

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SA

*Our house
is on*

fire



edition one



INTRODUCING ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK SA

WHO WE ARE

Anti-Poverty Network SA is an alliance of people affected and concerned by poverty and unemployment, including job-seekers, low-income workers, sole parents, aged and disability pensioners, carers, students, and community workers. We are led by people who have experienced it all, and aim to be a public voice for and of South Australians on low incomes

WHAT WE BELIEVE

- **Welfare Is A Right, Not A Privilege.** All people living on income support should be treated with dignity and respect, and not victimised by punishing, humiliating welfare policies such as Job Active, Work for the Dole, and Cashless Welfare. It is never okay to cut someone's income and plunge them into severe hardship. Everyone is deserving of support.

- **Poverty Is Not Inevitable.** The 2020 COVID increase to JobSeeker and Youth Allowance, now almost completely removed, proved that poverty is a political choice. We believe income support payments should be raised to \$80 a day (\$550 a week) not only for people on JobSeeker and students, but for pensioners, carers, sole parents, and for those who have no access to income support like migrant workers, international students, and refugees. No one, in a country this rich, should have to live in poverty.

WHAT WE DO

- **Activism.** We organise the community, particularly people directly affected, on issues such as housing, social security, and workers' rights. We hold forums, rallies, conferences, and info stalls. We reach out to people on low incomes, support and train them to get active, as well as allies. We engage the media, putting forward our views, and supporting people on low incomes to share their insights and experiences.

- **Community.** We create networks of care and solidarity that provide emotional and practical support for those affected by poverty, unemployment, and dealing with stressful government bureaucracy. We build connections with other activist and community groups. We hold free lunches and dinners for members and supporters.

FIND US

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Attendees of the
APN Annual General Meeting
June 25, 2023





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STATEMENT

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A quick editorial

By Chanel Trezise

Hiya, I am so excited to share this magazine with you all on behalf of the Anti-Poverty Network and the handful of talented writers, editors and our lovely designer who have made this edition possible. However, before I let you read on, I would like to discuss the current realities that many across the state and country are grappling with.

There are 2.9 million households (as of 2021) in Australia that rent, of which, the risk of poverty is two times more likely (1,238,000 people) than homeowners. Renters, amidst stagnant wages, and rising costs of living, are being confronted with massive rent increases, with an average rent increase of around 11.1% this year alone in Adelaide. I am disheartened, sickened and upset at the world, confronted with these statistics, and the living arrangements and woes of my friends and loved ones living in the horror of poverty and housing insecurity. I know for many, myself included, that the world, our little state included, feels hopeless, upsetting...

The Anti-Poverty Network has banged on the doors of the law and politics for over ten years, demanding better for the working class, low-income households and individuals pushed to the side by politicians twiddling their thumbs. I wish I could tell you here that it will get better, but I cannot. I too am feeling weighted down, overwhelmed. But this magazine comes to you from a place of solidarity–

Solidarity with and from individuals who have been burdened with the misdoings, laziness and failure of the elite who are supposed to serve us and the system that props them up.

This magazine comes to you to empower you- to demonstrate the hardships, beauty, strength and love which can unite us all.

Enjoy!

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Sev Evans

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Chanel Trezise

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional lands of the Kurna people and we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

We also acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.

In Kurna

Ngadlu tampinhi yalaka ngadlu Kurna yartangka inparrinhi.
Ngadludlu tampinhi, parnaku tuwila yartangka.

Kurna Miyurna yaiya yarta-mathanya Wama Tarntanyaku, parnaku yailtya, parnaku tapa puru purruna. Kurna Miyurna ithu yailtya purruna, yarta kuma puru martinhi, puru warri-apinhi, puru tangka martulayinhi.

Kuma kumartarna Yaiya Miyurna ngadludlu tampinhi iyangka yalaka. Parnaku yarta kumartarna yarta Kanthi Partu-arra kuma Warrunangku.



Photo by Ben Douglas on Unsplash

The Pursuit of Ample Storage

Sev Evans



Everything is clearer in hindsight, but you need to understand the position I was in.

I hadn't had a wardrobe of my own for years.

My clothes rack, a wonky Kmart specimen when new, was sagging under the weight of a few dozen too many things. It was top-heavy and prone to keeling over without much provocation, sending everything flying, and my elderly cat skittering for shelter from the downpour. Everything else lived in plastic tubs or garbage bags.

Long ago, before the rack, I shared an actual wardrobe with my partner at the time. It had been the one I'd grown up with, plywood and plastered with stickers I got with TV Hits when I was eleven. It had served us well until finally giving up and falling apart dramatically the last time I'd moved.

A big solid built-in half the size of my previous room was looking pretty good from where I was.

There were other reasons for moving, of course, reasons that didn't have spacious but squeaky drawers. Reasons that didn't have endearing graffiti inside of them, or a weird smell I figured came from years of housing strangers' things, but those aren't as relevant to this story as the reasons that do, so it's enough to say that the wardrobe did it.

I moved in and immediately began to put my stuff away. I relished it, lovingly giving my favourite jackets pride of place, sorting things by colour, and storing boxes in every spare square centimetre of this new storage space. It felt so good to put things away.

I began settling in, started the new job that moving across town had required me to take, explored the best streets to bike down, and attempted to get used to living with new people.

For a while, that was the worst of it- getting used to new people's habits. Adjusting to a new routine. Finding equilibrium.

Time passed the way it does when you're busy.

And then the cracks started to show.

The back deck was made out of bits of old fence, and someone's foot had gone through it. The fly screens on the windows had been hot-glued on.

I could handle that.

What I couldn't handle, was finding thick, furry white mould growing on the back of a box I'd kept in the wardrobe. On all the boxes in the wardrobe.

My stomach sank. My skin crawled. I pulled everything out and assessed the damage.

It was all through my clothes. The hanging space and the drawers. Judging from the thick healthy patch I'd uncovered, it had been there a while.

I washed everything, and then I washed it again.

What couldn't be washed, I dragged outside and hoped the sun would deal with.

I probably should have thrown more out, but I couldn't afford to replace everything.

If I'm being honest, I couldn't really afford to replace anything.

I tried airing the room out.

I tried damp-absorbing gadgets.

Nothing worked.

No one told me I smelled weird, but I feel like I must have.

Of course, we reported it to the land agent as soon as we realised.

It took them a while to send someone around to look at it. Somehow they lost the photos we sent.

It took weeks more before work began.

The landlord had done the plumbing himself.

If he'd been any good at plumbing, he probably wouldn't have had to be a landlord.

The pipes in the laundry were leaking into the wall.

The wall directly behind my wardrobe.

They replaced the pipes and the taps, and that was the end of it.

Nobody said a word about the mould, or what should be done about it.

Once again, they'd done the barest minimum possible.

This had all happened initially because the landlord had wanted to save money.

At every single opportunity, they'd chosen to save money, rather than provide us with a safe place to live.

My clothes, my family photos, everything I'd had to throw away. Mysterious issues with my sinuses.

The fact I'd probably smelled like a mushroom for months.

I knew it wasn't a unique quality of this landlord, that most will choose saving a dollar over tenant welfare, but something about the way they hadn't even mentioned the mould, broke me just a little bit.

Fed up, exhausted and beginning to worry about the long-term effects of mould on my health, I packed my things and moved out.

My stuff is back on the wonky Kmart clothes rack and in bags and tubs. I'm still working my way towards a wardrobe, but I've never breathed easier.

