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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Letting Go Symposium

Catholic Healthcare was delighted to hold its Hoarding and Squalor Symposium, *Letting Go, The Challenges of Disorganisation vs The Impact on Others*, designed to increase awareness of the complexities associated with excessive accumulation, on 30 October at NSW Parliament House.

The event highlighted the impact of hoarding and squalor on individuals, families and communities; and emphasised the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to hoarding and squalor.

Catholic Healthcare's Hoarding & Squalor Manager, Mercy Splitt said, "Since 2009, Catholic Healthcare has been a leader in specialist services, with the expertise to deliver a unique offering for all clients.

"We are committed to raising awareness of the complexities associated with hoarding and squalor and dedicated to providing a holistic individualised support to vulnerable members of our community. We understand that stakeholder collaboration is important and that we need to work together with other healthcare professionals and the community to support the individual."

The first keynote speaker, Associate Professor Melissa Norberg, Deputy Director for the Centre for Emotional Health at Macquarie University, presented on *Compensatory consumption - Why we acquire and save possessions we do not need*. "Research shows that people save the same things for the same reasons whether they have hoarding tendencies or not. Those who hoard, however, tend to experience interpersonal difficulties and have a strong belief that possessions transform the self and are fused with relationships," said Norberg.

This leads to anthropomorphism where human qualities are projected onto an object to feel connected. Anthropomorphism doesn't fully meet people's needs, so they collect more objects. Norberg also spoke about interpersonal therapies used for treating hoarding disorders.

The second keynote speakers, Lee Shuer and Becca Belofsky are co-founders of Mutual Support Consulting in Massachusetts, USA and internationally recognised advocates for trauma-informed, person-centred human services. Using their own experience and personal recovery stories, they shared insights and tools on how people impacted by hoarding can maintain a healthy relationship

Shuer presented on *Trapped Under Plunder*. He calls himself a 'collector' and cautions against using the word 'hoarder'. "Recovery starts with words and calling someone a hoarder can be detrimental," he said.

Belofsky presented on *From Chaos to Communion*. "It's important to harness communication, compassion, respect and action so families can live healthily and more happily together", she said.

The symposium ended with an open panel discussion. Over 150 delegates across the sector attended.

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