

I thank you for coming to listen to a few personal experiences of the rental crisis.

I honestly don't think that Politicians have any idea of the amount of citizens that have been affected nor of the impacts that it is having on their daily lives.

I personally know, right now, of 12 people that are displaced, and that is what we are, displaced or internal refugees.

They are either living back with parents, couch surfing, staying in a converted garage made into a living area at her sons house in the inner suburb of Brisbane and a friends son that has converted the garden shed into a bedroom and 2 people living in a caravan.. 9 of these 12 are working. Not one was classed as homeless previously. ..

Yet nobody knows of these 12 situations, we are not on a list. If the correct numbers of people and families that have been impacted were known it would rock the socks off all politicians. If I know 12, how many others are there?

But they don't.. so it is all talk and announcements of what they are going to do.. in the future.

I'm 63 years of age, have no children, I have no financial savings behind me and both my parents are no longer alive... so sorry Phillip Lowe, they cannot help me from where they are now.

This face is the face of what I had been hearing is one of the highest percentages of homelessness.. though two and a half years ago I wasn't. So what has happened in that time? What happened when the pandemic began and 8 -9 months later when I found I was looking for a

house to rent and there wasn't one.

I see myself as a normal girl who has lived a normal life growing up within an honest hard working class functional family.

I am one of 3 children of the ten pound Poms that came to Australia from the UK in 1972 when I was 11. The Australian Govt invited us here wanting trades people with kids to help build and populate this country.

I do not do drugs, I do not drink alcohol, I don't gamble, never been involved in domestic violence so I do not see I have contributed to find myself on this path of homelessness in such ways that can.

Forward 52 years from when I was 11, for the first time in my life and beyond my wildest dreams, I'm living in a caravan with my younger brother sharing it with me on my older brothers property. Caravans are not intended to live in on a long term but here we are, in sub standard conditions now for 2 years and 5 months.

I had to leave Tasmania due to the rental crisis down there. It was a place I loved living and never intended to move from.

I had to travel 2000km, through 3 States, all while Covid19 was in full on, I had to sell or give away everything I owned that made my home a home and my garden a garden. Bringing it all with me was not an option I had.

So everything that I have bought throughout my working life since 16 years of age.. and many sentimental items were included, are gone. My past also now feels like it has been erased.

I arrived on this property as the 'el nino began. Over 12 months of

record breaking rains that caused major flooding from Maryborough down to NSW and it was horrendous living in a caravan, which sits on a downhill slope, all under the fury of the rain bombs we had.

I was living daily in the wet and damp for over 12 months. A caravan is like a tin can, it reaches temperatures of close to 40 degs in the summer and gets quite cold in the winter and it does not keep the damp out. There are not made with insulation and I can reach up and easily touch the roof of the van or the canvas roof of the annex that I have tried my best to convert into a living area. The whole area with beds, a table, cabinates and storage is 22 ft x 16 ft. That is 2 people living in it.

How did I get here?

I relocated to Tasmania from the Sunshine Coast in 2010 with my mother who had suffered a stroke and with my younger brother of which we were both caring for her.

We were looking for a better life for ourselves and we found it.

I even organised a house to rent before we arrived, over the phone as I was taking my dog and cat with me so needed a place to move into straight away.

Fancy that.. pre renting a house in another State that accepted pets without questions.. just based on good rental references.

After 12 months we moved to another area which we had found and loved, my mother and brother got their own rental this time and I went out by myself and found one for me close by as I was still helping very much with her daily care. We had a choice of 3 rentals each to pick

from.

My mother died 4 years later in 2014 so my brother came to my house to share it. I never spent more than \$260 a week on rent the whole time I was there, they were nice homes close to the beach. I never for one day took for granted of what we had.

In March 2020 the pandemic arrived to stop the world. I was living day by day as everybody was not knowing what the future held and what was happening and I lost my employment within the hospitality industry.

North West Tasmania I believe was the first lockdown in our country after travellers came home from the cruise ship the Ruby Princess with the virus.

I was concerned with watching what was happening in other countries but not too worried at that time in Australia, I was just focusing on avoiding the virus.

The Govt doubled the employment benefits to help the most vulnerable people and it did sure help. I was hearing that 'we are all in this together' and it did feel more that way then.

8 months later towards the end of 2020 stories appeared in the local media of people being forced to live in tents as they could not find a rental home, then I noticed a few families doing the same thing in our local caravan park and I wondered what the hell was going on.

Unbeknown to all us good girls and boys staying home and not travelling around, using hand sanitisers and wearing masks while

looking for toilet paper in the supermarkets to buy there had been an absolute frenzy buying up of our homes going on under our noses.. and the Government had a hand in this but they didn't have the insight to understand what the end result was going to be in a very short period of time which is now the catastrophe of the homeless and those struggling to pay rents due to the demand.

I soon learnt about it though.

In January 2021 my landlords informed us that they needed their home back for themselves and so I started looking for another rental. Each one I inspected had approx 80 - 100 other people also wanting it.

One house was in a cul-de-sac and I found it hard to park my car when I arrived. I walked to the top of the road and a line up of people was from one end to the other and more were arriving in line behind me. Those who lived in that road all came out into their gardens asking us what was going on seeing this long queue of people on the footpath.

It was humiliating and embarrassing, I had not been to an 'open house inspection' before, lining up with other desperate people just wanting a roof over their heads. I did this for close to 3 months without finding one.

Reality set in and I ended up having a choice to make.. 1. of living in a tent with the others, 2. living in my car, 3. finding a bridge to live under or 4. move to Brisbane to live in this caravan.. 4 is the choice I made.

I was hoping it would be a short term situation, how wrong was I as I have sat and watched this crisis unfold.

