

**Anne's Path - A story of inspiration and courage*

*Name and image have been changed for privacy reasons

Rubbish swirled across the carpark. Overgrown weeds crawled up the graffitied walls. Dirty nappies were left in piles on the pavement. Cars with broken windows were parked in the street. A man recently out of prison visited his girlfriend next door.

This was a community housing option presented to *Anne as she searched for independent living in Melbourne. After her marriage of 43 years ended, *Anne was forced to find a new home. *Anne was dealing with a troubled past that continued to re-surface everywhere she went. Her future was clouded. She had been in a relationship since the age of 16, and now found herself inspecting buildings that filled her with dread.

It could happen to anyone.

When her marriage ended four years ago, *Anne walked the streets of her suburb feeling embarrassed, self-conscious and scrutinised. With little money, no option to buy or rent a house and with rheumatoid arthritis, *Anne was forced to rely on her family. But being an independent woman and needing space, *Anne required her own living arrangements as she dealt with the problems of the past, and soon began looking into community housing options across

Melbourne. Aged in her sixties and in a constant battle with Centrelink, *Anne just wanted a nice apartment in a safe area.

Each inspection increased concerns as *Anne tried to remain positive about her situation. The community housing buildings were dilapidated and far from secure, while cars had been broken into. *Anne loves to drive, and this presented new fears in an already dire circumstance. She wondered if her belongings would be safe. After a particularly horrible inspection where *Anne's sister said, "there is no way you are living here," *Anne was told about new community housing units in Glen Iris with mecwacare.

mecwacare's community housing is designed to promote comfort and independence for people who are over 55 years of age and meet the Department of Human Services eligibility criteria. *Anne attended a mecwacare Open Day

in 2016 at Elm Road. She instantly knew this was the place for her. After listing an interest, signing the paperwork and providing the necessary details to secure her own little unit, *Anne needed constant reassurance from mecwacare that her place was guaranteed. She did not want to miss out on a unit that she claimed as her own immediately on inspection.

From the moment *Anne moved in, the unit has felt like home. *Anne has a balcony where she can tend to plants (she is an avid gardener) and space to continue her hobbies of knitting, embroidery and cooking. She soon met other mecwacare clients in other units and made new friends, occasionally plucking out their weeds and cooking them dinner. The social aspect of her life grew once more. With four children and eight grandchildren, she has found a home and a balance that suits her lifestyle.

Whether it be visiting local shops, watching a film at the cinema or going to the Thai restaurant alone for a wine and a meal, *Anne values her independence and feels safe on her own. She no longer frights when there is a knock on the door. *Anne describes her apartment at Elm Road as “heaven”. In her words, she would like to remain there forever. The neat and



humble abode is the perfect size for her. At night, *Anne now sits on her balcony overlooking the parklands with a glass of wine in hand, admiring

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the view and the independence offered by her homely apartment.

She looks forward to her trips to local suburbs and interstate holidays with family, and even visits her old suburb every so often without worrying about running into a familiar face. The ongoing support provided by mecwacare has *Anne resting at ease. She knows she has someone to talk to whenever a problem arises, and her immaculately clean unit makes the horrible inspections a distant memory.

*Anne’s story has a positive conclusion, but with poor living conditions at so many community housing units across Melbourne there are people who cannot sleep at night due to the conditions they are subjected to.

Nobody should feel unsafe in their own home.

Nobody should feel as though their belongings may be damaged or stolen while they sleep.

Nobody should have to walk out to their car to see vandalism or feel depressed at the sight of their building.

Nobody should fear a knock at the door.

With your help, we can maximise the quality of life for those in need.

With your help, we can continue to make a difference in the community.

Michele Lewis

Michele Lewis
Chief Executive

Your gift will change a life. Thank you for your support.

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