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Travel the inner streets of our capital cities and major centres and there they are, hidden in alleyways, in doorways and alcoves and under bridges, some of the tens of thousands of Australians who are disadvantaged and homeless, many of whom are children, and some as young as 12 on their own, or younger still with a parent.

For an industry funded on developing new locations for people to live, trying to address this issue of homelessness could be thought of as being ironic. However this is exactly what has been happening in NSW for the past 12 years through the Property Industry Foundation. Now, Victorian developers, builders, property owners and estate agents have the chance to help address homelessness with the formation in late 2008 of the Property Industry Foundation (Vic).

The Property Industry Foundation, or PIF, is the brain-child of industry luminary Greg Paramor. In 1996 key business leaders in NSW formed the PIF to mobilise the financial and human resources of the industry to assist charitable organisations providing services to 'young people at risk'.

PIF was formed with the vision to "unite the entire national property and construction industry in an independent initiative to support community programs aimed at youth homelessness".

Latest figures of Victorian children needing housing assistance is at a record 20,500! A monumental problem. But with an industry effort, we can make a difference to the lives of our homeless children in this State.

We are conscious of the current challenges we are facing in our industry, however we can expect that this business downturn will only increase the hardships faced by our most vulnerable.

Another key reason to support PIF is the benefit associated with corporate social responsibility, and giving back to the community.

Money is raised through corporate sponsorships and donations and by holding a variety of fund-raising functions. In NSW, approximately \$1.5 million is raised each year. PIF then distributes these donations and provides in-kind building services to approximately 20 children's charities that specialise in providing support for street kids.

On 18th November 2008, PIF (Vic) was officially launched. The Board of Advisors consists of myself as Chairman; Tony McCormack, ISPT (Vice Chairman); Howard Brenchley, APN Property Group; Mark Granter, CB Richard Ellis; John Henderson, Marks Henderson;

Carolyn Parker, Kador Group; Oscar Guglielmi, Folkestone; Barry Brakey, Future Fund; Grant Hodgetts, Mirvac Funds Management, and, Andrew Erikson, Mallesons Stephen Jaques.

PIF (Vic) is already starting to take shape and plans are being laid for several events to be staged during 2009.

The first event will be held in February – a get to know PIF (Vic) luncheon between the Presidents and Executive Directors of the API, UDIA, PCA, MBA and HIA. The aim of the lunch will be to enlist the local support for PIF (Vic) from these organisations.

Then in October, we are planning on joining with our NSW colleagues to participate in National Hard Hat Day whereby employers and employees donate one hour or more of their pay toward an approved PIF building project. Last year in NSW, this event raised approximately \$250,000. Suggested ways business can support this initiative is to match donations dollar for dollar, host a morning tea, run a raffle or hold fancy hard hat parades.

Another event is in the pipeline for 2009, possibly to coincide with the Melbourne Cup Carnival, but with a twist – more details will be available shortly.

The initial recipient of funds raised by PIF in Victoria will be Open Family Australia. Since 1978, Open Family Australia has been working with some of Australia's most marginalised youth, linking them to the services they require and helping them to reconnect to their family and community. The aim of PIF (Vic) is to raise \$400,000 over three years with the monies to be used to extend the services currently offered by their outreach bus.

To ensure PIF (Vic) is a success, corporate donations and sponsorships are essential. To find out more about how you and your company can become involved and support PIF (Vic) in its efforts to reduce youth homelessness and help youth at risk, please visit the website www.pif.com.au, or phone mobile 0418 360 066.

Bert Dennis OAM
Chairman
Dennis Family Corporation

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