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Housing Crisis Deepens, But Hills Optimistic About the Future

Former government and sports administrator, Jackson Hills has joined Q Shelter to help address the housing and homelessness crisis in Queensland.

“I am thrilled to join the team at Q Shelter, under the leadership of executive director, Fiona Caniglia,” said Hills.

Gold Coast-based Hills has been a former staffer to several local and state politicians on the coast, following a career in sports administration, spanning 15 years, including executive roles with the AFL and Tennis Australia.

He says the current need for more social and affordable housing support on the Gold Coast is dire.

At the pointy end, there are an estimated 300 people sleeping rough on Gold Coast streets every single night, 1707 people classed as homeless, and 3,000 applications on the social housing waitlist.

The story is not much better in the broader housing market, with rents skyrocketing in an already tight rental market. The latest data from REIQ shows the Gold Coast with a 0.4% vacancy rate, which is considered extremely tight. This will only serve to push more people into housing stress and homelessness, especially with programs like the National Affordable Rental Scheme (NRAS) closing to new applicants this year. A third of those applicants in NRAS are from Queensland.

“I have already had a lot of exposure to the housing and homelessness sector on the Gold Coast through meeting and volunteering with a range of services and through involvement with Common Ground on the Coast”.

Hills explains there’s clearly still a lot of work to do in this space, but he is optimistic about the future. “What inspires me is the talented people and the work ethic in this sector. The willingness to cooperate and work together on long-term solutions is an inspiration”.

The Gold Coast, as a tourism hot spot, needs varied solutions to meet different community needs. “It is positive to know that people are working together to prevent and solve homelessness through a range of initiatives”.

- There is community support for the Common Ground project on the Coast, which if funded, would provide a further 200 supported social housing units, which would go some way to addressing the current need
- Gold Coast Homelessness Network hosted the Gold Coast Homelessness Symposium recently, where all the service and housing providers were represented, and the Gold Coast Zero campaign was launched
- Gold Coast Youth Foyer has been up and running since late last year, which has recently launched its own mentor programme involving business and community leaders connecting with 40 young people
- The City of Gold Coast is also an active participant in the space with their Homelessness Action Plan and staff working on the ground to connect vulnerable people with the services
- The Vinnies CEO Sleepout was launched this week on the Gold Coast, so there’s a lot of support in the community and among local leaders

“With all of that said, there is a long road ahead, and I know there are several housing proposals in front of Federal candidates in the lead up to the election. In my opinion, Housing supply and support for vulnerable Australians certainly should be key election issues, and I hope the discussion looks beyond first home buyer schemes and the current funding arrangements between federal and state governments,” said Hills.





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“I understand the Australian Labor party is possibly discussing the issue further today at their campaign launch in Perth. It would be great to see the federal parties committing to a nationally coordinated approach. Q Shelter, along with National Shelter has been calling for this for some time now, and we hope that all the major parties make similar commitments before election day.”

ENDS

Media opportunities for comment by Q Shelter Executive Director, Fiona Caniglia.

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