

Housing crisis hits Sydney at all levels

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International visitors stepping off cruise ships at Circular Quay this summer might feel strangely at home if they come from cities where rough sleeping is an all too familiar sight.

At the gateway to Sydney, their first impression of our wonderful city is the sad and troubling sight of homeless people living on the street.

These scenes are evocative of the disturbing trend in US cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco where block after block have been transformed into shanty towns.

It isn't fair to our city that this is the first impression international travellers receive when they disembark from a ship or arrive from the airport.

It's hard to understand why, with all the efforts of government

agencies and charities, rough sleeping seems to have become an intractable problem.

As Business Sydney has said many times, there must be a vacant or underused building in the CBD that can be adapted for emergency housing.

Our parliamentarians must surely be aware that the plight of the homeless is literally on their doorstep — every night.

Rough sleepers bed down in their makeshift “homes” in the walkway alongside the State Library and Parliament House.

We recently spoke to a young woman who told us she had been living in this alcove just metres from Macquarie Street for the past year. Used to living on the street and wary of strangers, she didn't want to give even her first name or where she came from.

We are also told that a significant number of people

sleeping rough in our city are from overseas and now find themselves in a form of stateless limbo. We know that homelessness is a complex issue and, with the cost of living crisis, we also know that more people are ending up on the street.

Premier Chris Minns and Planning Minister Paul Minns are making strides in solving the housing crisis by breaking down regulatory and planning barriers to create more affordable housing.

We have no doubt that Housing Minister Rose Jackson is similarly determined to help homeless rough sleepers.

Let's hope the same steely determination to build our way out of the housing crisis can be applied to the plight of the homeless.