

**Submission
No 73**

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

Organisation: MUTTI
Date Received: 26 May 2022

26 May 2022

Chair,
Standing Committee on Social Issues,
NSW Parliamentary House,
6 Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
Via email: socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Endorsing NSW Ageing of the Edge Forum submission

The Museum of Understanding Through Tolerance and Inclusion (MUTTI) uses art as a platform to create a safe and inclusive environment for people to share their lived experience of marginalisation, discrimination and disadvantage. People who participate are from a diverse range of ages and often have intersectional identities including LGBTQIA+, First Nations, CALD or having disability. Currently we are working with 27 women who have or are experiencing homelessness in a project called 'UNSEEN'. Two of these women are at risk of homelessness once more due to service providers selling the property they currently live in or that the property being repurposed for another cohort.

I wish to pass on messages from just some of the women in UNSEEN:

'Every woman is a daughter, mother, auntie, or grandmother. We are not anonymous statistics'. When you offer homeless women a choice you offer them hope and dignity' – Jai

'Homelessness was not part of my life plan, I have a PhD. I had a well-paying job, a house and family and I lost it all through divorce. The hardest part of living as a homeless person for me was not having that safety or privacy. There is something exhausting about always being in public, with the other people a constant presence. Additionally, the right to privacy is sacrificed for the right to services. While being interviewed by a worker in the department of housing, who was legitimately going through my bank statements, she queried what it was that I had bought at a chemist. This felt invasive into very my personal matters which were of no relevance to housing.' – Emily, 56

'They wouldn't help me, so I got a tent and camped out the front of the office (service provider)...they said "we will call the police" and I said "I'll call the media"...only then did they give me temporary housing, it was unsafe with just one bedroom for me and my boys' – Anonymous, 74

'The system is designed to not cause change for women' – Sally, 55

'Through my divorce the courts left me destitute and homeless' – Alex, 78

Our organisation is a supporter of NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum, and collectively we are working towards ending homelessness of older people in NSW. As a coalition we are calling on the NSW Government to –



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Fund a specialist older person's housing information and support service that comprises both an early intervention and crisis response, similar to the HAAG 'Home at Last' model in Victoria.

- **Lower the priority age for social housing eligibility from 80 years as a matter of urgency.**
- **Build 5,000 social and affordable homes per year for 10 years, at least 20% of which should be dedicated to older people.**

In addition, we are recommending that NSW government –

- **Adopt concrete measures to address ageism, sexism, gender and disability discrimination in government services, finance institutions, including banks, and private rental markets.**
- **Remove unnecessarily burdensome requirements, such as, completion of 'seeker diaries' to maintain temporary accommodation imposed on older people who are already in challenging housing situations.**
- **Increase transparency and accountability by increasing availability of data including –**
 - o **Social and priority housing waiting list data broken down by age, gender, disability status and geographic area,**
 - o **The number of social and affordable housing dwellings available in NSW, including age and gender breakdown of allocations,**
 - o **The number of dwellings assigned under State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors and People with a Disability) (Seniors SEPP) and Public Housing Seniors Communities (PPOPH), and**
 - o **The number of dwellings built under the commitments in different housing commitments including the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023, Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) and Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF).**
- **Provide exemptions to strict documentary evidence for housing applications, including identity documents, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and older women escaping domestic and family violence to ensure equitable access for all older people.**
- **Adopt the new mandatory minimum accessibility standards contained in the revised National Construction Code for all future constructions in NSW.**

We urge the committee to adopt these recommendations highlighted above and welcome the opportunity to engage with the inquiry process where possible.

Sincerely

Belinda Mason Knierim

**Director
Museum of Understanding
Through Tolerance & Inclusion**

ABN 60 657 777 216