

## **National Housing and Homelessness Plan – Submission.**

**Background:** When regions are impacted by homelessness, it is not only those experiencing homelessness who are affected, their situation also has a profound impact upon communities as a whole. My response to this submission is based upon seeing dramatic changes [REDACTED] as a result of development. While many changes are welcome, there has also been a huge cost to the environment from these changes, along with a critical lack in social housing and a rapidly growing number of people experiencing homelessness. Through local interaction with those experiencing homelessness, some of whom I have taken into my home in an attempt to provide assistance, I have become aware of a concerning range of social welfare issues. I have acted as a citizen advocate, lobbying of government administrators, homeless service provider organisations and the Department of Housing. In this way, I gained some understanding of how hard it is to make a difference.

**Introduction:** The rental market on the Sunshine Coast reflects extremes in wealth and poverty. Rentals at the high end of the market contrast with those at the lowest end of the scale in affordability and availability. In more recent years, extreme shortages of accommodation have increased to the point where rental properties in areas that were previously at the lowest end of the market are now in short supply. Rental ‘auctions’ provide accommodation to the highest bidder, with some tenants paying months in advance. Additionally, a selective market and appraisal process guarantees that properties will not be made available to anyone without employment or who is living on the street. In this submission, I include significant factors of concern, relating to the negative impact of government policies such as ‘mutual obligations’ and the frequent changes of homeless service provider organisations that involve shifts in funding responsibility for homeless clients. This is unsettling for clients, as they go from pillar to post, sent from one organisation to another, just to get their basic needs met. I believe these two policies, in particular, warrant urgent consideration and change.

### **How can governments and community service providers reduce homelessness and/or support people who may be at risk of becoming homeless in Australia?**

Changes of provider organisations that deliver funding and social services are a cause unnecessary stress to clients, who rely upon timely payments to meet critical needs: food, medication and meeting the gap in payment for a temporary roof over their heads. When clients are swapped around between provider organisations in the delivery of funding, new providers have little, if any, understanding of clients’ backgrounds, including serious health concerns. It is yet another pressure placed upon clients to update relevant information of their needs, health details and impacts of disabilities, over and over again, to different providers. There may also be the added stress of a gap in payment between agencies: a funding gap between the days that are funded by one organisation before that of the next. Any shortfall in payment impacts upon funds available for buying food or paying rent for temporary accommodation. The uncertainty of funding is a cause of huge stress that has significantly negative impacts, adding to the burden on mental health. The Housing Department, as a government body, should take full responsibility and accountability as a ‘one stop shop’ for all funding and social services, so that homeless clients are not shuffled around between various providers of services and funding.

**Negative Impacts of ‘Mutual Obligations’ required by Homeless Service Provider Organisations and Centrelink:** This concept needs re-examination. The housing crisis has a profound impact of hardship for all those affected; however, there are government policies that compound this hardship. For example, Centrelink’s ‘mutual obligations,’ on the face of it, may seem reasonable. But when applied as yet another pressure to those in the daily struggle to survive, who are homeless, sick, disabled or unemployed, this concept is not at all productive. It should be recognised that fulfilment of ‘mutual obligations’ is completely futile and has potential to cause profoundly negative impacts. Callously pointless policies should not be imposed in exchange for funding.

In a contractual arrangement of 'mutual obligations', there is an expectation by Centrelink and other homeless service provider organisations that those living on the street should actively seek rental accommodation and/or employment. This arrangement includes those who are sleeping rough, sick or disabled. This expectation is entirely unproductive and cruel, particularly for those who have no personal transport and who are not in a position to afford the high costs of the private rental market.

