congratulates The Hon Niall Blair for supporting Sydney wool blanket campaign for homeless

In a recent speech to the NSW Parliament, The Hon Niall Blair highlighted the need to raise awareness of people who sleep on the streets of our capital cities. He particularly mentioned his support for young Sydney film maker, Hayley Olsson, who is in the process of making a film to raise awareness of homelessness, by raising funds to purchase wool blankets for those on our city streets this winter.

AWGA would like to congratulate Niall Blair and his office for their support of these initiatives, promoting wool and raising awareness of homelessness.

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See links:

<http://bulletin/Prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LC20120501073>

<http://warmheart.com.au/>

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/members.nsf/0/8F58BE7BC2169157CA25787100047E6F>



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“Project Warmheart makes NSW Parliament”

Extract from Hansard 1/5/2012

“Speech to NSW Upper House 1.5.12”

By The Hon Niall Blair (MLC)

On the night of the 2006 census more than 27,000 people were identifying as homeless in New South Wales. According to the City of Sydney's "Street Count", more than 700 people are sleeping rough or occupying a hostel bed in the city every night. This is a truly concerning number, and the problem is being addressed by the New South Wales Homelessness Action Plan, as well as by some of the inspiring charities that work with the homeless on a daily basis. Last year the Parliamentary Sports Club was proud to play a charity cricket match against the Press Gallery to raise much needed funds for the Oasis Youth Support Network—an arm of the Salvation Army that works with young homeless people—and not only those who sleep rough, but the "hidden" thousands who spend their nights on the couches of friends, drug dealers or worse, couch surfing. I might add that the parliamentary team slaughtered the press team in that match. Charities such as the St Vincent de Paul Society also do fantastic work on our streets each and every night. One hugely successful fundraising event is the Vinnies CEO Sleepout. Last year more than \$1.5 million was raised in New South Wales after chief executives, politicians and the like "slept rough" in Luna Park one winter's night. These are inspiring acts of charity by great organisations. But tonight I would like to speak about a much smaller project started by a 21-year-old Goulburn girl who became concerned about the levels of homelessness in Sydney when she moved here from country New South Wales. Hayley Olsson recently graduated from Macquarie University with a bachelor's degree in media. Her family are involved in growing wool, prime lambs and general agriculture on the Southern Tablelands. Last year she was shocked to learn that, according to St Vinnies, just under half of all rough sleepers are women, and a quarter are under 18 years of age. After researching and contacting government and non-government organisations Hayley decided to make a short film with the intention of raising awareness about this issue and highlighting the work that is being done by so many charities and organisations to combat homelessness. In 2012 we celebrate the Year of the Farmer and, coming from a family that produces merino and cross-bred wool in New South Wales, Hayley and her father Chick came up with the idea of raising funds from private donors to purchase easy-care woollen blankets to distribute to homeless people in Sydney. These blankets, made from good Australian wool, are a small comfort for the people who sleep rough every night in our city. Hayley has dubbed her campaign Project Warmheart. She is supported by her family as well as the Australian Woolgrowers Association, a national representative body that believes in the positive promotion of Aussie farmers and wool. Her final filming begins in May. The documentary will look at wool from her family's shearing shed and follow the production process through to production of the wool blankets being given away by such excellent institutions as St Vincent's Hospital and other organisations throughout Sydney. It is hoped that the film will be shown nationally on the Community TV network later this year. I congratulate Hayley and Chick Olsson and their family on this great initiative. I certainly look forward to the release of the film. I hope that all members will join me in a viewing of that film here at Parliament House on its release. This is a great initiative by a fantastic young person from a regional area who has seen a problem that she would not normally see, just as I did when I first started coming to Sydney to work in this place. I had not been exposed to homelessness and people sleeping rough. When I drove home from this place after late sitting nights I was moved by seeing people sleeping rough under the awnings, particularly on the wet nights we have had in the past 12 months here in Sydney. I commend Hayley and Chick and the rest of the Olsson family for doing something not only to raise awareness of this problem but also to promote good Australian wool. This fantastic initiative deserves the recognition and support of everyone in this House. I hope members will join me in the viewing of this film and providing the support that Hayley and her family deserve.