PREVENTING BURNOUT FOR ACTIVISTS

Activism can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience, but it can also be emotionally and physically draining, leading to burnout.

Here are some strategies to prevent burnout for activists:

1 Prioritise self care



Take time for yourself to rest, exercise, eat well, and engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Remember that self-care is not a luxury but a necessity to maintain your well-being and resilience.

2 Set realistic goals:



Set achievable goals for yourself and prioritize the most important issues that you want to address. Don't try to do everything at once and be realistic about what you can accomplish.

3 Set boundaries:

It's important to set realistic boundaries for yourself to avoid overcommitting or spreading yourself too thin. Learn to say no when you need to and delegate tasks when possible.



4 Create a support network:

It's important to set realistic boundaries for yourself to avoid overcommitting or spreading yourself too thin. Learn to say no when you need to and delegate tasks when possible.



5 Celebrate your victories:

Celebrate your successes and milestones, no matter how small they may seem. Recognize that change takes time, and every action you take makes a difference.



6 Seek professional help:



If you feel overwhelmed or experience symptoms of burnout such as chronic fatigue, mood swings, or decreased productivity, seek professional help. A therapist or counsellor can help you manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

7 Stay positive:

Focus on the positive impact that your activism work is making. Celebrate your successes and recognize the progress that you've made.



Remember, preventing burnout is essential to your well-being and the success of your activism work. By taking care of yourself and staying focused on your goals, you can make a real difference in the world.

Bloody Money

Chanel

A man offers his hand, licking his
lips,

He wipes his dripping teeth and
pats my head.

My hands flail violently, cursing to
the wind,

His talons sink.

My world twitches painfully,

Longing nothings-

Whispering, winding, voices
lingering-

He licks up the blood

Dripping by my feet.

Blood pools into my eyes,

Colouring the world red.

His teeth sink.

Money clawing,

Bartering my ability to think.

He promises immortal greed,

And a bandaid for wounds

decades deep.

Communities fade, children beg
to breathe

Between the fog that wanders
feverishly,

Suffocating the goodness of a
world once green,

Gnawing at the people
wandering lost.

He licks the lips of corpses,

Whose stories lay unfulfilled-

A demon of the system,

Grinning in greed,

Born into the promise of power,

A husk of humanity-

A symbol of a system,

Which benefits nobody but he.

Desperation

Written by: **Salem Ulver Skelton**

That email comes; “we regret to inform you that the landlord does not wish to renew the lease”

So cold and unfeeling, their ‘regrets’ mean nothing in the face of becoming unhoused

The anxiety of what this means for the future washes over you, you suppress the urge to panic

Straight away you begin gathering all the necessary documents and making sure your housemates do as well, there’s always something missing

Within a day or two of starting the house hunt you’re making backup plans, who’s couch will you be surfing on? Where will your pets go?

Scrolling through the available properties on rental apps and websites only increases your feelings of hopelessness. How is rent so much more expensive than even just a year ago?

You filter by ‘pets allowed’ and watch the availabilities drastically go down, you then realise there are property ads that haven’t even bothered adding this to their search terms and just put ‘pets allowed’ in their descriptions

Collecting boxes becomes a pastime, you’re already cursing yourself for how much stuff you own

You get less and less picky as you realise just how limited your options are, could this living room be converted into a bedroom?

And the open house inspections start, racing to get to various different suburbs before, after, in between work, sometimes you have to miss work altogether, how do people with full-time jobs and childcare responsibilities manage to do this?

Who can go to this one? Can you get from one inspection to the next in time?

The inspections are as bleak as the search was, how can they even call this broom closet a bedroom? Why is this bathroom so poorly ventilated? There'll be mould within a week And yet there are so many people looking, so many people applying Online application systems are tedious and soul-crushing but hey, at least they'll actually notify you when your offer has been rejected The real estate agent calls and asks if you'll offer more than the asking price, you already did that in your application but they want more Offering above the asking price is just standard, your desperation drives you to the limits of affordability And affordability becomes a more and more nebulous concept, How much is really too much? Just how far are you willing to travel for work?

Finally, you've been approved for a property! The fact that they want the bond and two weeks' rent in advance basically right away really highlights the feeling that houses are being held at ransom by landlords You scramble to get the money together, it's all sent so why haven't you received the lease to sign yet? Third email, still no lease. I bet they don't keep the landlords waiting for paperwork this long Ok finally the lease is signed, you've got the keys. Time to take photos of every chip in the wall paint and obvious mould damage, wouldn't want it to look like you've actually lived in this house when you eventually leave

Still no ongoing inspection report from the real estate agent but hey, at least you're going to have a roof over your head! Now the heavy lifting starts, moving day sucks about as much as the house hunting did How did we manage this last time? It takes longer than you estimated to move everything out and you are beyond exhausted So grateful your friend with a towbar and trailer was able to help out, who can afford a moving truck? The mad scramble to get everything off of the property just so the end of lease clean can be done, you leave the place looking better than when you moved in

Congratulations! You're in your new home! But it won't feel like home until you're done living out of boxes and squeezing past furniture that has no place yet Unpacking is a lengthy process but the rearrangement is the least stressful part of all of this Traumatized from the experience you pack down all the salvageable boxes and store them away, just in case But now your house is liveable, it finally feels like home You breathe a sigh of relief, it's over... at least for the next 10 months



