

15 November 2018

## Private rental a burden for seniors

Private rental became impossible for Gail Carter to cover after she lost her job as an aged care assistant in 2015. A diagnosis of depression, caring for her terminally ill mother and living with an abusive flat mate made the 68-year-old's situation all the more dire.

Gail was forced to sleep on her mother's public housing unit couch and borrow money to cover her rent while she searched for options. After being told she had a potential 20-year-wait for public housing unless she took what she describes an "un-accessible box of an apartment", which would have exacerbated her mental health condition, Gail didn't know where to turn.

Unfortunately, Gail's story isn't uncommon. Recent statistics reveal:

- A 42 per cent increase in people aged 65 and over paying unaffordable rents in Australia since 2011 (ABS).
- 132,301 people over 65 whose rent is more than 30 per cent of their income (ABS).
- Only 1.62 per cent of available housing stock in Australia is affordable and appropriate for a single person on an Age Pension (Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot).

Luckily, Gail found support through non-profit organisation Villa Maria Catholic Homes and its Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) Program, which had been supporting her mother.

Within 18 months of reaching out to VMCH, Gail's Case Manager Amy Yuen found her a permanent home at Villara (public housing units) in Wantirna South, where her mother lived. Though Gail's mother sadly passed away just before she moved in, Gail was happy to receive the news.

"I felt like I'd won the lotto – I was so grateful. I now feel secure for the future."

Amy says she noticed a positive change in Gail once she moved to Villara.

"Gail supports her neighbours at Villara, helping them with their gardening, taking in the bins, cooking winter soup for them and even taking them to medical appointments. Her way of expressing her gratitude (to finding housing) is by giving back."

It was this positive attitude and various other community volunteer roles that saw Gail recognised with a Senior Volunteer Achievement Award at the Aston Community Awards in September.

Always advocating for others, Gail would like to see more done for older people in need of housing support.

"There is definitely not enough public housing. And if you are offered a place, even if it is run-down and not accessible, you're expected to take anything, which I don't think is right."

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Gail also feels there needs to be more support for older people once they find accommodation, like the ACH Program.

“Amy linked me with counselling services and carer support when I was looking after my mum. I know they’re (ACH) there if I need anything. They’re like family to me.”

**If you would like some information on Assistance with Care and Housing Program, call 1300 971 720.**

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### **About Villa Maria Catholic Homes**

Through our passion and commitment to everyday people, Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) works in partnership with people of all ages and abilities. From all faiths and backgrounds, to achieve their goals, remain connected to their community and maintain independence.

We’re a Catholic not-for-profit organisation, providing services to 7,600 people across Victoria. Ask anyone at VMCH and you’ll find we’re driven by wanting to achieve outcomes that enhance the lives of older Australians, people with disability, families and carers.

We have a long history in listening to what people want and need. By making sure we can deliver services to match those needs, we can offer greater choice and opportunity to our customers. We want to help build compassionate and sustainable communities, so everyone is included.

Today we offer services that cover affordable housing options, residential aged care, retirement living, home community and disability services and specialist education. We’re an agile organisation constantly improving how we do things.

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