

## Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Ms Leah Mootoosamy

**Organisation Name:**North East Multicultural Association

**Your position or role:** Community Outreach Support worker

### 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::**

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

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

Currently or have had a lived experience of homelessness,Other (please describe)

Working in Multiculturalism

**Are there any additional themes we should consider?**

Immigration status

### YOUR SUBMISSION

**Submission:**

North East Multicultural Association (NEMA)

NEMA covers- 5 local government Areas- Alpine shire, rural city of Wangaratta, Rural city of Benalla, Indigo shire, Mansfield Shire.

3 Key issues

1. Overcrowding- Rent affordability/inadequate housing
2. Relationships problems re: Domestic/family Violence
3. Services- access & eligibility re: Migration status

please find our report attached with more in depth information.

1-4 pages

**Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:**

I am writing this on behalf of North East Multicultural Association and our President Susan Ingleton.

### FILE ATTACHMENTS

**File1:** [5e6f0374a3e7c-North East Multicultural Association homeless report.docx](#)

**File2:**

**File3:**

**Signature:**

Leah Mootoosamy

North East Multicultural Association



16/03/2020

Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness: NEMA

To Whom it may concern,

I Leah Mootosamy Currently work as a volunteer for North East Multicultural Association (NEMA) as Community Outreach Support worker. NEMA is a Not-for-profit Organisation whom operates mostly as a volunteer capacity (NEMA currently has 2 paid staff). NEMA covers 5 local government areas in the HUME region of Victoria- Rural city of Wangaratta, Alpine Shire, Rural city of Benalla, Mansfield Shire & Indigo shire.

Clients/members- NEMA's client/members are of all ages & ethnic backgrounds- We work Mostly with migrants and have the occasional refugee who requires support.

**Key issues:** I'm raising **Three** main issues we have highlighted in our CALD communities in the 5 Local government area's our Organisation covers.

1. **Overcrowding-** Multicultural families have moved to the LGA's covered by NEMA. Most families will reside with other family members already living in the HUME region, this usually remains the circumstance until finding employment & housing. This is resulting in overcrowding where there may be 10 people living in 1-2-bedroom units.

**Seasonal workers** are living in accommodation where 7-10 people may be sharing a hotel room or cabin.

**Larger families** are living in smaller dwellings due to the inability of achieving adequate income and employment therefore unable to afford the rent for a bigger house. Most families are of 4 or more people living in a 1-2-bedroom unit.

- 2. Relationships-** Younger Asian women, often in De facto/married relationships with older Australian men. Often these women become widows or isolated from the community in the result of their husband/partner becoming deceased or moving to an aged care facility. More often than not, these women will end up in crisis and are at high risk of losing their homes due to the estate being left to their husband/partners children or other family members. Example: client- Female aged 23 years, from Laos in S.E Asia, was married for 7 years to a 53-year-old man, partner died on their isolated property in Jamieson, Victoria. Client had only lived in Australia for 4 years, could not speak English, had no income, had no Australian education and ended up suffering at the hands of financial abuse perpetrated by her in-laws trying to gain control of the estate.

- **Family & Domestic violence-** NEMA has supported numerous families who are/have experienced/ing family & domestic violence. Unfortunately, most women will stay with their abuser because the houses are not available when they do make the decision to leave their partners. Most women will take their children when they leave and require accommodation immediately. The emergency accommodation is not always suited for a family for long periods of time. EXAMPLE: Female client was pregnant, with 2 younger children in her care, had a mental breakdown at the hands of her partners abuse and was placed in a hotel room for more than 3 weeks with the children. She ended up returning to her partner.
3. **Services-** NEMA often refers clients that are homeless or at risk of homelessness to other services. We are aware that anyone who **is not** an Australian citizen or have Permanent residency status are ineligible for public housing or assistance from Beyond housing. To be eligible for assistance from Beyond housing our clients need to be receiving a Centrelink benefit. The law states **you must** have your permanent residency for **two years** before you are eligible to receive an income. This makes things difficult for people on skilled working visa's and student visas. skilled workers are often supporting their families who entered Australia with them. Visa's vary in terms of what the requirements are, some workers will have a limited number of hours they are able to work, they must have employment that meets their visa requirements. This makes it very hard for families to afford adequate housing.

## Strategies/solutions

North East Multicultural association have paid for accommodation for the occasional client in crisis however, we don't have adequate funding to do this which is why we refer to other organisation's whom specialise in homelessness support. We are finding it difficult when our clients who attend NEMA for help are ineligible for assistance from the necessary support services. People often return to NEMA feeling lost and disheartened. We believe this needs to change as most of our clients have other crises, they need assistance with alongside homelessness.

- We would like to see equality in services- all people in crisis should be able to gain shelter regardless of migration status- if they're already here we need to help them.
- Support for **ALL** families and people on lower incomes in attaining adequate housing – reducing the issue of overcrowding, making rent affordable for struggling families/skilled workers regardless of migration status.
- Emergency services and/or support services need to have housing available for people leaving Family & Domestic violence situations regardless of migration status.