

**INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AMONGST OLDER  
PEOPLE AGED OVER 55 IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** St Benedict's Community Centre Inc.

**Date Received:** 7 June 2022

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# St Benedict's Community Centre Inc.

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31<sup>st</sup> May, 2022

TO: NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues

## **Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in New South Wales**

St Benedict's Community Centre is a homelessness service based in Queanbeyan NSW and working with people aged over 18 years old. We welcome the opportunity to provide a response to the Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in NSW.

As a service provider, we directly engage with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. St Benedict's has been doing this work for almost 20 years, and members of the organisation have nearly 40 years of direct experience in the sector. The following is what we know is happening in our region:

- There has been a 25% increase in numbers of people aged 55 and over in the last 5 years experiencing direct homelessness
- The lack of suitable housing, especially accessible housing, means the length of homelessness has increased from weeks to months.
- The lack of affordable housing – increases in rent, properties being sold and tenants who have rented for years or decades being displaced – means the private market is now not an option for those on fixed or low incomes.
- The wait list for social and public housing in our local area is now around 2 years, meaning that short term alternatives have to be found that often do not meet the physical or mental needs of older people, resulting in pressures being put onto respite care, hospitals, and family resources.
- Access to refuge accommodation is exceptionally limited, often meaning people have to leave their familiar situations to move to a completely different part of the state. This causes further disconnection of social supports, changing medical opportunities, and further distress for those already in crisis.
- Although families can be supportive, having elderly relatives stay with them can cause overcrowding, exacerbate mental health issues

We are available to give evidence to the inquiry and can be contacted on the numbers below to arrange this.

Yours sincerely

Fr Michael Cockayne OAM  
St Benedict's Community Centre Chair

Mrs Elaine Lollback  
St Benedicts Centre Coordinator

Email

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