



Baptcare



In partnership supporting Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre

SCHOOL ROUGH SLEEP OUT

One night.
Real stories.
Lasting impact.

An immersive learning experience about homelessness.

SCHOOL ROUGH SLEEP-OUT



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Raising awareness. Restoring hope.

Every night in South Australia, more than 5,500 young people experience homelessness. Some sleep on the streets, others couch surf, and many struggle to find a safe and stable place to call home.

Baptist Care SA, in partnership with **THE RITE JOURNEY**, is proud to present the School Rough Sleep Out, a powerful, hands-on experience that challenges students to give up the comforts of home and sleep rough for one night.

By swapping their beds for sleeping bags, students walk in someone else's shoes, developing empathy, a deeper understanding of social issues, and a stronger sense of their role in creating positive change.

The event raises awareness and vital funds for **Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre**, which provides meals, shelter, showers, healthcare, crisis support, and long-term assistance to South Australians doing it tough.

Since its launch, the School Rough Sleep Out has united schools and communities with a shared goal: to foster empathy, raise awareness, and provide life-changing support for people experiencing homelessness.

Through real stories, shared meals, and reflection, students learn that homelessness is about more than not having a house. It's about losing stability, security, and connection. They leave inspired to act with compassion and empowered to make a difference.

Why take part?

The School Rough Sleep Out is a transformative learning experience that fosters compassion, leadership, and social responsibility.

The experience will help students:

Walk in someone else's shoes:

Experience what it's like to sleep rough and understand the realities of homelessness.

Lead with compassion:

Step up as advocates for social change and inspire action in your school community.

Bring learning to life:

Connect classroom lessons on social justice with a real-world experience.

Fund life-changing support:

Every dollar raised provides food, shelter, and critical services to people experiencing homelessness.

Join the School Rough Sleep Out and help create a future where everyone is seen, supported, and has a safe place to call home.

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The Rite of Passage

For more than 20 years, **The Rite Journey** has provided unique educational programs for schools and organisations, supporting the development of self-aware, responsible, respectful, resilient, resourceful, and reflective young adults.

At the heart of their work is a flagship year-long Rite of Passage program, designed to acknowledge and celebrate each student's transition into adulthood.

A key element of The Rite Journey is shifting the students' mindset from 'life is about me and what can I get?' to 'life is about me and what can I give?'

This program encourages students to step outside their comfort zones and reflect on how they can respond to the needs of others with kindness, empathy, and care.

Links to The Rite Journey Program

If your school participates in **The Rite Journey**, the School Rough Sleep Out can be integrated into the Challenge phase of the program.

This experience aligns closely with the program's aims by fostering resilience, compassion, and a sense of social responsibility.

It also serves as a stepping stone to the solo experience, offering students a powerful opportunity to build self-awareness and develop a deeper connection to social justice issues.



Not part of The Rite Journey program? No problem.

While the School Rough Sleep Out aligns well with the Challenge phases of The Rite Journey, you do not need to be part of the program to take part.

All schools are welcome to register and participate.

Whether you're integrating it into a broader wellbeing or social justice curriculum, or simply looking for a meaningful experience to help students build empathy and understanding, the School Rough Sleep Out is a powerful opportunity for learning and impact.

We invite you to learn more about The Rite Journey Program at: www.theritejourney.com/

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What is the role of Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre?

For over 100 years, the WestCare Centre has been a lifeline for South Australians experiencing homelessness, providing essential services, practical support, and a welcoming community to people in need.

Every day, the WestCare Centre provides essential support for South Australians in need:

50,000+ meals served per year

Providing nutritious community breakfasts and low-cost lunches to ensure no one goes hungry.

3,600+ emergency food parcels distributed per year

Offering food relief to individuals and families facing crisis.

305 people helped with groceries each week

Providing affordable food through Baptist Care SA's Community Food Hub.

90 hot showers each week

Giving people access to basic hygiene and dignity.

32 loads of laundry each week

Ensuring people have clean clothes and bedding.

Up to 50 rough sleepers per night*

Providing beds in our chapel so people can sleep in a safely cooled or heated space in extreme weather.

Health care services

Providing trauma-informed healthcare, including GP clinics, nursing services, dental care, physiotherapy, drug and alcohol counselling and eye care.

Social, legal, and financial support

Connecting individuals with legal aid and financial assistance to help them rebuild their lives.

