

LES Australia and New Zealand

Award-Winning Backpack Beds To Help Auckland's Homeless

Many of Auckland's homeless will sleep better this winter thanks to an innovative donation received by Auckland City Mission.

Eighty award-winning Backpack Beds designed and produced by Australian charity Swags for Homeless are being donated to the Mission this week by Simon Rowell, partner at James & Wells Intellectual Property, on behalf of the Licensing Executives Society International (LESI) whose Auckland conference attendees in April raised the funds for the Backpack Beds.

Otherwise known as "swags", Backpack Beds meet 47 international standards and roll up to be worn like a backpack. They are fire retardant, waterproof, windproof, mildew resistant and also contain a fire retardant built-in mattress. This is the first time they will be available in New Zealand.

Auckland City Missioner Diane Robertson says they are very grateful for the donation and the Backpack Beds will be used as an emergency measure as winter approaches.

"Mission staff work closely with all our homeless clients, offering a comprehensive mix of services which aim to ultimately move people out of homelessness and into adequate accommodation. The reality is that homelessness is a complex issue that can't be solved overnight and we do have a population that is sleeping rough."

"The Backpack Beds will be used in the most desperate cases as an emergency measure: for example, when our street outreach homeless workers come across someone in desperate and im-

mediate need. They will be particularly useful as winter sets in and the weather gets colder and wetter."

The Backpack Bed has been used by more than 180 homeless charities globally, including organisations in Germany, the UK, and Australia. A study has shown Backpack Beds improve homeless dignity, health, comfort and warmth. The Backpack Bed has won four global product design awards including Germany's Red Dot "Best of the Best" and is on display in three international museums.

LESI conference convenor Simon Rowell says the LESI delegates were moved by Swags for Homeless founder Tony Clark, who spoke to them about the patent pending Backpack Beds, and highlighted that about 80 people live rough in central Auckland each night.

"The conference theme was Commercialising Innovation to Save the World, and it is great that the LESI delegates, many from overseas, have actually been able to make a difference to some people's lives, rather than talking about it at a conference." ■

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