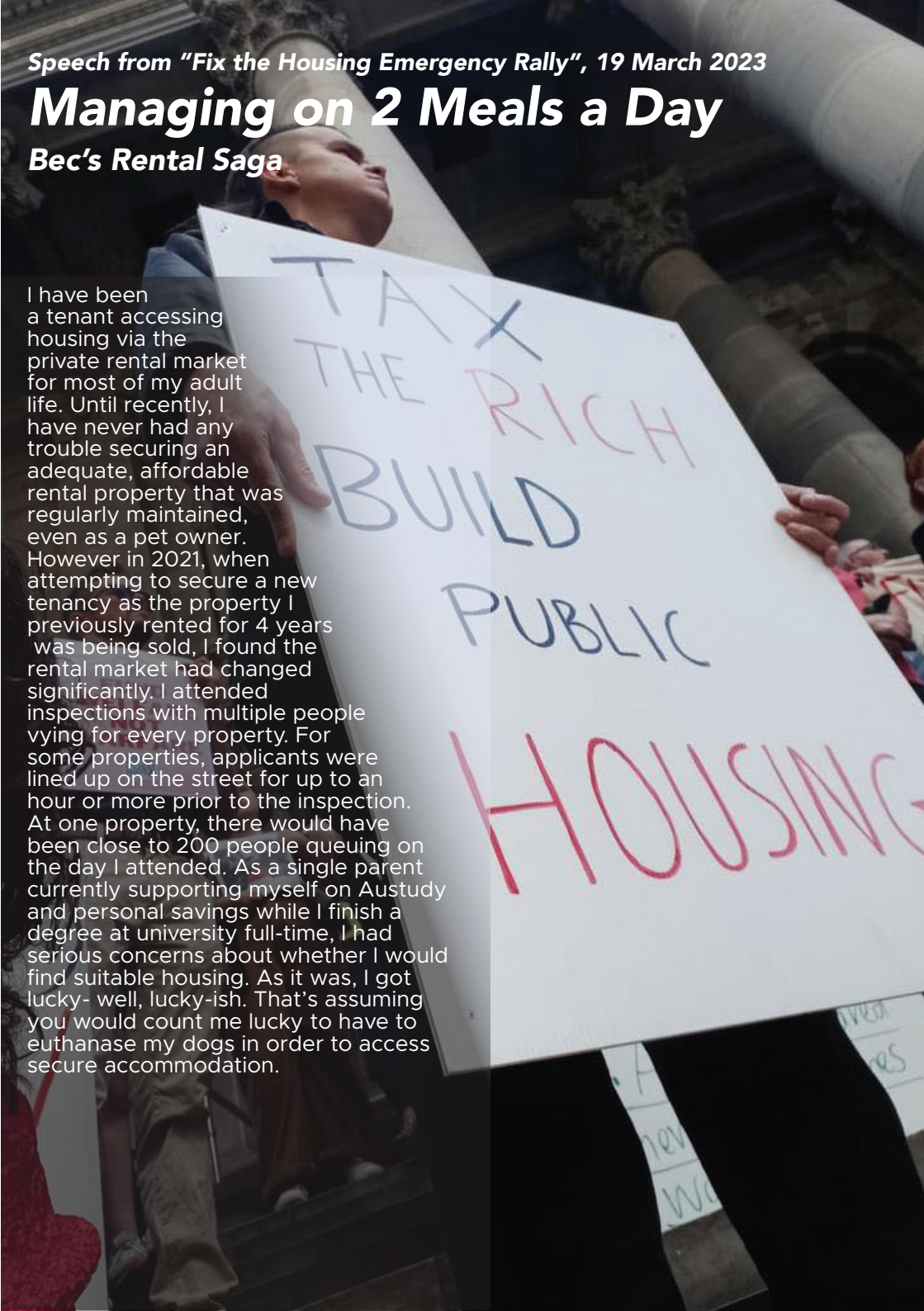
Artwork by C Snowden

Speech from "Fix the Housing Emergency Rally", 19 March 2023

Managing on 2 Meals a Day

Bec's Rental Saga

I have been a tenant accessing housing via the private rental market for most of my adult life. Until recently, I have never had any trouble securing an adequate, affordable rental property that was regularly maintained, even as a pet owner. However in 2021, when attempting to secure a new tenancy as the property I previously rented for 4 years was being sold, I found the rental market had changed significantly. I attended inspections with multiple people vying for every property. For some properties, applicants were lined up on the street for up to an hour or more prior to the inspection. At one property, there would have been close to 200 people queuing on the day I attended. As a single parent currently supporting myself on Austudy and personal savings while I finish a degree at university full-time, I had serious concerns about whether I would find suitable housing. As it was, I got lucky- well, lucky-ish. That's assuming you would count me lucky to have to euthanase my dogs in order to access secure accommodation.



TAX
THE RICH
BUILD
PUBLIC
HOUSING

I now live in a property where the rent I pay is almost the equivalent of my entire income when I am not able to access part-time work at uni. I have been waiting for maintenance on this property since September 2021. One of those maintenance jobs is securing a window that does not close above my bed. Throughout winter there has been cold air flooding through the bedroom window, making it impossible to maintain the temperature throughout the house. This is also an insecure access point to my home and the window bangs in the slightest breeze making it difficult to sleep. I also have no working heating at this property. This is maintenance I believe my landlord was aware of prior to the beginning of my tenancy.

I am well aware of my rights as a tenant and the available avenues for pursuing them however, assuming this is a solution fails to account for the serious power imbalance that now exists between tenants and their landlords. Given the tenuous nature of the market, no renter in their right mind is willing to make any move that might make them a less desirable tenant. This is a critical issue exploited by landlords who misuse the power they now have as a result of so many tenants seeking properties, leaving existing tenants vulnerable. We are forced to choose between suffering in properties that are inadequately maintained and risking homelessness.

There is also a serious issue with landlords either handing on the impact of interest rate hikes to their more vulnerable tenants or capitalising on this to their further advantage. My last rent increase was 10x higher than any other rent increase I have ever had in 30 years of private renting. My Austudy payment, rent assistance and family tax payments total \$1004.34 per fortnight.

My rent has increased to \$950 for the same period. If I did not have savings to supplement my income, this would leave me with \$54.34 per fortnight to support my son and myself. In light of this financial situation, I would not be able to afford to heat my home,



even if I had working heating. I am also currently managing on 2 meals a day- breakfast and lunch, and I no longer eat meat when my son is not home, just two of the many sacrifices I am forced to make in order to make rent. Clearly, my rent is now beyond my budget,



however, given the market, it would not be wise for me to risk giving up my tenancy. I do not believe I would be able to successfully compete with the many other South Australians trying to find a place to live as a result of my low income- in spite of the fact that I have many references to prove a 20+ year history of being an excellent long-term tenant.

I have also got excellent references for my now deceased pets- a situation that has severely impacted my well-being. Pet ownership has previously been an important way of mitigating the health conditions I am affected by, however, I am unable to access this important protective factor as pet ownership jeopardises my ability to find a tenancy. Understandably, my health and well-being are affected by these current conditions. I wake up every night multiple times thinking about how at risk I am. I am currently supporting myself on my rapidly declining savings and am aware that if one thing goes wrong, I will run out of money before I can finish my degree and will no longer be able to afford my rent. Left to contend with the market as it is, I am most likely to end up homeless- either couch surfing or more likely living out of my car and unable to provide for my son.

As a social work student completing honours next year, I am well aware of the systemic and structural issues impacting many Australians at this time. Within this, I think of our skills shortage and consider myself an Australian working hard to do my part to contribute to a thriving future economy.

I am in the top 5% of students enrolled in the School of Social Work at UniSA, and am working exceptionally hard to enter the workforce as a highly-skilled, educated, passionate woman with valuable lived experience and a credible work ethic.

However, all of this will be jeopardised if, as a result of being unable to keep a roof over my head, I am unable to continue to upskill myself while living out of my car. From an economic perspective, I could easily become a statistical deficit- relying on the State to provide services to mitigate my homelessness instead of being a financially independent contributor to our country's broader economic success.

It makes no sense to leave Australians like me, who are fighting for their chance to occupy a better position in life, so vulnerable to further disadvantage. If you are unable to consider this from a humanitarian perspective, to envisage what it might feel like to be someone plagued by this kind of adversity without the means to lift themselves out of it, then I implore you to at least consider the cost in economic terms.

Given my current situation, I stand in support of APN's recommendations for change when it comes to strengthening the basic standards and protections for tenants and call on the Government to:

Increase social housing to ensure those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have their basic human right to housing met

Urgently freeze rent increases in the short term, and in the longer term cap rent increases in line with inflation

Re-consider existing policies to strengthen and protect tenant's rights, ensuring they accurately reflect current social reality of the average Australian renter to prevent exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and worsening experiences of disadvantage

Urgently reassess policies associated with Australia's 'one million empty properties' and regulate Airbnb to ensure they are financially compensable for the impact they are having on the everyday Australian's ability to access secure accommodation

In the long term, re-consider housing policies in response to current social realities. In our contemporary society, many Australians don't, or can't, aspire to own a home. With this in mind, there is a need to restructure private rental market policies to create long-term rental opportunities for people who want to have a home but not own one, with long-term tenancies and rental increases indexed in line with inflation.



HOMELESS

Kathy Bost

Sad and lonely, we try to sleep.
Living rough, out in a tent.
Our lovely home, we could not keep,
Could not afford, to pay that rent.

