

Wagga tradesmen build for under-privileged in NZ

TWO Wagga tradesmen have donated their skills and expertise to an organisation dedicated to combating the growing issue of overcrowding in New Zealand.

Laser Plumbing Wagga owner manager Greg Charleson and Laser Electrical Wagga owner manager Ben Woodhouse spent nine hours in heavy rain building sleep-outs for vulnerable families.

The sleep-outs are designed to provide additional accommodation into existing New Zealand homes, giving young children and teenagers access to more suitable sleeping conditions.

According to a report recently released by researchers from the University of Otago Wellington campus, household overcrowding is rising in New Zealand and the country is facing a severe shortage of affordable housing.

Infectious disease from household overcrowding accounted for one in 10 admissions to New Zealand hospitals for the treatment of infectious diseases such as pneumonia, hepatitis, meningococcal and tuberculosis, but for Maori and Pasifika people that figure jumped to one in five.

Greg and Ben joined close to 90 tradesmen from Australia and New Zealand in offering assistance to Habitat for Humanity.

Through Habitat for Humanity's A 'Hand Up' Not a 'Hand Out' program, families have access to affordable accommodation - which they voluntarily donate labour to building.

"We made three sleep-outs during the day, but we also did up the interior of the Habitat for Humanity building because obviously they never spend any



money on themselves," Greg said.

"We put new lighting through the office and complex and did up their toilets with new toilet suites and basins."

Each of the sleep-outs created by Habitat for Humanity volunteers are transferred into the backyards of homes to provide an extra bedroom to occupants.

"Some of the homes where these sleep-out are going have six kids living in a two or three bedroom house," he said. "This is a very serious problem."

"We found the whole experience very rewarding."

Not only does reducing overcrowding amongst under-privileged families increase the risk of serious diseases, the living conditions can have a detrimental effect on the well-being and education of young family members.

Greg and Ben had the chance to aid Habitat for Humanity while they were in New Zealand for a week long Laser Group conference.

For more information on Habitat for Humanity or to learn how you can support the organisation visit www.habitat.org.



TRADE AID: (Left) Laser Electrical Wagga owner-manager Ben Woodhouse and Laser Plumbing Wagga owner-manager Greg Charleson team up to work on a leaking underground waterpipe in Wagga last week. The pair joined forces in New Zealand recently to help construct sleep-outs for under-privileged families. Picture: Alastair Brook



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