**Put simply: Applicants who are homeless are not given consideration as tenants from agents in the private rental market. So, enforcing a wild goose chase that inevitably results in being turned away is worse than demoralising; it may also entail an added expense to the applicant and a cause of physical pain and suffering for those who are sick or disabled. Clearly, no realty agent will give credence to an application from anyone on the street as a prospective tenant, especially if they are unemployed.** Additional factors of a housing shortage, where prospective tenants have bidding wars in offers of rental payments in advance, puts the kibosh on any attempts to gain entry. The simple truth is that, if you are homeless, you are not considered as a potential tenant. No matter who you were before, no matter how stable your financial management or how confident you were or that you took care in your appearance and your home surroundings, the prevailing status quo is that there is no escape from being stigmatised and disconnected from mainstream advantages.

**Unemployment and 'Mutual Obligations':** Employment is not offered to those who are unable to guarantee reliability. Maintaining stability in the work environment is far from the realms of possibility, due to the unpredictable nature of survival and having no safe place to sleep. **Sleeplessness plays a huge factor for those who are homeless and unemployed: Sleeping by day is often the only safe time to sleep. So, sleeping through the day to maintain health is essential. Being forcibly sent to find work, under threat of loss of funding, and missing vital sleep to do so, can result in an increased risk of accidents and deepen a sense of failure and despair.** The consequences of being hounded by organisations such as Centrelink to provide proof that clients are 'helping themselves' to find accommodation or employment are unproductive. **These arrangements of 'mutual obligation' with imposed penalties or withdrawal of payments are a major factor in the tipping point of despair.**

**Mental Health Impacts of homelessness:** Day by day, those forced into living on the street fear for their personal safety. Compounding this is the lack of sleep, the insecurity of financial hardship, the stigma, the constancy of the public gaze, the exposure to all weathers and the uncertainty for their future. Added to this can be family breakdown, domestic violence and loss of social connections. All of these issues are hard enough to cope with: the impacts of which have a profound effect on mental health.

**The impact of becoming homeless causes a person's previously sound state of mental and physical health to, unavoidably, deteriorate. Each person who was 'someone' is rendered invisible and, concurrently, is forced to remain glaringly exposed to the public gaze.**

So, this fruitless exercise of institutionalised pressure and control, with the expectation of 'mutual obligations,' brings yet more hardship and feelings of hopelessness, failure, despair and depression. When this deterioration leads to suicide, this untimely death is simply put down to 'mental health problems,' as though those who have succumbed are an entirely different species, when the reality is that the unnecessary factor of institutionalised pressure is, potentially, the final straw on the back of an ordinary human being.

**Physical Health Impacts:** Further to these concerns of worsening mental health, people surviving on the street are more likely to have minor and major health issues: exposure to weather; sunburn; colds and 'flu; poor dental health with associated factors of pain; an inability to sleep at night for fear of personal safety and stress-related health issues. By forcing clients to search for accommodation or work, Centrelink and provider organisations serve only to cause significantly adverse impacts upon physical health.



**How can governments, across all levels, best work with communities to support better housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?**

[REDACTED] I understand, however, that in order to secure good outcomes, it is absolutely vital that Indigenous Australians are consulted with as fully as possible and provided with supportive, culturally appropriate representation and assistance. An Indigenous heritage frequently involves social marginalisation in mainstream society and significant disadvantage in accessing housing. Someone who understands this marginalisation can make a significant difference. Service providers should ensure the presence of Indigenous caseworkers to provide support for Indigenous citizens experiencing homelessness.

Becoming homeless and enduring life on the street places those with Indigenous heritage into a category of exceptional vulnerability, particularly when coupled with compounding factors of aging and disability. Even within the general context of those experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough, the risk to personal safety of Indigenous citizens is far more compromised by these factors than most and, justifiably, leads to feelings of extreme insecurity when sleeping rough.

**Colin's story. (Not his real name.)** I have acted as a citizen advocate for an Indigenous man who I will call 'Colin', who had been sleeping rough [REDACTED] I saw him there on a regular basis. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] regular attention to dental hygiene and general health care is of major importance. [REDACTED] a process of early intervention should have prevented the impending state of homelessness for someone like Colin, before he was forced to live on the street.