This caravan has no hot water connected, no toilet/ bathroom close by and no functional kitchen to cook meals. I have managed to cook with an electric frypan and eat salads along with pre cooked foods and take a ways. I had to manage using a bucket for my toilet and washing myself in our little sink on two occasions when my brothers family home went into isolation due to them having Covid and we couldn't use their bathroom. I have learnt that lemon scented bin bags are a god send. I then drive out and drop it off in the doggy poo bin at the local park. How much lower can a persons life get?

For 2 years and 5 months I have watched the housing crisis availability and affordability worsen 1000 fold. They are not going up by \$10 or \$20 a week, they are going up \$50 - \$150 a week in one hit.

Still lines up of people competing with each other for the rental, that's those that feel they can just afford it. Many like myself don't apply, I know I simply cannot pay the rents being asked.

It is a take it or leave it attitude by Real Estate agents and landlords. But to the people, trying to manage such high cost of living for food and electricity and petrol and medications, it is a 'can I or can I not afford them'.

Tenants are frightened of speaking up if repairs are needed as they may lose their home and that is a fact. Landlords know of this fear and use it to their advantage.

Is this really what we have become as a country?

All of what has happened to me has created my mental health to crash and crash big time along with my physical health. My appetite has disappeared and I have not slept well since my experience began. I am

a shadow of what I was two and a half years ago and my mind screams from helplessness and hopelessness.. I feel like I am living in a twilight zone.

My future has been taken away from me at my age as I can't wait 5-10 years for these promises from our Govt of more affordable homes.. Mr Albanese spoke a few days ago of it being better for the next generation and I hope it is, I really do but I will be 70 or 75 years old by then, that's if I get there.

When my journey began I was granted stress leave from my GP that was accepted by centre link for some time because of how this experience affect my mental health but now they are refusing it even though nothing has changed for the better and my mental has only become worse.

I have the support and written proof from my doctor, a mental health social worker, a psychologist, a clinical pyschologist and a pyschiatrist that centre link have told me to see to confirm the stress leave but now they think they know better than all these mental health professionals and are refusing their qualified assessments than I am still not coping. Now I'm fighting for them to accept it.

It's RoboDept all over again trying to prove to the Govt that I did not have a debt to pay back.

I see the 'R U OK' days promoted, phone LifeLine or Beyond Blue on the media everyday, I have recently heard Jim Charmers talk of a "wellness campaign' that the Govt is creating though I am not sure what it's about. But it dosen't matter anyway.

To me right now it is just more talk to make it look like they are doing



something and to make themselves feel better, not us.

I have been crying out for help since January 2021 and nobody has been listening. The Politicians don't see me... nor all the other people, including kids, that have fallen through the cracks.. we are not 'all in this all together' after all nor included in 'nobody will be left behind', the words our current Prime Minister. We have been left behind to fend for ourselves in the best way we can.

3rd world country conditions in one of the richest countries in the world.

I do have ideas of what can be done to achieve cheaper and faster solutions to get people into homes and have a roof over our heads if you would like to hear of them. We are the ones who do think out of the box when it is us stuck in the box. We have to. I spoke to a local Labor MP on the 9th March last year and she thought my idea was great idea but that's as far as it went.

It has taken many decades to get to this crisis point, it's politicians that have been in charge of running this country not us. And they have ended up failing their citizens of providing what is a Basic Human right of not having enough affordable homes for everybody.

It has to change.

We have a surplus right now, spending billions of dollars on war equipment, billions more on tax breaks for the rich, billions given out in negative gearing for investors to build their wealth. The inequality that has been created is mind boggling, and it is now starting to kill people via poverty and stress and daily suffering.



We hear talk about a threat of war starting but I sit back and think at least we will 'all be in this together' again once more if it does. Houses will be piles of rubble and everybody will be affected, not just us vulnerable people.

I have seen mass corruption exposed within our Governments. It is time to start spending public funds correctly and build roofs to cover our heads. If they don't, my Govt is my enemy, not another countries.

What we need to hear is 'we see you, we are going to build as many homes as needed starting right now, homes you can afford'.

I feel I am dying prematurely, and the truth is unless life circumstances change, it doesn't phase me. As I said I don't have kids to think about, thank goodness. I no longer have my mother alive that I love with all my heart and miss greatly, I actually now feel blessed she is not here having to share this homelessness life with us and I get so peeved off that I have been made to think this way, that I am blessed my mother is dead.. My God!!

I am so mentally and physically tired that it is a struggle to get up each morning. My beautiful dog and my brother are the ones who I get up for right now.

I can no longer change anything to help myself like I have been able to in my past, the opportunities have been stripped from me to so. It is up to you lot to offer the help needed.

I ask of one thing before I finish.

When you return to your home, look around and notice everything in your house, all the furniture, your home decor and look at what is in

each cupboard and drawer in every room. Think about the hot shower you have and the flushable toilet after you have used it that everybody takes for granted.. including me until 2 years and 5 months ago.. The washing machine in the laundry and the clothes line in the garden. All your cooking appliances, the full size fridge, the size of each room. Take it all in of what you have.

Then imagine tomorrow you go out for a few hours and return to see your house has burnt down to the ground and you have lost everything in it.

You have no insurance to replace it, limited funds in the bank and there is no other home available for you to move into.

If you can manage that sight of your home not being there and the emotions and the feelings of hopelessness and despair not knowing what to do or where to go then you will start to understand us better. Then see yourself in your mid 60's and you will see my story.

All I want, and others, is a basic safe secure home to live in where you don't have a fear of being moved on continuously, and that we can afford. Is that too much for us to ask??????

It was possible before the pandemic in March of 2020.

Thank you for listening to me.