It hit us hard, that last review,
I try so hard, to just get by.
My children here, are four and two,
I will not let them see me cry.

Internal battles in my mind,
Dark thoughts lead to despair.
How could I, have been so blind,
For believing that life was fair.

Sinking further, day by day,
My old life, I kiss goodbye.
I hate it here, this place I stay,
Where hopes and dreams all go to die.

People judging, stop and stare,
But I've got something raw to say.
Would you listen? Would you care?
Either help or go away.

Outreach programs do their best,
Sometimes, it's not enough.
Charities are over-stressed,
And poverty is tough.

Authorities are disengaged,
And policies don't count.
They don't see the war that's raged,
Right here, on local ground.

Morning comes, cold and grey,
The light assaults my eyes.
I struggle just to face the day,
And watch my own demise.

A Poem

Jolie Mystique

A starving artist isn't all I can be
The hospitality rates appealed to me
To serve the people still and be secure
Until I wanted to live outside of obscure
To achieve ownership was never the dream
I was brought up in poverty I knew what I could achieve
It's the friends I made along the way
This hunger and emptiness they were left as strays
And whenever they had courage to reach out and ask
By the moment someone even greeted them their dignity had passed
We all were dragged through the mud
We know we earned respect
Yet the powers that be, kept failing us
Even the latest prime minister elect
We never stop fighting
Our blood sweat tears to every soup can
And now I try with two jobs just to get the bills paid
The hours only drop off yet I know I have it made
I have a roof a bed a shower
Even if it is shared I'm still empowered
And with this I take responsibility
I stand with my community that fights
We are only asking for the basic human rights
As much as it may change and politics they love to fluff
They have blood on their hands because enough is enough
We take back the power because they are nothing without us.

What Does the Housing Crisis Mean?

A Speech from the "Fix the Housing Emergency" Rally

Delivered By: ***Jack Jablonski***, Australian Communist Party

Good evening all,

We see the housing crisis everywhere in our media. It is a veritable hot button issue! And not just in Australia, the cost-of-living crisis is a serious affront to our ostensible "human rights" all over the world. In Adelaide especially the situation is in complete turmoil. Thousands have entered homelessness in just the last two years, we have had a crisis of inflation and rents haven't budged!

When we talk about human rights – and housing as one – we have got to ask what rights are. There are various enshrined legal rights, some less enforced decorative ones, and in great contradiction with the law there are those rights we have a sense of as humans – that is: what we feel is right. Of course, that's we as in the oppressed and working class. There's a small group of people who own lots of stuff for whom the legal rights and what they think is right overlap quite nicely.

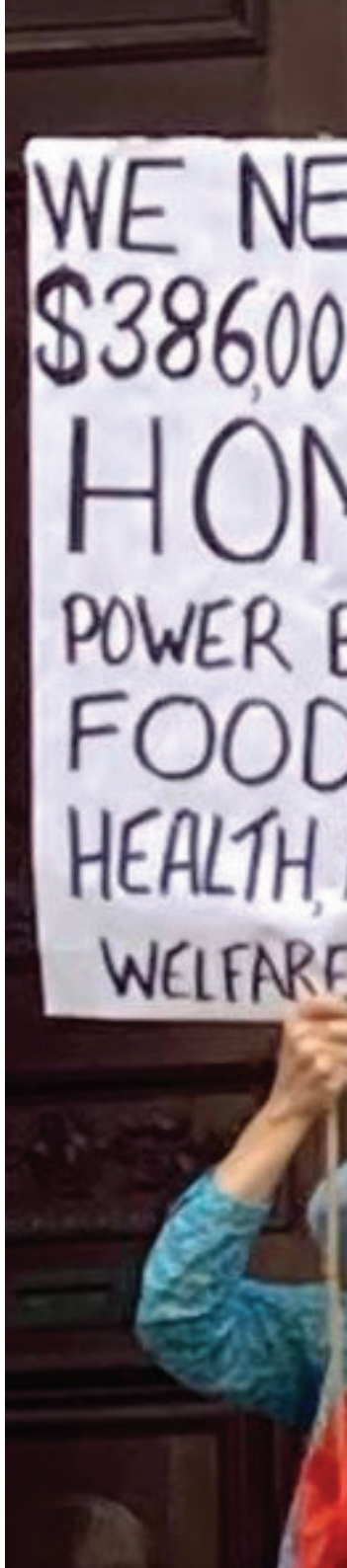
But, when a human right as fundamental as housing is denied, a complex chain of events are set off which function, by design, to maintain an exploitation-driven system. You can't attack the basic human desire for safety, that instinct which drives so much that is fundamental about humanity and society, and not expect a catastrophic pushback towards which a vile repression is constructed.

Here is the incredible depth of our demand. We are calling for the transformation of the houses held en masse for the infinite enrichment of a few, physical spaces held as a lifeless series of numbers, into a complex network of centres for human life, for the real enrichment of beauty, creativity, and – of course – safety. We are calling for the reintroduction of community; and all the radical implications that we know must follow.

Please excuse any idealism! But is not the question of the housing crisis – the question of where to live – a question of human life? That beautiful and humanising experience which is denied to the homeless? We are dealing with the simple fact of existence – which is transformed by landlord greed into a painful and ever-increasing tension.

A homeless man, passing through the street kitchen, explained to me how invisible he feels. They'll even sometimes throw money, exchanging some spare change in return for the ability to forget and erase his plight from their minds, a small gesture to prelude a profound disregarding. The same thing, in a magnified way, happens to prisoners. Millions of the federal budget is spent to construct prisons, institutions designed to make certain people invisible. The process of casting people off into invisibility speaks magnitudes to the contradiction between humanity and capital which we see play out in heightened contrast amidst economic crises!

It is a perfect example of bourgeois right. Beauty, and the ability to love and enjoy life, has been appropriated for an elite. Art has been taken for the rich. Beauty, in a profound way, is a fact of everyday human life, this is an observation completely incompatible with bourgeois right. And so, by treating the homeless as invisible, and teaching a whole population of people to disregard the most downtrodden people – out of sight, out of mind – we



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 BILLS,
 RENT,
 AGED CARE



have extended this cruel manifestation of bourgeois right – onto the most oppressed people. By being denied a house, you are very quickly treated as invisible. And what does it really mean to be invisible?

You, alienated and othered, are stripped of part of your humanity. You are unseen and unheard, as though light is passing through you. Human sensory experience requires one's body occupy a certain physical space. Physical spaces, where humans go about their life, gain a fundamentally social character.

But a small class of people are relegated to living in the shadows of the esteemed towers of capitalism, off in the enclosed doorways and pushed right up into the corners of the urban jungle – an architectural design which prioritises the effortless movement of capital – everyone knows the homeless are there, you will avoid stepping on them during the 8am rush!

And yet, they are invisible. No one has acknowledged their being in this space. Their body is there, but it isn't a fully human body, a mere biological footnote, lived out as a half-measure. It has lost its social character by the sin of it being so poor.

The rarest nod from a stranger will taunt at some semblance of connection... but anything further doesn't belong, the most minute exchange of capital relegates you to your lot. What does it mean for your body to be somewhere you aren't? This is something prisoners trouble themselves with in the inverse way so often.