**Sufferers of homelessness, particularly those of Indigenous heritage, are forced into an awareness of the need to maintain invisibility within the community.** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This is not a simple matter for any homeless person: essential amenities, such as access to water and public toilets are vital. Anyone with the condition of diabetes, whether the more serious and potentially life-threatening insulin dependent, Type 1 IDDM or Type 2 (late onset) diabetes mellitus, both types require regular access to adequate hydration and close proximity to essential public amenities.

Sleep deprivation is an acute factor impacting on health and safety for those who are homeless in public areas. It is well documented that the stress of constantly remaining alert to potential risks, inherent to the public exposure of homelessness, increases cortisol levels and raises blood pressure levels. [REDACTED]

Being homeless in all weathers, including storms and winter cold, is a miserable state for anyone; [REDACTED] Exposure to elements, such as extreme summer heat with temperatures of 36°C, poses risks of heat stroke and dehydration. The consequences to health for someone with diabetes can have a huge impact: this is especially true for a senior person with interrelated factors of co-morbidity.

**Storms posed a direct safety risk to Colin, as well as extreme discomfort and the risk of chest infections. At certain times of year,** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] having to consider risks of becoming totally blind, while living on the street. How can this situation happen in a first-world country?



A [REDACTED] held Colin's mail for him but this could mean that it was weeks before he was able to access his mail. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] What can happen (and this certainly did happen to Colin, several times), was that when an 'update' with the Department of Housing was required to confirm his ongoing situation of homelessness, the form would not be attended to in sufficient time before Colin was 'dropped off' the list and the process would begin all over again. Due to this, Colin found himself perpetually homeless and overwhelmed by hopelessness, as he despaired of ever having a roof over his head.

[REDACTED] he could not access online sites, such as with the Queensland Homelessness Information Platform (QHIP) provider, to facilitate his claim for accommodation. This limitation excluded him from access to many services, including those provided by government departments.

People who are experiencing homelessness are in situations where they will not know when a random letter or form from Government may appear and it may be very difficult to access and complete such forms. A requirement to constantly 'update' to advise that a person still needs accommodation is a cause of unnecessary stress and hardship. It is difficult for those who do not have the skills or ready access to help, as well as for those who do have skills but no fixed address to receive mail. It should be taken for granted that circumstances have not changed unless notification is provided. In the unlikely situation that accommodation is available it is easy enough for the Housing Department to make contact. If, after several attempts are made by the Department and contact has not been successful, the accommodation can be given to someone else. Whereas, for those who are homeless and cannot afford the cost involved in spending hours on a mobile phone, trying to make contact with government departments that have people on perpetual hold, establishing contact is no small matter. (Especially so, when the line cuts out during this process.)

At length, Colin was assisted by someone at the community centre to lodge an application for accommodation with the Department of Housing with all required documentation, including a medical certificate. Receipt was acknowledged but he was told there is a significant waiting list of years. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I provided support for Colin in contacting the Housing Department and local Member of Parliament and through an online search for suitable accommodation of a small, self-contained and affordable rental situation but I did not meet with any success. A conversation with an owner would all go swimmingly, until I turned up with Colin. Then, there was an immediate 'shut down'. In the short time that it took for me to make contact with Colin and to take him to meet the owner, the following would happen, either: (a) the owner said he had decided to take the unit off the market or (b) someone else had a 'prior claim'. For those in society who say that everyone enjoys equal opportunities, they should re-educate themselves about Indigenous marginalisation. I had attempted to help Colin as a citizen advocate and, although I had persisted for some time, I was not successful. Four years later, Colin was still sleeping rough.

