

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW Community Partnership Wins Prestigious PM's National Award

Youth Off The Streets and McGrath Estate Agents Honoured with Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Business Community Partnerships

18 October 2006 (Canberra) – Last night Prime Minister Howard presented Youth Off The Streets, a not-for-profit community organisation supporting young people who are chronically homeless, drug dependent and recovering from abuse, and McGrath Estate Agents, one of Australia's leading real estate agencies, with the top honour in the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Business Community Partnerships in the national medium-business category. This honour further recognises the partnership, which won the NSW state category two months ago.

Prime Minister John Howard announced the award last night at a gala dinner in Canberra.

"It's a pleasure to be recognised with this national award and a privilege to share it with McGrath," said Father Chris Riley, CEO of Youth Off The Streets. "We have found in McGrath a partner who believes businesses have a responsibility to support even the most marginalised in our community as they work to turn their lives around."

"McGrath entered into the partnership because we wanted to do something significant for the community," explained Wendy McCarthy, Chairman of McGrath Estate Agents. "What we discovered through the partnership is that both parties learned from each other. That's the sign of a truly integrated partnership."

Employee surveys revealed that McGrath staff were interested in supporting a community organisation that supported homelessness and disadvantaged young people. "Then it became a matter of evaluating which community organisation best matched the McGrath culture and where we could make the most impact," added McCarthy. "The Youth Off The Streets and McGrath partnership goes beyond just writing a cheque. It has become incorporated into the culture of the company."

John McGrath, Chief Executive of McGrath Estate Agents said, "I'm very proud of our volunteers who have generously given their own time to mentor the kids and who have organised fundraising activities for YOTS. This award recognises the contribution of those who actively participated in the program."

The three-year partnership involved many different elements, including sponsorship, special events, staff volunteering, traineeships, staff fundraising and in-kind support. Together they created a partnership that is mutually beneficial and achieved significant, tangible results. For example, McGrath sponsored Key College, the Youth Off The Streets' alternative education program targeting youth aged 15-18 who have been marginalised from mainstream schools. With McGrath's support, Key College helped five students achieve their HSC and 11 students achieve their School Certificate. For disadvantaged and marginalised students, these are exceptional accomplishments.

The integrated elements of the partnership also fosters bonds between the two groups, and hence the wider community, by providing mentoring and volunteering opportunities that promote understanding, empathy and a mutual sense of responsibility. Through leading life skills workshops, McGrath employees used their expertise and resources to help Youth Off The Streets' young people to prepare for life. Topics included setting and achieving goals, writing résumés, preparing for job interviews, and renting an apartment.

Additionally, through the McGrath traineeship program, Key College students were given the opportunity to learn applicable, employable skills, such as organisational and administrative skills, computer skills and appropriate work environment behaviour. Through the experience, they received capability certificates, employment references and a higher self-esteem – all of which helped prepare them for future employment.

The Youth Off The Streets / McGrath partnership brings together two organisations with highly regarded success records. Led by entrepreneurs John McGrath and Father Chris Riley respectively, the organisations share common traits of being innovative in their fields and unwavering in their pursuit of excellence. The shared entrepreneurial spirit of their respective leaders, combined with the synergy of their core businesses – both organisations providing homes for their client groups – led to a natural relationship.

“The disadvantaged youth of today can either become disadvantaged adults of tomorrow, reliant on welfare provided by government and community services, or they can become productive members of our community. It is how we as a society support those youth that helps decide which direction they take,” stated Father Riley.

The Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence recognise those businesses and community organisations which come together to generate outcomes that have a long term benefit for the community. Since they began in 1999, the awards have become one of the most coveted within the corporate social responsibility sector.

About Youth Off The Streets

Youth Off The Streets is a community organisation working for young people who are chronically homeless, drug dependent and recovering from abuse. We support these young people as they work to turn their lives around and overcome immense personal traumas such as neglect and physical, psychological and emotional abuse. Since opening in 1991, Youth Off The Streets has grown from a single food van delivering meals to young homeless people on the streets of Kings Cross to a major youth specific agency providing a wide range of services offering a full continuum of care. It is their goal that these young people will leave their care drug free, with a high school education, living skills and a full or part time job in hand.

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