



June 8, 2017

A new play focusing on homelessness will challenge stereotypes and explore judgments about life on the streets, while directly supporting people who have experienced homelessness.

Trash Goes Down the River is an independent new play written by Melbourne writer Clare Mendes, drawing on the early 2017 clashes between Melbourne's homeless population, protesters, police and policy makers.

This play will partner with key service providers Launch Housing and Open Canvas while also supporting the Vinnies CEO Sleepout.

Trash Goes Down the River follows the journey of 'Trash', a strong-willed woman who has made a permanent home for herself in a city doorway. When Melody Freeburg, fuelled by her own powerful desire for a perfect home in a better world, embarks on a radical project to rid the CBD of its homeless campers, Trash refuses to budge. What follows is a journey into a dark future that these two women will be forced to share.

Throughout the play's two-week season at Bluestone Church Arts Space, Open Canvas will host an exhibition of works by artists who have experienced homelessness, a disability or other adversity, with the works sharing the theatrical space.

The social enterprise, which was launched last year, sells original art and craft as well as providing artists with reoccurring income through sales of art prints, cards, tea towels, puzzles, posters and other merchandise.

Open Canvas founder Dan Rath said artists receive a minimum of 70 per cent of profits from purchases, providing them with an opportunity for repeat income.

"When you buy art from Open Canvas, you are making a positive impact on the lives of these artists," he said.

"They are empowered through recognition of their talent and a sense of achievement."

Trash Goes Down the River writer Clare Mendes hopes people seeing the play will reflect on their own responses to those facing adversity.

"We walk past a homeless person without acknowledgement. We need to start to acknowledge the problem, and with a shift in attitudes perhaps we can start to change the way we view those who are marginalised in our communities."

***Trash Goes Down the River* runs from June 13 to 24 at the Bluestone Church Arts Space in Footscray. Tickets: www.trybooking.com/PTJQ A special Open Canvas exhibition will be held from 2pm-5pm on June 17.**

Interviews and photographs available upon request.

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