It was not until [REDACTED] that housing was finally provided for him. The availability of this accommodation took several weeks, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All the while, Colin was sleeping rough [REDACTED]

The first thing that governments can do to make a difference is to ensure that Indigenous citizens have culturally appropriate advocacy services and this advocacy should extend further, to provision of Indigenous caseworkers that assist homeless service providers. Indigenous citizens who are experiencing homelessness should be 'triaged' for

adequate care and the provision of services. [REDACTED]

**I ask: What Government measures are in place to see that senior citizens, especially those with underlying health conditions, are PREVENTED from experiencing even ONE SINGLE DAY on the streets? If there are none, then there is something very, very wrong with this 'first-world' country!**

If our nation is in such a broken state that it fails to provide for the homelessness of senior citizens, [REDACTED] then of what use is the Government. That anyone in this country is faced with such dire circumstances is an utter disgrace and brings shame to every level of Government and to every politician in the spectrum. This degradation of humanity in Australia is absolutely appalling: Australia is (supposedly) a first-world country!

**How can governments and the private and community sectors, help to improve sustainable housing and better prepare housing for the effects of climate change?**

**Unsustainable Population Growth, Urban Sprawl and Climate Change:** In some areas of Australia, unsustainable population growth is a particular issue: the Sunshine Coast is an example of this. And, coupled with an extreme shortage of social housing, this has a high potential for negative impacts upon the environment, the diversity of native flora and fauna species, and the community. The critical lack of social and affordable housing for the existing population clearly indicates that the Sunshine Coast cannot support further unsustainable levels of population growth. The irreversible loss of flora and fauna species is a shameful indictment on the lack of due diligence at every level of government: Australians have already lost so much of our unique, irreplaceable heritage.

As at 30 June 2023, it is reported that there are 1049 species (257 animals and 792 plants) listed as threatened under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992. A significant number of these species are also listed as threatened nationally, under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. **Poor forward planning and the critical need for housing continues to push policies of vegetation clearing. Loss of forested habitat and food trees impacts significantly on wildlife. Vulnerable, threatened and endangered Australian native birds and animals include: Koalas, Glossy Black Cockatoos, the Grey-Headed Flying Fox, Greater Gliders and several key species of frogs. It appears that nothing much is being done to bring about positive change!**

**An Extinction Crisis is upon us:** Excessive clearing continues, in a reckless forward drive of population expansion that will also create significant impacts on climate change, no matter what measures of sustainability are built into planning. As a result of the current levels of human population growth in specific areas, native wildlife species are surely facing an extinction crisis. **Considering track records, it appears that every level of government needs to focus on their responsibility of due diligence towards prevention of further losses of these irreplaceable natural assets by capping population growth in specific areas like the Sunshine Coast.**

**Planning for Best Practice:** Acceptance of best practice in town planning models is of vital importance to protect and sustain Australia's natural assets. **Higher levels of government accountability in replacing greenfield developments with infill construction, thereby further reducing urban footprints, is of vital importance. Maintaining preservation of species and forested green space, including old growth trees and natural hollows, green corridors and wildlife tunnels under roads are necessary measures. Sustainable building practices incorporating solar power and rainwater tanks should be inherent in construction practices in Australia's climate.**

**Construction of more medium density dwellings, especially in CBD areas that provide ready access to public transport and employment, would provide a vital contribution; low-density housing with inter-connectivity of linked paths, where pedestrians can walk to shops and take bicycle trips, without negotiating roads or traffic, will improve liveability in urban areas and contribute to better outcomes for climate change.**

**Urban Sprawl: Best practice also considers what NOT to do.** Urban sprawl of densely packed houses, mostly within new estates, acts like a pressure cooker: humans are territorial - we all need enough space between dwellings for privacy in daily living AND we need a vital balance of green space around us! An horrific example of lack of space between dwellings can be seen at Aura, a development on the Sunshine Coast. A trend for construction of narrowed street widths is another example of bad planning that can be seen on the Coast: this has resulted in people parking on footpaths to allow for through traffic. (And, as a consequence, getting fined for this.) Ad hoc development approvals for high-rise structures at the beach and poorly planned housing developments, without wildlife corridors and lacking green spaces, have serious impacts on human health and the quality of the environment.