But for the homeless man, he is invisible, and all light is passing through him as thousands rush past him. He feels as though he isn't really there. That, or he isn't really human. And in both cases, full human sensory experience is impossible. If light passes through you, it will pass right through your eye, producing no vision, no beauty, no human experience of life. If you are not really human, on the other hand, your experience is there, sure, but as a primal and damned experience.

This is what the housing crisis means at the collision of what is human and just – and what is right according to property laws. If, of course, the homeless person manages to maintain consciousness and sanity through their damnation they are still homeless. You are not allowed to build a home if you have the tools and materials, you must also first buy the land. That's stolen land, I might add!

Why this treatment? Why sentence a people you have failed so severely to such torture? It is explained well by W.E.B. DuBois; “A system cannot fail those it was never meant to protect.”

The system is working perfectly well, and quite purposefully threatens the working class with homelessness, whips them into line – to exploit themselves well and honestly – or you, too, will end up living some half-butchered dehumanised life.

Famous German physicist Albert Einstein explains very succinctly why capitalism keeps certain people homeless, I will read, at some length, some of what he writes;

“Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an “army of unemployed” almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job [...] Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all.

The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to [a] crippling of the social consciousness of individuals...”

I suspect the rich, the landlords, and all the propertied classes, know very well the consequences of their actions and so they are ready for everything [a] housing crisis means for them.

Let us return to the old words of Karl Marx, “They have nothing to lose but their chains.” For whom is this truer

than the unhoused? And so... “let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution.” This is what the housing crisis means. It is something that threatens capitalism’s very existence by wanting to enrich itself.

And so we must expect that the bourgeoisie at their highly technologically developed and culturally assimilated stage are ready for any inevitable surge of protest, uprising, and disruption amidst a housing crisis. They know that they will be endangering their own existence by continuing to, against any common sense, grow richer. And the strategies they will use to prevent uprising will be prisons, police, violent repression, and genocide, but they will also be and currently are far more subversive too!

Making you homeless and treating you as invisible is one such strategy. Of course, while Marx does identify revolutionary potential in those who have nothing much else to lose – he also writes that it is the workers, precisely due to their relations to the means of production – that must unite against the capitalism system.

The producers of capital are those uniquely able to withhold labour as a threat to capitalist want.

Knowing the danger that an “undisciplined” working class pose to capitalism teaches us a lot about why the state might force its most oppressed people into homelessness, pushing them far away from the instruments of production. We see how incentivised the capitalist state is to keep these people out of a job, further placing a stress on the housing market and public housing sector!

To further learn how capitalist society operates during a housing crisis, I will tell you a story from one of our patrons at the street kitchen.

About two years ago he was in the housing trust with shelter above his head, substandard living conditions to be sure but something he was grateful for nonetheless. His relationship began to sour, we imagine financial pressures thrust upon them by the state, the beckon of various addictions manufactured from a young age, and so on... all carried out on top of a fundamentally patriarchal system, and so of course sexual abuse erupts, he didn't make it clear to me whether he was abused or the abuser. It does not matter. The case was, both people lost their home. And so he returned to the streets – a place where you are sure to be rehabilitated of any abusive tendencies – and sentenced to a year of homelessness before the housing trust let him find another place.

The reactionary system would take this all in as proof that the public housing system doesn't work – they always trash the place. If you want to talk about trashing the place I'd suggest you look at what America has done to the Third World, with all our complicity. But I digress, we see here how sexism and patriarchy as part of capitalism function to ensure oppression goes on unchallenged.

Tensions between the working class are invented by the bourgeoisie as racism and sexism. Real pillars of oppression which are deeply intertwined with the housing crisis! And of course, if this case of an abusive family losing their home “of their own doing” does in fact, by it being so iterative, disincentive funding to the public housing sector, further stress will be placed on the private housing market, thousands more will show up to open inspections, and only the richest, now an even smaller minority, will be

offered the house at some insanely high rent.

We cannot let the system divide us; it is their primary mode of operation. A housing campaign is about fighting back against this attack on the working class. It is about coming together. They will cast homeless people off into the shadows, making them seem invisible, but they are not! Powerful, knowledgeable, and critical humans are being oppressed and we can dispel all notions of their invisibility by engaging with them, helping them, and organising with them.

Please, if this interests you at all, come along to the street kitchens where the working classes, homeless, and oppressed people unite. Please, disobey and rebel against the engrained structures of capitalist architecture, find truth in what you think is right. It is hard. But that doesn't mean we should give up. Fight the patriarchy, smash the neo-colonial project, and organise against a system which is already organised against us!

In the immortal words of Hazel Dickens, echoed by that beautiful banjo, “There ain't no way they can ever keep us down.”



They're Putting Politics First, People Last

We have seen the devastating effects of poverty in our communities, our cities, and our country. Poverty is a social problem, not just an economic one, and it affects so many Australians, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Yet, our government continues to do very little about the issue, claiming that they simply can't afford to lift Centrelink payments above the poverty line. They say that they have to prioritise the economy and that the budget doesn't allow more for social security. Well if the government can't afford to help those in need, then I'd love for them to justify how can they afford to throw away 244 billion dollars to the wealthiest people in the country and 368 billion into the development of weapons of mass destruction.

It is frustrating to see that organisations across our country and around the globe like the Anti-Poverty Network, the Salvation Army, and Oz-Harvest, have to pick up the slack and are forced to take on the work that our government refuses to do. It makes me angry that so many have to rely on these organisations to provide essential services, when it's the government's responsibility to ensure that every Australian has access to an adequate standard of living. I mean it's in their job description.

We have a government that claims to be for the working class, but they continue to fail us by putting politics first and people last.

Aussies are struggling to keep a roof over their head, people are suffering, families are living in cars and we have tent cities emerging, where does it end?



Fix the Housing Emergency Rally

19 March 2023

Speech delivered by **Luke S**

Everywhere we go, there are people living AND dying in the streets. What will it take for our state and federal governments to really deliver a country where nobody gets left behind?

Anthony Albanese talks about his experiences growing up with a single mum in social housing as a way of relating to people in similar situations. Still, the truth is that Albo is a multi-millionaire, one of the richest politicians in this country. He owns a 5 million dollar property portfolio and makes hundreds of thousands off those properties alone. Now it would be unfair to disregard his background in public housing, but it disgusts me that he continues to use the hardships he faced decades ago as political ammunition whenever the topic of poverty arises.

Now, today marks the one-year anniversary of the Malinauskas Labor

government here in South Australia, and I'm sure that their party room is celebrating today, however for the rest of us, today doesn't mark a day to celebrate, it marks yet another year of inaction, another year of broken promises and another year of hardships that impoverished people suffered through.

Our government needs to take real action to lift people out of poverty. This means increasing Centrelink payments above the poverty line, investing in affordable PUBLIC housing, and creating job opportunities that pay a living wage. We need to ensure that everyone has access to the basics like: food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education. We need to demand that politicians in this place and in Canberra prioritise the needs of their citizens above their political interests.

