

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Mr Brian Woods

Organisation Name:

Your position or role:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::

Public housing, Housing affordability, Employment, Services, Rough sleeping, Indigenous people, Family violence, Mental health

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

An advocacy body , Working in Homelessness services , A peak body , Other (please describe)
overall experience most areas

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

DRUG USAGE

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Submission attached

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

Drug issues have emerged so big, it has a dominant effect within housing issues, and not a good impact, therefore needs to be looked into when creating priorities, as free choice drug uptake is less worthy as priority than other priority classifications who create less problems.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: [5e42ced430040-INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA.doc](#)

File2:

File3:

Signature:

brian woods

INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA

Key objective: *solving homelessness and affordability, and priority criteria*

I have assisted the homeless over the years and also am a member of the T.U.V. Tenancy Union Victoria, however, the views in this submission is not related to the views of the TUV, and are from more inner and personal experiences. My mainstay areas of interest are homelessness, tenancy laws, and best priority standards.

The sudden big rise in the uptake of “Ice, meth” has become a very relevant factor in matters of housing and homelessness. Most state housing estates have almost a 90% user percentage per 100 property ratio, and has attracted “as witnessed” and on estate cam footages, a plague of state housing drug user couch surfers, and in-home drug makers/users/sellers. These people live as if they are not housed, they sleep approximately once per 3 days and are the cause of daily police call-outs and property damage. These need to be put far lower on the priority list, as easy housing just assists them to not move forward in life

Before doing anything in regards to housing assistance and priority, one has to weigh up what are urgent needs and what the priority needs are, then balance it with other factors.

Of late, it is often seen that very bad ranked tenants get priority, the new housing wrecked, annoyance to existing tenants or neighbours, many police call outs, drug affected behaviour, and so on, whilst the “street sleeping” non drug user with good prospects of being a good tenant and more appreciative of having housing, seem to be put into low priority for being a better person. It is easy for armchair experts to say give priority to the worst apples by saying they have no hope and no prospects, who rarely appreciate or respect the housing granted to them. Whereby, I personally have seen this theme is all wrong, and the armchair experts would be complaining if those persons were housed next door to them, plus, gifted housing removes incentive for them to get their life in order as it’s a pattern, as will describe further on

NSW is starting to drug test state housing applicants and tenants and there is a reason why, as shall be mentioned further down.

New domestic violence criteria. This is not a permanent housing criteria, as most victims are capable like any others to return to usual housing themes and just need temp housing priority not permanent housing priority. Once separated from problem partner there is no long term needs to be justified. These criteria should be altered to transitional housing scheme only, a scheme of subsidised rate housing for a 1 year period only, which is adequate time to save and get back to normal rental, and, still can qualify for standard state housing lists. It is not a gender matter but a circumstance matter. There are even fake claims on partners just to use it to queue jump, with male agreeing to an AVO being falsely laid.

Debate has it, that some feel priority should go to those who have no prospect of any type success in life, whilst long term housing priority criteria requires a person must have a long list of failed housing addresses, and on the other hand are the equally homeless with better prospects of getting back to a normal stable life.

The sooner is costing a fortune; the latter is hardly a burden at all. The other element is appreciation of being housed, the sooner often fails that, and the latter persons don't.

A close study of those who do not appreciate being given housing, subsidised housing especially. They all mostly showed signs of living as if homeless even when housed, and wouldn't seem to notice much difference if they became homeless again.

There are many street homeless who are homeless because they spend their welfare on drugs and prefer drugs over housing, unless someone gifts them housing, and if direct debit of rent was not available, most those persons when housed would not pay their rent.

When I started up homeless person's org a while back during rental shortage heights, there was a big sudden spike in working mature homeless, but these were like the aforesaid class of domestic violence situations where transitional housing was more suitable than permanent housing assistance whilst at same time also eligible for general waiting lists. It amazed me to see a quite well off female friend as a principal assistant of well known upmarket school, too proud to live with friends, saying she faced being homeless during marriage break up property settlements, due to rental shortage.

There is no sign of subsidised housing creating any improvement or future assistance too many of the current high priority criteria cases like drug users and career criminals, indeed they have been costly in many other ways once housed. It is starting to cause govt headaches in its new part private part state housing estates.

Should we not help those who are prepared to appreciate and help themselves? In doing so, sends a message to the others. As currently the opposite is seen to be done. And, who makes the better tenants? Who has prospects of improvement where they might move out of subsidised housing for another to have it?

Is transitional housing a better testing theme, to see if a person inputs rents, behaves and a period to get on their feet and into normal rental housing, and what if after one year they failed to get on their feet or fail to get a rental, then what were the causes, and from those causes are any identifiable to qualify for urgent permanent housing. But, cost of weekly illegal drugs should not be acceptable criteria as that is a self preference choice regardless if an addiction.

Most today's priority cases are on meth, and meth users should be housed among eachother, as their once per 3 days sleep cycle and other issues make it hard to co-exist with non meth users

What we need is a very low grade urgent accommodation system, as homelessness breaches two UN Articles. We need state land to create a tent type estate, which is for rough sleepers. A bit like a tent powered site.

