

Submission
No 77

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 9 June 2022

Partially
Confidential

Attn: Social Issues, inquiry into homelessness amongst people aged over 55 years
The Committee for Social Issues
NSW Parliament

To Whom It May Concern,

Kindly withhold my name and other identifiable information.

Thank you for the inquiry into this very important issue. This is a critical issue and I have seen firsthand the impact of housing or homelessness can have on older people. I worked for a corporate organisation that provides a range of services and financial support to people going through difficult challenges. One of the groups that the organisation supported was one of older women sleeping in cars, on their friends' couches or in other unsafe places sharing accommodation with men and women. Most of the older women that were supported through the organisation were professional women who had lost work due to Covid or broken relationships and ended up homeless. Others I met have experienced homelessness on and off because of domestic and family violence or financial issues.

They do not access known housing services provided by organisations such as Uniting, Catholic Care and others because of shame, or because they think those services are there for people who are sleeping in parks, tents or other unsafe conditions. Some feel that they should not be a burden on those services and leave it for more 'deserving' people or younger women. Most of these older women had hit dead-ends when they tried to find the right services to find housing. Some older women considered moving away from the city to areas where they had no contacts, just so that they could afford rent.

I offered to support one of these older women (in her late 50s) to find housing because she was staying at a friend's place, sleeping on a couch that was causing her back problems. She did not have access to a computer or internet and was not tech savvy. She did not have access to any important documents such as her birth certificate or passport. She had never been homeless before and she had been turned away from a homeless service because their housing was dedicated to younger women escaping domestic and family violence.

I consider myself to be somewhat tech savvy and able to find relevant information fairly quickly. However, the process of looking for the right services or information about available government support online was difficult and frustrating. The older woman I was trying to assist did not think she qualified for emergency services as she had a roof over her head, albeit unstable and unsuitable. I had to do my own research to educate myself to understand the housing options for older women. There seemed to be an expectation that people know where to look for information which is not the case for most older women.

After attempting to navigate the system together, I had to inform this older woman that I could not assist her and she would need professional assistance. To our knowledge such support did not exist. I have detailed the process that we went through late last year. Sadly, the challenges are still the same and the website

navigation is still frustratingly challenging when I went through the steps for the purposes of this submission.

Confusion with housing and aged care

The information is overwhelming and most of the search results are unrelated. I came across pages upon pages of information about research on older women and homelessness. The results provided two service streams, Ask Izzy and Infoexchange. The Ask Izzy website provided information about crisis housing. From what I could gather, it offered only temporary accommodation for a few days or months. This screen grab shows the results for the key word searches 'older women homelessness'.

The screenshot shows the 'Infoexchange Service Seeker' interface. At the top, the search term 'older women homelessness' is entered. Below the search bar, there is a note: 'For example [Aboriginal Health Grafton](#) or [Aboriginal Health 2460](#). You can also search the location by searching [Collingwood](#) or [3066](#)'. A prominent red banner contains 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) health information' with a link to the Australian Department of Health website and the number 1800 020 080. Below this, it says 'Displaying 100 results' and 'Share results'. Three service cards are visible, all marked as 'Now open':

My Aged Care 1800 200 422	Now open More information >
DCJ Housing Services Link2home 1800 152 152	Now open More information >
DCJ Community Services (formerly FACS), NSW Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463	Now open More information >

Below this is further information about various aged care services, which are irrelevant because the woman I was assisting was not old enough to access aged care related services. She also did not need support through aged care. She needed housing.

1800 656 463 More information >

Residential Aged Care (with Ageing in Place) 3.3 km 📍 Haberfield

🏠 Uniting, Annesley Haberfield Provides low-level-care and high-level-care accommodation, registered by the Commonwealth, for the aged capable of independent living with minimal support and for the aged needing nurs ...

☎ 1800 864 846

🕒 Now open [More information >](#)

Residential Aged Care (with Ageing in Place) 8 km 📍 Waterloo

🏠 Frederic House Provides low-level-care and high-level-care accommodation, registered by the Commonwealth, for the aged capable of independent living with minimal support and for the aged needing nurs ...

