

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 1 June 2022

Partially
Confidential

01 June 2022

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

Dear committee

How I got to the streets and homelessness. My friend passed away. His mother made a will leaving the property to his cousin, not my friend. He was only a lifelong tenant. Now with that, as soon as he passed, just after I turned the life support off actually, they took possession of the house and threw me out on the street. I went to my cousin's for a while but me and her kept fighting all the time. So, basically she threw me out and then I ended up homeless.

I ended up with plenty of TAs, but the main one that helped me was Edward Eager Lodge. Up on the mezzanine level they've got a team of helpers and they help in situations like mine. They put me in contact with Women's Housing and that's how I got started. I've had that now for 12 years. There was no such thing as a housing waiting list back in 2009.

The worker that I linked up with from Edward Eager Lodge, she approached Women's Housing on my behalf. I had to go rushing around getting all the paperwork, getting all the evidence and the rest of it. She submitted it to women's Housing, including all my medical stuff. The amount of paperwork that she's helped me with is unbelievable, because I'm partially sighted, it was too much for me.

At the Lodge they had plenty of services to help get access to what you want and they help you do it. Like secure housing, how you get your power connected. They had everything there. I'm still seeing my support worker from Edward Eager Lodge. We meet up for coffee all the time. She was there just after my friend passed. Five years ago, I lost my second husband to cancer and she was there for that too. She's always been there. Then again, so's my psychiatrist, all my doctors, they've all been there.

When I applied for housing, the housing department rejected me because I couldn't prove that I could sustain a private rental. They rejected me. How do you sustain a private rental on the pension, with the cost of rent. They just said that my application had been rejected. I've still got that in writing down at home. When I resubmitted the application, same thing again. How are you supposed to prove that you can sustain private housing if you can't afford to get in there in the first place? That does not make sense. Not to me anyway. They just sent me a letter saying that my application had been rejected and I've still got that letter. Here's the thing, I get caught between a rock and a hard place. I can't get into private housing, I can't get into government housing, so what was I supposed to do?

I know quite a few women that were at Newtown, at the Hub, two of them were homeless. How do you help them? I rang the Homeless Persons' Hotline, got them a room. The rest was up to them, I can't help them anymore. The Homeless Persons' Hotline, from what I know... only house you. They don't give you the support services and that's where the problem is. They'll give you a home for a week. A week's TA. Now in that week, you have to ring them everyday to see if they've got a better spot for you. Everyday... If they haven't got anywhere in that week, they'll extend. You can get up to a month in TA. You could end up back where you started, who knows.

I'm settled in my home now. Two steps I'm in the unit. That's easy. I had steps in the last house with Women's Housing in Lewisham... I had to go about five steps out the front of the property, then another set to get up to my unit. Sixteen more steps. It's hard when you get old to use steps.

I'm due for a rental increase now, but Women's Housing only puts it up by three bucks. Whereas everywhere else, goes up by 20 or 30, that's way too much.

I have been with Women's Housing since December 2009. I have a housing worker with Women's Housing. With their ongoing support and also they do outing and all the rest of it, I'm happy. Having them links always makes the difference.

Having a permanent home gives me time to focus on other things. My great grandmother was full-blooded Aboriginal. When my grandmother was taken from her birth, that's when we lost who my grandmother was, and where she came from. She also knew who her biological mother was, but unfortunately she took that to the grave.

I'm trying to track my heritage and hit a brick wall every time. What I need is Nan's actual birth records. Now to get them, got to go way up North, and I mean way up North to Arnhem Land. Which means I need my birth certificate, my mother's birth certificate and with that, I'll get what I need. Then I can go up North and find where they'll be, and who she was. Now, I know that my great grandmother was full Aboriginal, my great grandfather, he's white. That's how the term breeding the black out of them comes. I know she died quite young, she was only in her early thirties when she died and she's buried up in Arnhem Land somewhere. So I want to trace her, where she was born and her final resting place. There should be a simpler way to do all this. Here's the problem as well, my grandmother was part of the Stolen Generation, but on her birth Certificate, it has her step mother down as her mother. Not her biological mother. She was taken at birth.

Recommendations

You've mental health issues, you've got drug and alcohol issues as well. Housing only puts a roof over your head. It doesn't give you the rest of it. There should be sustained support services for everyone experiencing homelessness. The over 55s for instance, that are living

on the street, sleeping rough, what supports have they got? They'd be prime candidates for government housing.

What is in short supply is housing for the disabled people in wheel chairs, on walking frames, anything like that. There's nothing. Sensible housing for people, especially ones with disabilities, who can't get into government or private rentals.

We have buildings that are derelict, they only need doing up. Why can't the government spend money on them? Do them up, then people can get in, then people can have housing.

The government needs to hear from someone's that's been there and done it.

Thank you,