

Carolyn



**Carolyn** is fifty five years old. She has lived on the streets of **Melbourne** since she was involved in a **serious accident**, nearly **ten years** ago.

**“I lost everything. I began spending time in the city. I didn’t realise that I was ‘homeless’ for a long time.”**

Whilst **Carolyn** has a number of **friends** in the city, she spends a lot of time **sitting on the pavement** drawing, watching, and occasionally bantering with, **passersby**.

“I get **bullied** a lot too. People look at me like I’m an **alien**.”

**Once, whilst using a public toilet, a police officer barged in and asked whether Carolyn realised that the toilets were for the use of the public only.**

“I said, ‘Do you realise that I *am* a member of the public?’ He paused and **walked away** without another word.”



At times **Carolyn** has felt **victimised**  
by the homelessness service system.

**“I’ve stayed in boarding houses which did me over **so badly**. I’ve visited food vans which force people to act like **seagulls**. It’s like ‘They’ll be right with a **lukewarm dinner** in a **dark parking lot**.’ But that’s mean.”**

She also feels **frustrated** that many homelessness assistance services are open from **nine til five**, “but we’re homeless **twenty-four** hours a day.”

**Carolyn** has attempted to engage with the homelessness service system a number of times, but was **discouraged** by “**outreach** workers who force you to go to them,” and “**silly appointments.**”

**“Everyone wants to know every  
horrible thing to no end. Yet at the end  
of the appointment there’s no achievement  
whatsoever – no food and nowhere to  
sleep...”**

“Why sit with your own **nightmare**  
again for no reason?”

About **two years ago** Carolyn was assessed by a THM and was offered **transitional housing** a few weeks later. Carolyn **declined** the lease as it was **too far** from the **CBD**.

**“I wanted a place in the city with my community, my family. People think ‘Give her a roof and a letter box and she’ll be right.’ People think that it’s ok to pick me up and put me in Preston; that they know better about what I need than I do.”**



**Eight months ago, Carolyn's nurse referred her to a SAAP supported referral service that works with older people. This referral led to outreach-based case managed support and a CBD public housing tenancy for Carolyn.**

**“I was lucky with my support worker, Kerry. Kerry was willing to hear. Perhaps if I didn’t have the skills to communicate properly with Kerry, I would be in the same pickle.”**

**Two months into her new tenancy,  
Carolyn continues to spend a lot of time  
on the streets, because “I really am an  
alien when I’m not in the city... It’s too  
lonely.”**

She implores **the community** not to  
**discriminate** against people who **live**  
on the street.

**“‘Homeless’ is a term of judgement that other people give; I live in the city. In the eyes of those out there we’re all the same - a beggar is a beggar, a homeless person is a homeless person - but we’re human.”**



Jacob



DIGGERS



When **Jacob** was twenty six he “up and left” his social circle in **Sydney**.

**“I just had to get away.”**

**Jacob** moved to **Melbourne**, where the promise of a **friend's couch** awaited him. That arrangement fell through after a couple of days, so Jacob headed to a **backpacker's hostel** in the city.

**“It was cheap and I stayed there for like three or four weeks, but one day, when I was a few hours late with my money for the next night’s stay, they took my room away from me.”**

**Jacob** had been told about a THM service just outside of **Melbourne**. At that time, all that the service could secure for Jacob was a spot in a **rooming house**, so he took it up.

**“There were always drugs and cops around,” Jacob says. “I just wanted to get out of there.”**

**After almost a year in “awful”  
conditions, Jacob thought he would try his  
luck at another THM.**

**“They weren’t the most helpful people; they referred me to a place just as bad. Those houses are shocking. I’m glad the THM’s don’t use those two anymore. There’s so much drugs and stuff. I left Sydney to get away from all that, but I was thrown straight back into it at the rooming houses.”**



The second service also **prioritised Jacob** for **case managed support**. After five months the referral was accepted by a homelessness assistance service and **Jacob** began meeting with an **outreach** worker.

**“He’s been awesome, he got me into a really really nice rooming house and I’ve done a module towards my certificate II in hospitality. Even sitting down and chatting has been a big help.”**

**“You need someone who **listens** to you, someone who is **easy to talk to**, who **cares** and **actually does** what they say they’re going to do. I like that this service is **proactive.**”**

**“We’d done ninety nine per cent of my  
seg. one application when the referral  
came through for a new community  
housing tenancy.”**

**“I’m looking forward to having my own unit, all the activities, constant support. I really like cooking for myself and it’s close to the Queen Vic market so I can get fresh fruit and veg. There’s a rooftop garden where you can grow your own herbs and you can see out past the West Gate. There’s also a barbeque up top and cafés down stairs that I might be able to work at.”**

Jacob is certain that his new place will be “a hell of a lot better than being **bounced** around between rooming houses; when I showed my mum a brochure she asked if she could **buy** one of the apartments for herself.”

It's now **two and a half** years since **Jacob** moved to Melbourne and he's **optimistic** about what's to come.

**“In the rooming houses I kept to myself. I had to. At my new place there’ll be lots of new people I can meet. I want to finish my certificate, maybe then go to uni to study genetics, because I’m really good at chemistry.”**



Jacob is **especially** grateful for the help he's received in the last six months, but thinks "it's pretty much a matter of luck. Everything just **streamrolled** once I met my support worker. So there's gotta be **more access** to the services."