**What should governments, private industries, the not-for-profit and community sectors focus on to help improve access to housing and housing affordability in the private market?**

**Provision of Social Housing on New Estates:** Despite a steep increase in development, there has been a proportionate loss of social housing. A mandate on development requiring a minimum of 20% subsidised social housing, set aside on all new estates, is a priority in addressing supply shortfall.

**Critical Lack of Social Housing for older women and single women families:** Specific intervention and extrapolation of future need, in the now critical need for social housing, begins with adequate funding for provision of social housing, particularly for senior women and for single women families, as the most urgent priority. **Restructuring Government-subsidised private investment into Personal Loans:** There is significant problem with government subsidised private investment in community housing that lasts for a specific period of time and is regarded as transitional, with an end-date for government funding. Since older women and single women families form a significant sector of those experiencing homelessness, this does not resolve into anything other than that of a very distressing band-aid situation for these women, who will have to leave when these subsidies end. It is unlikely that the homeless situation is going to improve for a woman as she ages: five years may go by and she is that much more settled in 'her home.' Without an improvement in financial circumstances, prospects of increased independence for senior women and single women families are bleak. **Solutions must be found to ensure that older women can remain safely housed. Perhaps, interest-free, affordable Government micro-loans (similar to a student loan) could provide a solution for permanent residency of the unit. Obviously, financial adjustments need to be taken into account, if the woman leaves.**

**Capping and Freezing the Rent:** Concurrently, there is an urgent need for increased rental subsidies and capping and freezing the rising costs of rental accommodation so that people can remain stable in retaining accommodation. **Employment suffers a heavy toll when workers lose accommodation, causing a subsequent shortage of local skills. Homelessness, resulting from financial instability and subsequent rises in costs of rental and mortgages, impacts on local employment. Capping and freezing the cost of rental accommodation will significantly reduce the impacts of homelessness on the workforce, which can affect people from all walks of life.** Risks to health and personal safety, arising from homelessness, also compromises the safety and effectiveness of local workplaces. A significant indicator of social dysfunction is the widening gap between wealth and poverty caused through unemployment. When employment is impacted by homelessness, formerly functional individuals become entrenched in poverty.

**How can all levels of government, along with housing organisations, institutional investors, not-for-profits, and private industry, improve access to social housing, which includes public housing and community housing?**

**Temporary measures: Emergency accommodation and 24/7 drop-in centres with kitchen and laundry facilities, hot showers, access to advocacy on a regular basis and 24/7 security personnel are essential measures.** This provision



should include (without charge) the provision of tea and coffee, food parcels, blankets, tents, hot showers with personal toiletry items and towels provided, laundry products and facilities, the availability of a hot soup kitchen supplying regular daily meals and around-the-clock 24/7 employment of security personnel. A number of these facilities, throughout regional and rural areas are needed.

**Transitional and permanent hostel and boarding house accommodation:** Construction of hostel accommodation and renovation of existing dwellings for accommodation close to CBD areas would also ease the burden of hardship and pain in the current crisis. Safety nets are badly needed to put a roof over the heads of the largest sector of homeless population, as indicated in the Summary Paper, that of single, unemployed men, who are over thirty-five.

