

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

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

Dear committee,

My name is [redacted] and I'm 67 years old. I am a cancer survivor and have been in my current unit through a community housing provider over the last 5 years. I pay 25% of my pension on rent. After losing part-time work during COVID-19, I started a TAFE course and recently completed it.

When I initially experienced homelessness, I was really in a zombie state. It was just like you don't know how to feel, think, do, or where to seek help. I had nothing, just myself, no resources, no money, no job. I can't believe somebody sent me to the [redacted] accommodation. The room had a broken door, and the bed is like a dog bed. I said to myself, I am not sleeping here. I did not stay because I thought I'll probably get raped. In my zombie state, I keep going around in a circle. One day, Newtown Community Centre gave me a printed list of places I can go for a shower and meal. It was called a drop in centre on Erskine Street, Sydney. The minute I walked in, a voice behind the counter said today's lunch is crocodile sandwich and I thought to myself 'oh dear'.

NSW Pathways can only tell me there is a 16year wait for Housing, this was before I found my current housing. So, I printed 1,000 little slips of paper saying I can afford \$200 a week for a room to rent. I did a letterbox drop in a 1,000 letter boxes in apartments around Pyrmont. Somebody told me Citywide Community Housing in Pyrmont offers affordable housing, if one rent in Pyrmont for two years to qualify to apply for accommodation with Citywide Housing. My effort resulted in a call from a landlord who had a room for rent. I called in, it was a study room in a multimillion dollar apartment, but then I told the landlady I can only afford \$200, and she said minimum was \$260, so I stayed there for only a few months. After, I was approved for Women's Housing. When you're really in a zombie state, you don't know what to do. You try and try and do something for yourself. It's very depressing, it really suppresses your whole person and then you feel like how did I get here, what happened?.

One needs a whole load of courage to go through homelessness situation and try to live. It took me five years, or four and a half, to get myself right. This trauma, is really so insidious, it's so deep. Most times I fall into state of mental depression and I had to pick myself up, try to get better and to be shot down by in my face discrimination comments like 'oh you're in housing'.

The minute I went to Women's Housing, the lady who handled me and my case straight away put me temporary accommodation. First thing I asked was for housing security and I wanted it to be over 55's to feel security.

When I moved into Women's Housing unit that I've got now, I had nothing. Womens Housing told me to call and make appointment with Pyrmont Cares. Pyrmont Cares is run by a few volunteers where they pick up furniture and household goods from people who had relocated. I got my washing machine, fridge and one couch. The couch was smelling of cat or dog urine.

It had been a challenge. Had I not been picked up and housed by Women's Housing Company, I could have died.

I am in a good neighbourhood now. I am now feeling myself. I am still poor but never mind, I have myself back.

Women's Housing have the right experience and they have the right passion. They have the right system to house homeless women and they work really fast. If only Women's Housing Company model can be duplicated, so many lives can be saved. A permanent roof over our heads... long term housing is very stabilising and allows one to heal from trauma of homelessness, to be, once again, working or employed and be a contributing tax payer.

I have just completed 3 weeks work for Australian Electoral Commission in PrePoll and Postpolling.

Thank You Women's Housing Company in regards to my case and story.