☎ (02) 9310 2778

🕒 Now open [More information >](#)

Community Meals & Food Hampers 5.1 km 📍 Strathfield South

🏠 St Merkorious Offers material aid in the form of free nutritious lunches, dinners, food hampers containing fresh bread, fruit, vegetables and packaged staple food for disadvantaged Indigenous and non-Indigenous ...

☎ (02) 9799 9954 [More information >](#)

Specialist Homelessness Services

It is surprising that despite all the discussion around older women being the fastest growing homeless population, there is no dedicated government page or tab with information for this specific cohort. Disappointingly, older women are not even mentioned as a category on this departmental [webpage](#). See screengrab below with search words 'older women'.

Search our services

You can search for a service that you or someone you know may need by location or by the type of support needed depending on your situation.

I'm looking at services for:

young people

women

men

Aboriginal people

families

Which region of NSW are you from?

-- Leave Empty --

Keyword search box:

older women

Submit

These are the results that appear. The first link takes you back to the previous page. The second is in Mid North Coast which is a considerable distance from Sydney.

2 results found:

[Find a specialist homelessness service](#)

Search for details about homelessness services in NSW

This service is for .

Lead provider:

Phone:

[Mid North Coast Supporting and Securing Tenancies](#)

Mid North Coast Supporting and Securing Tenancies assists people including those with children, Aboriginal people and those leaving institutional care, to sustain their tenancies and prevent evictions from all types of tenures.

This service is for young people; women; men; families.

Lead provider: New Horizons Enterprises Limited

Phone: 1800 188 890

I added the 'greater Sydney' filter and researched and ticked the 'women' button and the website says 'No results found. Try searching again' as demonstrated below.

Find a service

No results found. Try searching again:

I'm looking at services for:

young people

women

men

Aboriginal people

families

Which region of NSW are you from?

Greater Sydney

Keyword search box:

older women

Submit

Searching for different search words such as 'ageing' results in the website indicating that there are no results!

Find a service

No results found. Try searching again:

I'm looking at services for:

young people

women

men

Aboriginal people

families

Which region of NSW are you from?

-- Leave Empty --

Keyword search box:

ageing

Submit

Eligibility for housing

The information about eligibility is confusing and there is an overwhelming amount of information to sift through. Each of the points (1-12) on [social housing eligibility](#) contain massive amounts of information to digest.

Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement

Last published 03 May 2022

This document provides additional information to support our policies about how we deliver social housing and who is eligible for assistance

1. [Eligibility for social housing - residency](#)
2. [Eligibility for social housing - income](#)
3. [Eligibility for social housing - property ownership](#)
4. [Eligibility for social housing - ability to sustain a successful tenancy](#)
5. [Eligibility for social housing - entitlements](#)
6. [Eligibility for emergency temporary accommodation other than because of a natural disaster](#)
7. [Eligibility for emergency temporary accommodation because of a natural disaster](#)
8. [Eligibility for priority housing assistance - urgent housing needs](#)
9. [Eligibility for priority housing assistance - unable to resolve need in private rental market](#)
10. [Eligibility for priority housing assistance - evidence requirements](#)
11. [Locational needs](#)
12. [Matching and offering a property to a client](#)

[View as single page](#)

In addition, the amount of documentation required to establish eligibility is very difficult to obtain without support from professionals who understand the housing system. I have attached the [Evidence requirements information sheet DH3001a](#) for your reference.

The older women I met were not looking for crisis housing for a week or two. They were looking for a permanent roof over their head in close proximity to their networks, health and other services. Even with some understanding about how to use online platforms, I struggled to find relevant information to help them to find housing or a service that could help them in their search. Without professional help from people who can assist them to understand the housing application process, what documents are required and help lodge those, older women are going to live in a perpetual limbo.

Thank you for your focused attention on this dire problem,

Attached : Evidence-Requirements-Information-Sheet-DH3001a