**Crisis Accommodation as a Response to Domestic Violence:** There is a severe shortage of crisis shelters for women, including elderly women and children. The lack of provision of crisis accommodation can prove fatal. The most important social strategy for community, as a whole, is to ensure safety for all. Domestic violence is a critical factor driving an urgent, ongoing need for crisis accommodation. People who are surviving primary homelessness on the street, living in cars or 'couch surfing' are also at serious risk of violence and need safety. **As a measure of providing safety at night for those who are living in cars, the provision of 24/7 security guards at car parks and showgrounds would save lives and, in the process, save significant costs, considering the expenditure needed to counter violent crime and hospital care.**

**How could governments work better with industry, community services and other organisations to improve housing outcomes for all Australians?**

**Local Government Restrictions on Tiny houses on wheels, Caravans and Buses must be lifted. The red tape of excessive constraints placed upon those living in self-sufficient tiny houses on wheels, caravans and buses is unnecessary. Many of these dwellings use solar power and have minimal impacts on the ecology.** Once a tiny house on wheels, caravan or bus has been adequately connected to grey water and sanitation and/or arrangements are in place for the use of facilities at the property owner's residence, there should be little intervention by Council or State governments. For example, Sunshine Coast Council currently has inflexible regulations that govern the number of tiny houses on moveable trailers, caravans and buses that are permitted on private property and the duration that they may stay. Dwellings on wheels are also subject to more stringent regulations than if they were simply lifted off their wheels and placed onto the ground. **In a homeless crisis, there is no place for a privileged attitude from those holding Council positions who impose these rules and yet fail to provide the security of safe homes for constituents who are subject to these regulations. Trivial complaints from neighbours are given more weighting than the safety, security and peaceful enjoyment of people doing it tough, who then face threats of fines or eviction. Council's rules also have a negative potential to force elderly residents and young families into dangerous situations, devoid of choice.**

**Council Regulations for Camping on Private Property:** In a housing crisis, restrictions for camping on private properties impose harsh and unnecessary constraints. **As long as camp sites are kept reasonably clean, tidy and sanitary, there should be no fees of any kind and far fewer constraints.** Council fees (which have been temporarily waived at the current time) are charged for any temporary shelter, even a tent, to stay on private property for the limited time that Council permits these to remain. Myriad rules, regulations, surveillance and fees revolve around the issue of camping on private land, including whether or not the campers are relatives. This is nonsense! **Every person is entitled to dignity and safety. It appears that Council tactics are focussed more on revenue raising, rather than helping to alleviate the incredible hardships facing campers, who are doing their best just to find safe situations that are not costly (so they can save for something better!) and that also offer a modicum of privacy.**

**Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**

**Infrastructure:** The strength of community fabric depends upon the inclusive health and welfare of us all and the delivery of infrastructure and services to ensure that this is possible. Areas of intense population growth, such as the Sunshine Coast, have insufficient levels of infrastructure to cater for the existing population. More funding is needed for hospitals, social housing, crisis accommodation, schools, accredited child care, government-owned aged care facilities and improved services in public transport and interrelated provisions for car parking. Population growth has been actively encouraged on the Sunshine Coast. Concurrently, insufficient infrastructure, per capita, has been provided for these increases. Population expansion is placing pressure on facilities and the provision of standards.

**Drug and alcohol addictions compound the existing social problems associated with homelessness. Safe-houses, ready access to provision of services and rehabilitation centres are critical in prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol addictions.** Unemployment and social disenfranchisement coupled with addictions, theft and violence are very bleak social indicators for our collective future welfare. Further marginalisation is no solution. While there is a homeless population, there will be addictions and crime. **Therefore, funding for drug and alcohol rehabilitation is critical, especially on the Sunshine Coast.**

**(Over) Policing of Camping on Public Property:** Survival is a daily battle for those forced to live on the streets. For example, those who have no car in which to keep their few essential items safe, have to leave these in their tent or camp site, while attending unavoidable appointments or buying food. There is an inherent risk that, on their return, belongings will be missing or vandalised. Limiting time away from a camp site becomes a factor in day to day survival. Homelessness can happen to anyone, no-one chooses to be socially and materially disenfranchised. Yet, the intolerant, antisocial behaviour of people in the wider community, who are NOT homeless, is extraordinary: there are people who randomly vandalise the personal property of campers and/or voice disparaging remarks to anyone doing it tough, in passing. These persons are a cause of greater problems than any risk of theft from other campers, a majority of whom tend to respect the property of those in a similar situation.

