A Soapbox for the Homeless
By Kelly Whitworth and Spike Chiappalone, *Roominations* presenters

The *Roominations* homelessness program, proudly celebrating 10 years on air in 2017, has come a long way since its humble, radical beginnings. Founded, in part, to prove wrong the assertion that ‘people who are homeless don’t have radios’—the last 10 years are testament to the show’s success in reaching its target audience.

*Roominations* is the only radio program that is produced and presented by people who either have, or are currently having, a lived experience of homelessness. The production team of Daz, Kelly, Spike and Tony provides weekly news, views, guests and analysis of issues in the housing and homelessness area.

In recent times, *Roominations* was a pivotal base for broadcasting the sounds and issues arising out of the 8-month long #bendigost public housing occupation-style protest in Collingwood. It also recently covered in depth the #nohomelessban campaign about the proposed introduction of Melbourne City Council by-law changes which would unfairly criminalise people experiencing homelessness in the CBD. Without *Roominations* and 3CR, news of these important community campaigns would not have reached the wide community base that it did and mobilise the community in support.

Spike says, ‘There is nothing sexy about homelessness. It can be a lonely, confusing

and terrifying experience, as anyone who has experienced homelessness can attest to. It was during my experience of this turbulence that I discovered the oasis that is *Roominations*. The strength and vitality of community radio is that it provides an authentic, unfiltered voice of those who experience marginalisation, alienation, social

exclusion and social stigma. These voices are heard only because in 1975 activists organised and were successful in getting up Australia’s first community-owned and community-controlled radio licence. *Roominations* and 3CR work to be truly democratic and representative of the community in which it resides.’

Kelly says that her favourite aspect of being a producer on 3CR is getting out into the community with a portable recorder and capturing the ‘voices of the street’. She says, ‘I love doing vox pops, getting the sounds and views of people who are

experiencing homelessness and broadcasting them on the show. That’s the beauty of *Roominations*: it provides a space for people who ordinarily have their voices filtered through mainstream media to be heard raw, as they are. To me, that is incredibly powerful. It raises people’s self-esteem, lets them know that their voices are important, and, ultimately, is a powerful force for progressive social change.’

Daz believes *Roominations* gives him a purpose in life. He hopes the show helps people get out of homelessness by bringing attention to issues. He believes it is a ‘voice for the voiceless’. Over the years *Roominations* has spoken to a wide variety of individuals, from those with a lived experience to those who work in the homelessness sector. These voices are valid and valuable contributions to our community and culture. *Roominations* provides those who have been overlooked, and in many cases disqualified, with the opportunity to participate in the social dialogue.

LISTEN *Roominations* Thursday 12-1pm

CRAM Guide 2017 – 3CR Community Radio