

# Home is where car is parked

## Homeless women prompts protest

**Housing | Tessa Hoffman**

AN alarming increase in the number of homeless women and children sleeping in cars prompted an overnight protest in Brunswick last Wednesday.

More than 120 people turned out to the Women's Car Sleepout at St Ambrose Church, in Sydney Rd, to raise awareness about the 46,000 women facing homelessness each night – the majority fleeing domestic violence.

About 25 women slept in their cars at the event organised by Women's Information Support and Housing in the North and the Big Issue.

WISHIN executive officer Trish ODonahue said the event aimed to encourage the community and government to work together to arrest the problem.

"It just seems pretty unfair that in this day and age women trying to protect their children are forced to sleep in cars as a safety

measure," said Ms ODonahue. "It's very dangerous because you never get any sleep, you stay between the zone of being half awake and going into a deep sleep because you're alert to any noise."

Sleep-deprived mothers led to poor school outcomes and behavioural problems in children, she said.

Ms ODonahue nominated a two-pronged solution: greater respect for mothers, and collaboration between agencies, private landlords and government to increase affordable housing stock.

Flat Out manager Annie Nash said the Federal Government's 2020 plan to halve homelessness – estimated at 105,000 people on any given night – was "simply not good enough".

"Women need access to crisis, transitional, and long-term housing. Women need it now. They cannot wait until 2020," she said.

"I slept in my car for one night and I am still feeling the effects."