

Christmas is a time for giving; a time for sharing but most importantly, it's a time for family and friends. We share stories and photos, and relive memories. We also rely on the internet to stay connected. Imagine if this was out of reach.



Lorraine is a tenant in one of mecwacare's community housing units.

And this is her story...

Five years ago, Lorraine's world crumbled when she was diagnosed with cancer. A community worker who devoted her life to helping others suddenly found she was the one who needed help. Lorraine was forced to cut back her hours to undertake prolonged life-saving treatment. With a reduced income, she had to move into the attic of a share house in order to cover her medical bills but this was only ever a short-term arrangement and the landlord soon kicked her out. When one of mecwacare's community housing units became available, Lorraine jumped at the chance to move into her very own independent home. She would have been homeless without it. This gave her peace of mind, stability and privacy when she was feeling her worst and despite her deteriorating state and being restricted to bed, Lorraine found a way to stay positive.

Lorraine remained connected to family and friends, who live too far away to visit, through social media. When she was too sick to visit the bank and pay bills, she used internet banking and when she could barely lift her head off the pillow, she watched movies via an internet streaming service.

Lorraine's cancer battle is far from over and she has a new mountain to climb after recently being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. However, Lorraine is a fighter and credits her little home, provided by mecwacare, and the connectivity that the internet provides as keys to her remaining positive. An avid gardener, Lorraine spends her time tending to plants and flowers. On the days when she is too unwell, she doesn't move far from the couch but stays in touch with the outside world through her laptop computer and phone. **Many of us take this for granted.** For Lorraine, it is a necessity. She relies on connectivity to remain independent, positive and safe.

But changes are coming that will impact the lives of our tenants.

In January 2019, the copper phone lines at mecwacare's community housing units in Sandringham will be cut to make way for the National Broadband Network (NBN).

New cabling and data points will be installed at a cost of **\$838 for each unit, which is the same as the average pension payment per fortnight.** It is an expense our tenants simply cannot afford. They come from a history of physical and mental abuse, as well as financial hardship, and they can barely make ends meet.

Without a stable phone line, they will not have access to their 24-hour fast response personal alarm, which helps them feel safe and supported.

Without the internet, they will not be able to keep in contact with family and friends online, leading to social isolation.

Connectivity is a necessity for them.



How can you help people like Lorraine?

mecwacare's community housing is designed to provide comfort and independence for people who are over 55 or living with a disability and who meet the Department of Health and Human Services eligibility criteria for a concessional rent allowance.

Many people arrive at our community housing units with very little and more so than ever before, they are women over 70 fleeing domestic violence with nothing but the clothes on their back. Without these units, they may live on the street or in other unsuitable locations. Providing people with safe, clean and supported accommodation is our number one priority.

Some of our tenants rely on a 24-hour personal alarm service that is connected to the phone line. If they fall, have an accident or feel unwell, help is available with the press of a button.

It won't be if their phone is not connected.

Losing their connection to the outside world, even momentarily, is an outcome we desperately want to avoid. We know our tenants don't have the means to pay for this unexpected expense, so we need your help to cover it for them.

As a not-for-profit charity organisation, every dollar we raise goes straight back into providing clinical care and lifestyle services for more than 14,000 people who are aged and people who are living with a disability across Victoria. We are committed to supporting and maximising the quality of life for all our clients, residents and participants. But we need your help to do this.

With your donation, our 27 community housing tenants will remain connected and safe. They will continue to have access to their personal alarm service and keep in touch with family and friends.

We need to raise \$22,640 to do this for every tenant.

Your gift this Christmas will enhance the lives of people who are much less fortunate and help us keep some of the most vulnerable members of our community connected and safe.

Making ends meet

Average pension is \$834.40 per fortnight or \$417.20 per week

Many pensioners live week to week. They spend their money on food, medication, medical, electricity and gas bills, and clothing (if there is money left over).

There is no money for a rainy day or unexpected expenses. If forced to pay bills such as wiring for the NBN, they will go without food and other essential items.



Michele Lewis
Chief Executive

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

PAYMENT DETAILS (Please print)

Title Mr Mrs Ms Miss Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

Suburb _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Email _____

Phone _____

☐ I would like to hear how donations are making a difference through the mecwacare newsletter

☐ Please send me information on leaving a gift in my Will

I would like to make a donation of \$ _____

I would like to make a regular monthly donation of
\$ _____ via credit card (on the 15th of each month)

I am paying by:

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex

☐ Cheque (please make payable to mecwacare)

Card number _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Expiry Date ____ / ____

Cardholder's name _____

Cardholder's signature _____

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible

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