*During Code Blue and Code Red activation.

Many of these services receive no government funding and **rely on donations from events like the School Rough Sleep Out** to continue supporting those most in need.

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Case Study

Don's journey from homelessness to hope

For years, Don found himself sleeping rough on the streets of Adelaide. He was cold, hungry and felt invisible. He turned to Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre, where he was met with compassion, support, and a warm meal.

"I didn't believe I was worth caring about," he recalls.

"I had lost hope and didn't think there was a way back."

Through the care he received at the WestCare Centre, Don's life began to change. Bit by bit, he started to believe he could choose a different path.

At first, Don came for a warm meal—but he stayed for the sense of belonging. The simple act of being treated with dignity made him believe he could rebuild his life. He found a community that cared about him and, over time, started volunteering at WestCare to help others who were facing the same struggles he once did.

Now, Don is a valued member of the WestCare team, giving back to the same place that gave him hope when he needed it most.

He often shares his story with students, showing them that homelessness doesn't define a person—it's just one chapter in their story.

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What happens at the School Rough Sleep Out?

An immersive learning experience about homelessness.

Students spend the night sleeping outside in a designated area, gaining firsthand insight into the realities of homelessness.

Throughout the evening, they will:

- Hear real stories from people with lived experience of homelessness
- Learn about the complex causes of homelessness, from financial hardship to family breakdowns
- Share a nutritious meal, just like the ones provided daily at the WestCare Centre
- Reflect on their experience, discussing what they can do to make a difference

To provide a safe and meaningful School Rough Sleep Out, we recommend:

- Choosing a secure, supervised location (e.g. the WestCare Centre, your school gym, oval or a community hall) with shelter available for bad weather.
- Using our event resources for clear guidelines on clothing and equipment.
- Holding a debriefing session the next morning using our factsheet to help students reflect on their experience.

“When students feel it, not just hear it, the lesson of empathy truly takes root. They start to see the world through a more compassionate lens.”

Andrew Lines - The Rite Journey Creator/Director



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Where is the School Rough Sleep Out held?

Your school can choose between two ways to participate.

Option **One**

Hosted at Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre

For a truly immersive experience, students can sleep outside overnight in the safety of the WestCare Centre courtyard.

This option includes:

- Hearing firsthand stories from people with lived experience of homelessness.
- Seeing and experiencing some of the services that Westcare provides.
- Empathy-building activities to challenge perspectives and encourage discussion.
- A nutritious dinner and breakfast, just like the meals served daily at WestCare.

Option **Two**

Hosted at your school or chosen venue

Schools can choose to host their Rough Sleep Out on school grounds.

To support schools in running the event, WestCare Centre will provide:

- A speaker who can share information about homelessness.
- Resources and activities to help structure the evening.
- Guidance on running a meaningful reflection session.

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How to get involved

Walk in someone else's shoes. Fund life-changing support.

One

Register your School

Sign up at www.baptistcaresa.org.au/sleepout or contact us directly. Once registered we'll set up a custom fundraising page for your event and provide a comprehensive Event Toolkit with everything you need to run a successful Rough Sleep Out.

Two

Choose your School Rough Sleep Out location

Host your event at Baptist Care SA's WestCare Centre or your own venue. Either way, we'll provide resources, guidance, and a speaker to enhance the experience.

Three

Set a fundraising goal

Work with your students to set an achievable fundraising target. Students can raise funds individually or as a team, with all proceeds supporting WestCare Centre's essential services.

Four

Sleep Rough for one night

Students swap your bed for a sleeping bag and spend one night experiencing, learning, and reflecting on homelessness.

Every step of the way, we'll support your school to ensure your students gain the best possible experience from participating in the School Rough Sleep Out.

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Register your school today

Empower your students to make a real difference. Join the movement to raise awareness, take action, and support South Australians experiencing homelessness.

Register your school now and help create a future where everyone has a safe place to call home.



Learn more and register at www.baptistcaresa.org.au/sleepout

Get in touch

Have questions or need support to organise your School Rough Sleep Out? Contact Melissa Westgate or Hugh Ballantyne.

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www.baptistcaresa.org.au/sleepout

Supported by The Rite Journey:
www.theritejourney.com



"I used to think homelessness was just about not having a house. Now I understand it's about losing stability, security, and support. This experience changed how I see the world."

Year 9 Student, School Rough Sleep Out Participant

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