A Housing Odyssey

By Hayden

In December 2018, the relationship I was in deteriorated such that I was left homeless, borrowing a friend's unfurnished studio apartment until I then moved into a sharehouse a friend and her partner owned and lived in. It was going along okay until the pandemic hit, where 3 adults in a house working and studying from home all became a bit much and I went looking for my own place. I found a former housing trust house with 3 bedrooms, in the hope that I'd get some kind of custody/ access to my 3 boys, at \$290/week, just under the \$300 Housing SA approved the bond for. I got the keys on a Sunday, on the proviso I sort the bond the following day - I got the paperwork together and sent it in, all okay, go to collect the cheque. I'd been previously advised there was a small amount owing - a result of my ex being kicked out of the house we'd been in together as a married couple. I offered to make modest repayments on it to clear, however, I'd just lost my hours at my job due to the lockdown but would be getting the additional \$550 pandemic supplement in my Austudy to cover that. "I'm sorry, we can't help you into a house you can't afford". I'd already moved in. I contacted the Minister who asked me to provide details on how I was going to afford it, which I did, only to find out that they were not counting the \$550 as income, even though it was replacing my income.

I was told this was supposed to stop people earning too much income and becoming unable to get assistance, not as it was in my case, but with policy being policy, they couldn't do anything about it - suggested I get someone to move in with me, defeating the purpose of renting a 3 bedroom house to get access to my kids. I had already applied for my super drawdown, so once I received that paid the bond and rent and despite a shaky start, got the ball rolling.

I moved in knowing the house was on the market, maintained the property for inspections, including facilitating at least 1 I wasn't notified about. The house sold, and settlement happened end of November 2020. 2 days after the settlement is where the problems started - the bath pipes sprung a leak into the second bedroom, resulting in half the floor being lifted out and some particle board put in to cover the hole, as well as half the gyprock wall. The room became unusable, and moisture was found well into the hallway.

We'd barely had that fixed then the shower pipes blew resulting in the entryway being ripped out for repairs, and a dehumidifier was run for the better part of a week. I'd asked the new real estate agent for a bit of relief, not feeling happy about paying for a 3br house when I could only use 2. No such relief was forthcoming. We then spent months working with tradesmen coming in to make repairs as well as works related to the back of the house that had been subdivided from the original block.

Then came the advice that the landlord wanted to raise the rent by \$40 - obviously in view of what has happened, not a large increase, but considering what we'd had to put up with, not something we were willing to pay given the circumstances, and that was a position the real estate agent supported. We eventually agreed to a \$20 increase, however, he was fired by the landlord before it could be put in writing. The new agent told us the rent would be the higher rate from the get-go when they took over until I challenged it and said have you got evidence we were provided that in writing, with 60 days notice? They assumed the advice was that the lease would not be renewed and accompanied by a glowing reference from the agent, was the letter - we advised it wasn't, and that we would be happy to pay the increased rent 60 days from whenever we received appropriate notice - which was met 5 minutes later with a 90 day no reason termination of lease.

We then made use of a list of repairs we'd sent through that still hadn't been attended to and took the landlord to SACAT, where we were granted a rent credit in lieu of what we'd been through. We also were then taken by the agent to SACAT regarding the vacate notice and granted an extension to the end of February, 2022.


We had by that stage already been looking and applying. In October, my new partner Aimee and 3 of her children had moved in, to get away from an ex that had threatened them up north, where the police, even having witnessed the threats, would not grant any protection orders. She didn't feel safe, I had space, I told her to grab what she needed and come down. We advised the agent at the time, just prior to the sale of the property, who left it to the new agent to act on, though nothing was ever formalised.

We made use of friends in the real estate industry and found out that our current agent had been badmouthing us when it came to giving references. Whilst not perfect, our rental history was okay, given the circumstances. Some of the issues with our ledger had more to do with agents not providing correct information to each other in the handovers of properties, more than it had to do with any payment issues on our end.

Channel 7 caught wind of our story via a post and wanted to do a story on it. I was hesitant 'cause these things can blow back... And kinda did... My partner was working a Government job, I was working for RAA and a Uni student, but we have dreads and a nose ring each, and were told we'd get a house if we just took them out. That falls apart when the only time a landlord was present for an inspection was the closest we got - eventually missing out to a family member in need of a home.

We reached the point where it was clear we would not get a house prior to the vacate date ordered by SACAT.

We started to pack up our stuff into storage, as well as in sheds at my partner's Mums' house, which was my partner's former house but her Mum had taken over the lease. Again, times being what they were, a lot of people who had offered to help us move got covid or were close contacts and were forced to isolate. We requested 1 more week just to clear out the rubbish and were denied when my partner was in Noarlunga at work, and I was at Elizabeth Grove, where we were temporarily couch surfing. My partner and a friend went past the house and grabbed anything final we needed and were left with no choice but to leave as is. I knew that meant that was my bond gone, but it was what it was. I couldn't make money or time appear out of nowhere. We continued to apply for houses, mostly north at that point but a few south as well. Our housing officer from Toward Home Alliance was based south and continued to help us, even though we'd moved. For 6 weeks after my partner would drive from Elizabeth Grove to Noarlunga to get to work - I

A hand is visible on the left side of the frame, reaching out towards the right. The background consists of a body of water with ripples, and a cloudy sky above. The overall color palette is muted, with blues, greys, and skin tones.

got a job at the same place and joined her for the last 2 weeks until it became clear the travel wasn't tenable, when petrol hit \$2+ a litre. Our health wasn't coping with the prolonged driving either.

Due to the timing of the SA elections, we had to vote south, I avoided all contact with anyone walking in, but my partner, not shy on saying a word or two, spoke to Nat Cook about the situation we found ourselves in. She offered to help, which consisted of being offered advice from a housing officer, advice we had either already had or was irrelevant. Obviously in the months after the election, when the race became more important than housing. I was pretty scathing that their response to the housing crisis was all talk at that stage, until it became clear it wasn't just all talk, it was all too little, not enough and too late.

In the end, we applied for 317 houses, about 27 of those my partner had applied for before we got together.

The challenge of finding somewhere big enough under \$450 a week that wasn't falling apart - and there was plenty we didn't apply for, for that reason. We were offered this community house in Strathalbyn through Unity Housing - and initially said no, I still had a year of my uni course to finish, a lot of trips to the city for medical appts for the kids etc.. Eventually, we were convinced to consider it, by which stage it had been offered to someone else. Fortunately for us, she was unable to accept it and we were able to sign the lease and take the property. I don't regret moving regional, but there is a distinct lack of infrastructure, particularly on a medical front, even in the nearest major town. Our current lease for where we are now runs to the end of May next year, which gives us a lot of stability and we can engage in the community knowing we're not here temporarily.

Welcome to Newsletter

A throwback article

This month's newsletter is focused on public housing.

The first reason for this focus is because a friend and I recently fought for public housing and won. She was in imminent danger of homelessness but now is in a public housing flat. I'll come to that soon.

The second reason for this focus is that any government focused on its people ought to be focused on making sure every person has a roof over their head.

Not just a roof.

The government ought to ensure every person has:
basic amenities under that roof,
space to breathe and elbow room to grow under that roof and
afford to pay rent under that roof too.

Therefore when a state government proclaims in their 2021-22 Budget that they are "building what matters," one should expect them to be building public housing.

Why? Because the government can build the most cost efficient, stable and accessible housing for everyone who is in need.

Notice anything missing from the glossy budget statement excerpt below?



That's right, you guessed it.

They're not building public housing.

I'm not the only one who noticed. Here is Dr Alice Clark, the CEO of Shelter SA, saying as much.

Instead of building public housing, the government is building 'affordable' housing which sells off public land for short-term gain.



I asked Dr Clark to comment on the government's ten-year housing plan at a recent housing forum.

She astutely pointed out that affordable housing is, "...being built on public land. So with the sale, we can say goodbye to more than 75 per cent of the public land that we've got."