A change in police culture would make a big difference for those forced to live in the harshness of the public gaze. Police have not shown themselves to be particularly concerned about reports of damage and theft when the missing property belongs to campers. Whereas, when complaints about campers are made, police ask campers to move to another location, which can place a tremendous burden upon those without a car. The lack of tolerance in the community for the appearance of tents should not outweigh the needs of campers to remain in locations chosen for relative safety. As long as camp sites are kept in a sanitary state and there is no disturbance of the peace, the right to camp on public property should be respected and some privacy afforded. Police also have alternatives, such as the provision of warnings, before moving campers on, but such orders should not be given simply to pander to the whims of those more fortunate.

**Proactive measures that prevent particular 'at risk' persons from ending up on the street should be the primary purpose of a safety net. Colin's story provides one example, as does the case of Marnie and her partner, Tim.**

**Marnie's Story:** (Real names are withheld.) This information is provided to air valid concerns about departmental neglect, especially in relation to Marnie, in the failure to provide someone [REDACTED] with the safety net of suitable temporary and permanent accommodation, immediately, on losing long-term tenancy. Marnie and her partner Tim became homeless [REDACTED] The couple do not have a car and were sleeping rough [REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Acting as a citizen advocate, I first became aware of Marnie and Tim in September 2022. The couple had been sleeping rough in all weathers [REDACTED]. In order to gain accommodation for this couple, it took a great many emails and phone calls and a considerable period of time before Marnie and Tim were provided with temporary accommodation. From the time Marnie and Tim [REDACTED] [REDACTED] their time sleeping rough was in excess of three months. [REDACTED] the couple were provided with a fortnight in a motel and were then granted subsidised stays for intermittent periods of time, mainly to avoid dangerous thunderstorms. From [REDACTED] this subsidised accommodation became more stable, but never definite, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Social welfare providers questioned whether Marnie was 'helping herself' to find her way out of her predicament. This attitude indicates a complete disconnect and lack of understanding of the reality of life on the street, especially for someone in her physical condition. [REDACTED]

As it relates to the concept of 'mutual responsibility/obligation' by clients to find accommodation themselves, the only way that Marnie and Tim could attend appointments with realty agents, as required by providers and Centrelink, was to budget for expenses in catching taxis. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There were also concerns about loss of personal belongings, when leaving essential items unattended in their tent to attend appointments. It is damaging and shameful that Centrelink and other providers impose sham and degrading searches for accommodation upon clients. It is also an indictment that suitable accommodation was not found by the Housing Department for Marnie and Tim BEFORE they had to vacate their previous rental premises. And it is no thanks to social welfare providers or the Housing Department that Marnie and Tim [REDACTED] survived their ordeal of homelessness. **Where is the safety net? How is it possible that a couple, [REDACTED] was left to find their own accommodation?**

Finally, [REDACTED], after constant lobbying as a citizen advocate for Marnie and Tim, a unit was provided by the Department of Housing through a provider organisation. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the couple had spent a total of eight months without permanent housing [REDACTED]

Enumerated throughout this submission are issues and community-led solutions in addressing the acute shortage of social housing. All it takes is political will, a proactive approach at every level of government and much more funding than has been provided over past decades. **The Sunshine Coast is a microcosm, indicative of responses needed on a national scale. There is an unprecedented level of community need and there must be the same level of funding in solving the national shortage of social housing.**



**Conclusion: Positive Solutions for Positive Outcomes.** In this submission, I have discussed government policies in the delivery of services and provided the personal background of two senior people with significant health issues, who should never have been living on the street. **Proactive measures that prevent particular ‘at risk’ persons from ending up on the street should be the primary purpose of a safety net.**

**Changes in provider organisations that deliver funding and social services cause unnecessary stress to clients, who rely upon timely payments to meet critical needs: food, medication and meeting the gap in payment for a temporary roof over their heads. The Department of Housing should be a one-stop housing provider.**

