

Start-up charity Spare Keys to disrupt Australia's homeless accommodation crisis by offering buyers the chance to get in on real estate for the price of smashed avo on toast

Australia's housing affordability problem has become a national joke, but a new charity is aiming to leverage the hype and humour to solve an even bigger issue - the fact that every night in Australia 106,000 people have nowhere to sleep.

Founded in January by a former Queensland hotel executive, and officially launched this week, [Spare Keys](#) is taking an unconventional approach to Australia's homeless accommodation crisis with three never-before-seen initiatives. If they work, no Australian homeless person will need to sleep on the street or in a car ever again.

The first initiative is crowd-funding homeless shelters and giving the returns back to investors. For the cost of smashed avocado on toast in a hipster cafe (\$22) - the amount one social commentator suggested millennials should give up if they ever wanted to afford a house deposit - Spare Keys will allow everyday people to buy a small share in capital city property, get a share of the rent, and a share in any capital gain made when the property is sold. The initiative is being launched this week with a crowd-funding campaign to raise enough for a deposit on a home in Sydney, and will be opened up for smashed avo shareholders in September when crowd-funding laws change to allow equity investment.

The second initiative is giving crisis accommodation referers access to empty hotel rooms. On any given night in Australia there are around 25,000 unused hotel rooms, and Spare Keys is working with accommodation chains to make those available to organisations like Queensland crisis hotline DV Connect via a booking platform.

The third disruptive solution is giving everyday Australians the opportunity to make their Spare Keys available to people in need. Via an online booking form, Spare Keys will let anyone with an insured, safe room provide access to those in need in times of natural disaster, or unexpected financial hardship. Referrals will be sent from authorised domestic violence and homelessness shelters, as well as emergency services coordinators.



Spare Keys founder, Matt Granfield said these three initiatives were game-changers.

“In Australia we’ve tended to ask governments for hand-outs to provide homeless accommodation, but that’s not a scalable solution. Even if every capital city council in Australia allocated \$10 Million towards building homeless shelters, you’d have a few dozen rooms here and there. It’s just not enough. We won’t ever solve the problem with that sort of thinking.

“If we crowd-fund refuges, make use of spare hotel rooms, and let the general public make their spare keys available, we could instantly create enough accommodation supply to house every homeless person in Australia. What we’re doing is as disruptive to the homelessness problem as Airbnb was to the guesthouse industry, and Uber was to the taxi business.”

DV Connect CEO Diane Mangan said Spare Keys would make a huge difference to domestic violence victims.

“The increased demand for places of safety throughout the country has seen a strain on the women’s refuges, and any other emergency option open to services like DVConnect in the interim will be most welcome.

“At present, DVConnect provides motel accommodation to women either while waiting for a vacancy in a refuge or enroute to another safety option. Having access to empty hotel rooms for a small fee will be life saving because it will allow us to provide more crisis accommodation to more families in need.”

Last year alone, DVConnect accommodated 3,323 women and 3,769 children in motels through funding from Queensland’s Department of Communities. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that similar organisations around Australia help more than 115,000 women dealing with domestic violence each year, in addition to the 279,000 people seeking support for homelessness.

Spare Keys Australia Limited is a registered charity, founded in Brisbane in January 2017 by Matt Granfield - a former hotel group marketing executive who decided to set the organisation up when he realised there were so many rooms going to waste each night.

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Visit <http://sparekeys.org> for more information, or visit <https://sparekeys.pozible.com/project/sydney-homeless-shelter-1> to view the crowd-funding campaign.