South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS) - the peak body for the non-government health and community services sector - also noticed that the government is not building public housing in their state budget analysis.

SACOSS' analysis is that the "failure to invest in public housing" is the "biggest missed opportunity" for low-income folks.

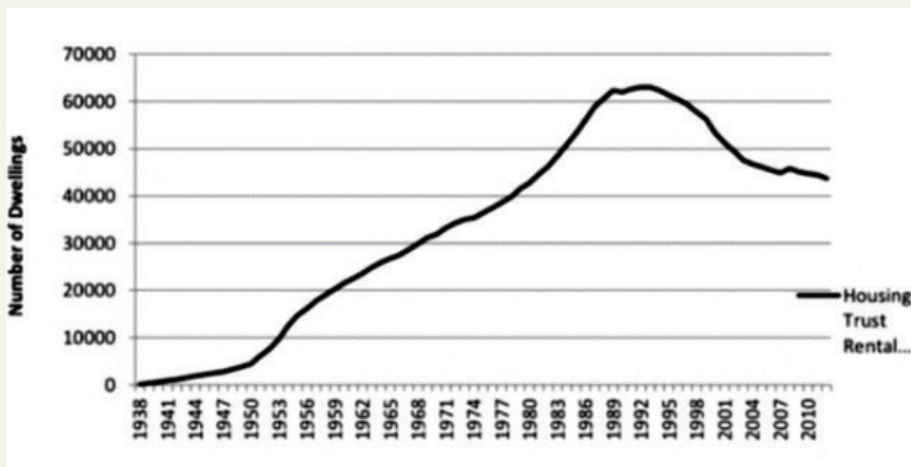
Notice the word "again" in the quote below. a



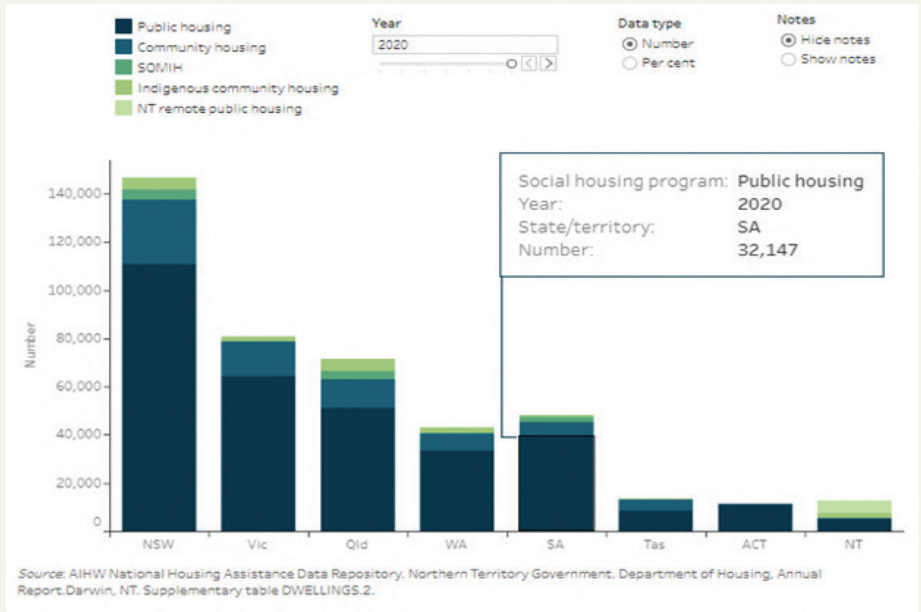
So why isn't the SA government "building what matters" again and again? That's an easy one.

They are demolishing and selling off public housing instead.

See public housing start to recede from 1991 in the graph titled, 'Publically Owned and Controlled Housing in SA, 1938 to 2012.'



South Australia now has about the same amount of public housing as it did in 1970. Since 1970 the state's population has grown by over 600,000 people but the public housing for those people is at the same level, only 32,147 houses.



This year, public housing will have decreased even further.

And when the State Government isn't selling off public housing, they are handing over control of it to private entities.

This transfer is done under the friendly sounding guise of 'community housing.'

With warm and fuzzies, charities and NGOs take control of these houses to profit off of public housing. These Community Housing Providers (CHPs)

can earn a 'profit' because they can take a person's Rent Assistance whereas the SA Housing Authority cannot. They can also be more selective about who they accept into publicly owned houses and who they boot out of them.

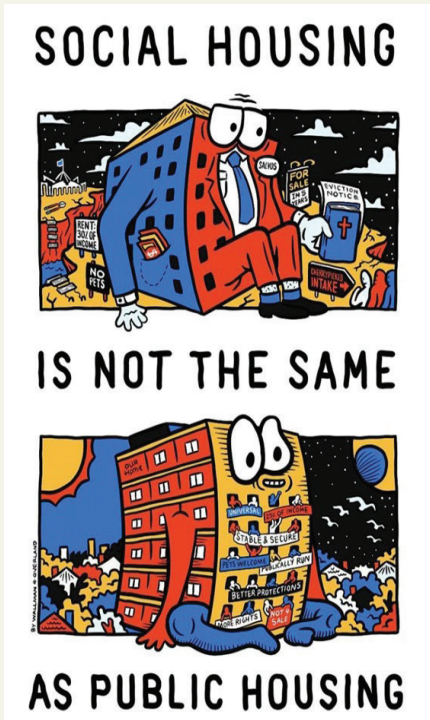
At the same housing forum that I asked Dr Clark a question, I asked the CEO of Hutt St Centre (a homelessness day centre) a question about CHPs. His reply highlights the difference between community housing and public housing for those on low-incomes.

Community housing is being used to fill the gap as public housing is reduced.

And it is lumped in with public housing under the umbrella of 'social housing'.

However they are quite different if you look at them.

Sam Wallman has illustrated the difference with a masterstroke below.



Community housing is being viewed as the “future of the social housing sector,” according to Terry Burke, Professor of Housing Studies at Swinburne University Centre for Urban Transitions.

This a worrying trend but the SA Premier and Treasurer are quite happy with the management of public housing being privatised.

They are quite happy with public housing and public land being sold off too.

It's part of their financial viability strategy.

The more public housing sold off and the more public services privatised, the more financially viable they think the SA Housing Authority is.

See them smile with their budget papers alongside.

It's not that the Premier Steven Marshall isn't putting any money into housing. He would tell you that he is putting heaps in.

“We’ve outlined 5 key strategies, including the delivery of 20,000 affordable housing solutions in partnership with the housing sector and industry, backed by over \$550 million investment from my government to spark investment, demonstrate innovation, remove systemic barriers and pave the way for a bright housing future for all South Australians.”

- Steven Marshall, Premier of SA



He's putting heaps of money into 'affordable housing' and into 'first home buyers,' not public housing.

That's the problem.

Similarly, the federal government would say it is putting heaps of money into housing too.

But instead of public housing they put large amounts into private schemes. For example, Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). This is public funds for private landlords.

The ~\$5B the government puts into CRA each year is roughly half the amount that is required to meet the needed build of 730,000 public houses over the next 20 years.

About \$10B a year would clear the public housing wait lists and expand public housing to all the people in housing stress too.

Putting a spotlight on the state government's failure to invest in us, the public, is one reason I focus on public housing.