**Recognising the negative impacts on of government policies, such as ‘mutual obligations’ on the vulnerable lives of those experiencing homelessness, is inherent in this discussion.** The culture that shapes government policies and private institutions filters down, contaminating staff with prejudiced views towards the socially disadvantaged. The mental and physical health of those without the safety of a roof over their head, are fragile. There is no need to make life worse for people who are living with hardship, just because government and/or provider organisations control the golden keys of taxpayer funding. Those who are in privileged positions, including decision makers, policy providers and those delivering social services and funding, all need intensive training to clear workplaces of prejudice towards anyone living on the street and to promote a kindlier attitude to those who are socially disadvantaged.

The Human Rights Commission reports that Indigenous people in Australia suffer grossly disproportionate rates of disadvantage against all measures of socio-economic status. **Social marginalisation of Indigenous Australians limits their acceptance in the housing market. Whether this is due to racism or any other factors, those of Indigenous heritage are negatively impacted and should, therefore, receive culturally appropriate assistance in securing housing and provider services.** It is important to recognise that poor health and reduced longevity impacts upon Indigenous citizens to a greater extent, which should also be taken into account with timely provision of housing. If a double jeopardy of physical disability exists, Indigenous citizens are even more at risk and urgent intervention is needed.

**Higher levels of government accountability in replacing greenfield developments with infill construction, thereby further reducing urban footprints, is of vital importance. Maintaining preservation of species and forested green space, including old growth trees with natural hollows, green corridors and wildlife tunnels under roads are necessary measures.**

**An Extinction Crisis of native flora and fauna species is imminent. Heedless of this, excessive clearing continues, in a reckless forward drive of population expansion.** A significant number of species are listed as threatened nationally, under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Only a progressive approach in functional governance that is focussed on provision of sustainable housing, while maintaining responsible care and balance with the natural environment, can meet this Australia-wide level of need. **Sustainable building practices incorporating solar power and rainwater tanks should be inherent in construction practices in Australia’s climate.**

**Medium density dwellings, especially in CBD areas that provide ready access to public transport and employment would provide a vital contribution of housing; low-density housing with inter-connectivity of linked paths, where pedestrians can walk to shops and take bicycle trips, without negotiating roads or traffic, will improve liveability in urban areas and contribute to better outcomes for climate change.**

**Housing can take many forms, including preventative measures: support for capping and freezing the rent, allowance for a number of caravans, buses and tiny homes (on wheels) to remain on acreage properties on a semi-permanent basis, provision of loans for permanent residency in social housing for older women and single women**

**families, construction of boarding house and hostel accommodation and a percentage of social housing on new estates, all of these options are valid forms of permanent housing.**

Where there is a huge gap in wealth and poverty, there will be drugs, although, paradoxically, there are no social barriers in drug addiction. **If people are to live functional lives, drug and alcohol rehabilitation is an important facet of this and there is a critical need for funding support for rehabilitation on the Sunshine Coast.**

**Temporary measures of crisis accommodation and properly funded 24/7 drop-in centres with 24/7 security personnel are vitally important and may save lives.**

**Provision of 24/7 security guards at specified car parks and showgrounds, as a safety net for those who are living in cars, would save lives and, in the process, save significant costs, considering the expenditure needed to counter violent crime and hospital care.**

**The strength of community fabric depends upon the inclusive health and welfare of us all and the delivery of infrastructure and services to ensure that this is possible. Population expansion is placing pressure on facilities and the provision of standards: more funding for infrastructure is essential.**

**Camping in the safety of private property should not incur any type of fees from local government.** It is important to keep in balance the frivolous complaints of neighbours about camping, as opposed to the need for safety for those who would otherwise be forced into the public gaze by the housing crisis. **Every person is entitled to courtesy, dignity and safety.**