Whilst in the aforementioned, interviews can determine patterns and factors including any drug usage, and recommend the level of assistance for that person, such as a basic estate, similar to tent city but with permanent portable living quarters on govt land, may or may not have public or private toilets and laundries, as we are not to encourage such temporary living theme. Or are they better suited in transitional to test if can get on their own feet, or are they worthy of priority permanent subsidised housing.

How easy is it to use State vacant land, dig trenches for wires and pipes, and put either tents or portable rooms, making it a site like a caravan site, some powered-only but can take a tent, some can take a caravan if person has or buys one, others can have a portable room already fitted, and then solve issues like, will toilets or laundry's be private or public, per each various type system. These also are suitable for meth users who only seem to be able to live among other meth users due to their lack of sleep being mutual.

State housing are holding many properties vacant for prisoners, this is a big wastage and has seen many complaints even by the media, and why the reward many are asking. Why not utilise those empty abodes, keep rotating them with a next current vacant home, so if released they have a more current next available home as priority and at all times stays on a list with a next on priority home until released. Usually a good thing as removes them from old networks upon release.

Who really needs housing versus who really deserves housing? The UN Articles say both but that's not always possible. If we house a no hope person ahead of a hopeful person, we are pushing the hopeful person into a no hope zone. So who will most deserve or appreciate being housed, this is the better criteria and sets an example bar for the other class to attain.

I see many people making decisions and policy with no idea of the realities, or falling for hard luck stories, and, are people who would be wanting most people evicted had they been given housing next door to them, a sad reality, and the old state housing stigma is worse than ever, where in Victoria, from mass thousands of complaints, only a handful are taken to VCAT for eviction matters. And it is here, where it is time to reveal I have been homeless but also I am in state housing.

However, let me explain my 7 years here in common state housing flats, an estate of around 7 blocks of flats, around 9 flats each, initially many on more harmless weed drug, a few arguments over buying the weed or getting it on credit, and occasional police call outs, then around 3 years ago everything changed, moreso around the time federal govt taxed cigarettes out of reach of those on the dole, who then found meth was cheaper, suddenly these flats had easily 8 out of every 10 people using meth, and one dealer became many dealers, then many learned how to make their own drugs, dangerous state housing meth labs, hard to detect, but its said it costs around \$25k to special clean such flats or houses. Its not as complex as main drug cooks, as state housing tenants use basics like AAA or Tiny 9v batteries and a few basic chemicals and they have high risk of fire and explosion, as a neighbour, you hear the sheraded knife cutting up the batteries and batteries being dropped and rolling, people having over 40 people come to a flat per day/night, almost all of the 40 have kit bags or back

packs, not what you take for local visits. Then noise all night as meth stops normal sleep pattern, meth people sleep about once per 3 days usually in early afternoon, and CCTV shows the area like a mice plague of people going from flat to flat from midnight to 6am, many arguments, especially about money for drugs, and with most on drugs they all know each other as the interest is in-common, where if I have an issue with noise I complain but it will be ignored, but if the meth people have a problem with another's noise, then its doors and windows smashed, and maybe police called, but never is the landlord notified. A good example late night early morning whilst I write this submission, am in a block of 9 where most are on ice, arguments so loud it triggers CCTV not by motion but by noise, 8 people next to me in a 1 br flat, the CCTV size of match box and cheap, but these people are so loud that it sounds like its in my flat when playing back recording, so next, the wasted police resources, police high speed lights flashing stop with skid, then another about half hour later, fast, lights flashing, then about 45 mins later the check up patrol shining spotlights in flats. 3 CARS. The point being, police resources wasted when already overloaded, police almost live here. Usually it's all mostly over drugs or couch surfers being told to move on. The incident grew more, but when I complain to state landlord they say its fine, in fact twice suggested I leave rather than offenders. Favouring drug offenders ahead of good tenants, pretty much backs up what I am saying about getting priorities right.

Even when landlords do tell them to stop any breaches, they continue regardless until offender is fully confident they control the landlord. And, long before this I had much skill in housing, the tenancy Act, case authorities and so on, however this was showing in just 3 years, the whole system, people, and criteria's had changed, but more importantly showed me who does or does not appreciate assistance given to them pertaining to housing. Therefore, in just 3 years, many local house breakers, car thieves, "usually via car jacking or home invasion", many making or selling illegal drugs, a tax evaded industry, and most their welfare goes on drugs as they do not eat much, most have no fridge or TV as the drugs create in mind some other type living world.

How are ice users getting a life? And, are there signs of them getting off ice? There are two known denominators to getting off ice. Whole family shutting them out has been a successful reality check, or losing their accommodation, the latter sometimes takes two lessons. But is what we should strive for the most, whatever gets people back to normal chance of life.

A good example, its now common to sublet illegally, so many are subletting 1 br flats or putting in more than a home was designed to have, not to house them but to make money from them to buy more drugs, and then it's a group awake day and night, in my case saw the last 3 years having to sleep on my lounge-room hard floor as noise all night by sublets at my bed wall made my bedroom uninhabitable, as I write this, 8 people in room adjoining my bedroom wall too noisy to sleep and a 9th arrived 1.45 am, took recording though it will be ignored, the landlord inaction is so negligent it need not be mentioned as its too obvious. My point is, with these new drugs comes new attitudes, attitudes not acceptable to be put amongst non meth users or workers who need sleep. They live like housing, seems like its like it's a bit of grass with a tent on it and part like a community centre with many drop-ins per day, not friendships as they often argue heavily. So what I am saying is in last 3 years we are

dealing with a totally different set of situations and criteria's. Indeed, we have been gifting meth use big rewards with the only result being trouble in return and no appreciation or respect.

The making of meth in most the subsidised or emergency accommodation situations and costs of clearing it, led NSW Govt to start drug testing their state housing tenants, and when kicked out, their chances of sorting their real life out, gets much higher, as they will leech anything until all is exhausted like family, friends, housing, then they make the reality check. In other words, like surgery, be cruel to be kind is the cure for most common drug use types.

Migrant and refugee queue jumping. I make no apologies for not sharing some peoples sensitivities on this subject, It is hard to justify how either are in any worse position than an existing street sleeper homeless person, and is almost hypocritical to bring people here if we do not have enough housing for them, as any home they get, was destined to an existing homeless had we not allowed them here. Some may argue a family who the main bread winner loses their job is in just as much need. The new English language assurance policy gives good odds of employment, I think this too is another classification where only transitional housing should be eligible for one or two years as there are no long term proven obstacles, but still eligible for general waiting list

It is unfortunate to have to tell this cold hard truth, but today's homeless are different to past days, most find drugs more appealing than housing and do not even try to get their life back on track, and most their alleged mental health is really just bad attitude and not anything malfunctioning in the brain, and bad attitude is diagnosed wrongly as mental illness. We need to face this is true in most modern cases, and it is time it was taken on board. People would need to do far more to convince me they will help themselves get life back on track. The new era should be priority for those prepared to help themselves along side any assistance given. If one is going to be a good advocate then they are of no use if fooled or used. It is very expensive to subsidise cheaper rents, however, damage to property by the modern type tenants like state housing with most on meth, and saw a massive increase in severe damage to properties, too many persons in those properties, including illegal sub-lets which must always be discouraged. Tell them, you do your part and show you're off drugs and we will reward it with starting a housing process, but keep an ouster clause of 5 years in case they return to drugs. We do not have enough housing without making the type of entities I first mentioned. Drugs like meth, and, attitude issues are the main problems, homeless are a by-product within those themes and is made worse by rewarding those problems. I seriously believe tent estates are the best to offer to drug users with monitoring of drug usage and allow progression for those who make effort to get off and stay off drugs. There is no sign in near future of policing the drug problems, therefore they will grow bigger. My experience amongst so many, indicates they are more suited living together than to be placed with non drug user tenants.

State housing needs much in the way of changes, and that will help a lot, but requires an active minister and housing director and toss the social pity book out the window. Moreso as the state is selling mass housing stock silently, but not so silent that it wont be on the records, and its new stock only a few go to state housing and most are sold to private, whilst each new lot required prior tenants to need re-housing thus hardly any new housing places at all. So, should we be looking for a federal model, or do we have lazy state departments, however I will not comment on those here.

We have very poor priority criteria in regards to homeless issues, several priority criteria which need to be downgraded to transitional assistance only

We are ignoring the entry of meth and what it does and causes, and the value of giving these people housing when others are more deserving and appreciative

Drugs are a big player in the homeless numbers, as meth makes their minds not really see themselves as homeless, it indeed induces them to preference buying meth ahead of paying rent or share lodging fee. Gifting them housing will not change their life for the better, it will make them secure to stay off the track.

I think we should adopt the following, though Governments never adopt things that require extra work.

1. Drug test all people seeking urgent, priority, or emergency accommodation
2. Drug users or those who show drugs in tests, are to go onto the most basic type emergency accommodation list and told that getting off drugs will elevate what level of accommodation they might get.
3. Every emergency or priority housing tenant should first do a year or two in transitional housing before becoming eligible to permanent home
4. Referral social worker programs trained to focus on solving drugs issues, likely try get families involved, and transitional housing to not be among regular user's housing estates. And assistances to get work.
5. Non drug user priority cases, start off in transitional premium, with no rent direct debit, to test their payment ability, as its too easy to just direct debit, as during the self period of payment it will expose addictions like drugs or gambling problems and may need deeper case interventions.
6. After 5 above, all subsidised housing who receive welfare, must mandatory agree to direct debit of their welfare or face losing the subsidised property
7. It sickens me to watch young mothers bring little babies and kids to buy meth from locals, therefore parents with young kids who test positive to meth etc should be made to have federal govt welfare trial card, in which can also debit rent, so as to avoid serious neglect of children, as most welfare and family payment goes on drugs, parents rarely cook, schooling and sleep disturbed by many blow in's, and often spent at pokies.

8. Consideration of allocating state lands for tent and portable unit estates, cheap to add services, can even make a small welfare direct debit fee.
9. Consideration of more honesty in new social housing, less sold private more returned to public tenants
10. Canvas federal Govt for funds to put towards creating powered basic sites

Sincerely

Brian Woods