An Uncensored Disability Employment Services Experience

two social-media posts written by Andrew

So, here is my uncensored experience of the DES system. I am in this stream, because I have chronic, incurable pain in my hip, due to having developed Perthes disease as a child. Perthes disease is rare, and the average person in the street has never heard of it. Neither has Centrelink or any of the numerous DES Providers I've had the misfortune to encounter.

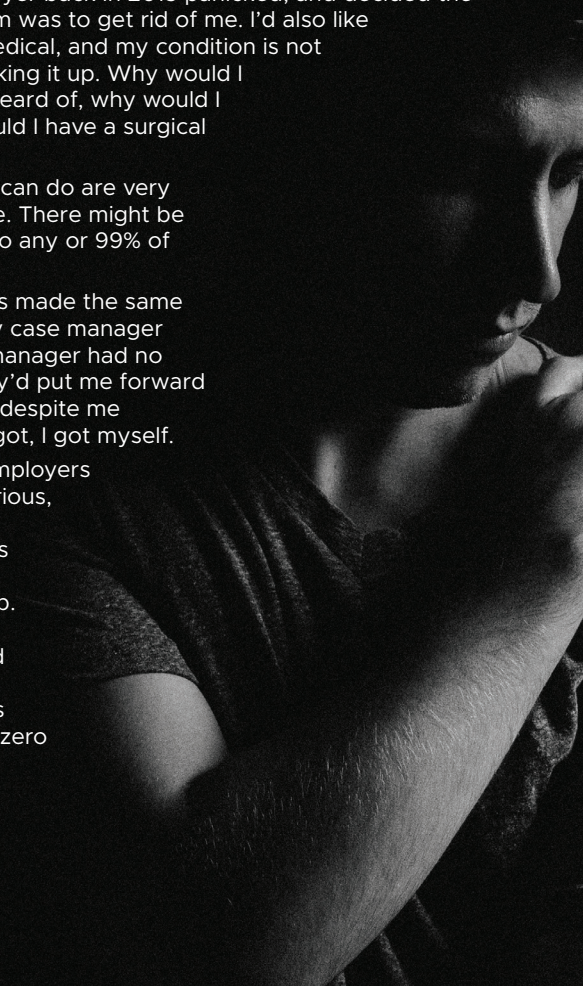
Most Perthes patients will develop pain in their hip as they age, usually much sooner than non-Perthes patients. The pain varies from day to day, if I am too physically active, I tend to develop pain soon after. It also restricts my ability to perform most physical tasks, including standing and walking for extended periods. I can do the weekly shop, but I'm usually in a lot of pain by the end.

The career I planned for, and trained for, as an Automotive Parts Interpreter, is quite a physical role. So, my employer back in 2013 panicked, and decided the easiest way to solve their HR problem was to get rid of me. I'd also like to add that they never gave me a medical, and my condition is not obvious. They also told me I was making it up. Why would I make up a disease that no one has heard of, why would I know so much about it, and why would I have a surgical scar on my body, on my hip?

My point is that the types of jobs I can do are very restricted compared to other people. There might be 40,000 job vacancies, but if I can't do any or 99% of them, they're a bit irrelevant.

Every one of my DES Providers has made the same promises to help me but haven't. My case manager changed regularly. Every new case manager had no idea about me, or my problems. They'd put me forward for jobs that were totally unsuitable, despite me explaining my limitations. The jobs I got, I got myself.

The biggest barrier I face is that employers just do not want employees with serious, pre-existing issues as I have. I may have the right qualification, and years of experience, but I get ruled out as soon as my medical history comes up. Even the government incentives do not sway them. And they skirt around discrimination laws by saying I'm not a good fit, or the other applicant was better (i.e., the younger person with zero experience and zero qualifications)



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Mutual Obligation, What is it Good For?

Really, my biggest beef with DES Providers is the haveno idea, they don't help, they don't get results, and as happened atleast once, they lost their government contract due to not meeting their own KPIs. I turned up for my appointment, everyone was running around like headless chickens, and I was told to find a new Provider. Hmm I don't like the term "disability" either. Employers hear that and tend to make their own erroneous assumptions. I shouldn't have to share my confidential medical history with strangers either. If I mention to someone, I had Perthes disease they look at me blankly, or worse, as happened before, they think I'm making it up.

I can make people look stupid quite easily. I just show them my scar and say "Oh I'm making this up, am I?" Physical proof, right in front of their eyes. Not that it's any of their business. You don't go up to a blind person and accuse them of faking it.

There are many people walking around the streets with surgical scars hidden by their clothes.

You wouldn't know unless you saw them at the beach, or in a communal change room.

Occasionally I've been asked, and I just tell a massive lie and say I got attacked by a shark! It's easier than trying to explain what really happened, and it's believable.

Mutual Obligations (MO), what do they actually achieve? If the measure of success is getting a job, they haven't helped me achieve this. I need my Income Support payment, so I'll do whatever is required, otherwise, I'll be unable to pay my bills.

Mutual implies input from both parties. My DES Provider is supposed to help me find employment. I'm currently on my 8th or 9th Provider, none of which have achieved the measure of success.

So what is the problem? For me it's very simple, a chronic pain condition as a complication from a previous rare childhood bone disease. The pain limits the type of work I can do, and employers are wary of employing people with pre-existing medical issues. I need something desk-based, otherwise, I develop quite severe pain. Centrelink knows that I have a medical issue, and has reduced the number of jobs I have to search for accordingly. I'm still struggling to meet my MO, and in the rare instances when I do get an interview, it's always thanks but no thanks.

So the end result is no job, stress from not having a job, stress from not having enough money, stress from trying to meet MO and stress from not getting solutions from the DES Providers.

I've lost 10 years' worth of Super contributions, due to not working, which will have a ripple effect on my financial future too.

MO does not work, causes harm, and should be scrapped immediately.

Residential Tenancy Databases: Symbolism of a System

In 2010, TICA's CEO, Mr Philip Nounnis, exclaimed that "...tenants do not deserve the right to impose their habits on innocent landlords by claiming that housing is a human right...." While upsetting to many tenants, Mr Nounnis's insight allows us to perhaps better understand the mindset of those within the rental industry and the operations of Residential Tenancy Databases.

TICA is Australia's largest Tenancy Database, with some 7 million tenancy records as of 2022. Used by industry giants such as LJ Hooker, Ray White, Raine & Horne and Elders, TICA's services, such as 2Apply or its Database, are used extensively by agencies and landlords alike to screen tenants and 'blacklist' them— wherein a tenant's information is stored in the database.

In light of the current housing crisis, the use of tenancy databases and their impact on renters has come into question. Particularly, this has raised questions about the ethics, cyber security and misuse of Residential Tenancy Databases within an industry that has left many tenants frustrated.

Since the turn of the century, the percentage of Australians who have been forced to turn to and rely on private landlords for housing has increased from a fifth (20%) to just over a quarter (26%). Simultaneously, there has been a 16% decline in public housing stock since 2006. The impact? There are currently 163,500 households waiting desperately on public housing lists and 12,100 households waiting for SOMIH (State-Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing).

As public housing availability has diminished, an increasing number of tenants have been forced to navigate the challenges of the private rental market. The rising tenant population in the private market, coupled with declining housing vacancy rates, has intensified competition for housing.

Consequently, databases like TICA have emerged as a means for landlords and agencies to screen potential tenants to narrow down their pool of applicants. These databases, including software like TICA and services such as 2Apply, enable agencies and landlords to request information during the screening process so a prospective tenant's rental application can compete against other tenants. However, this system significantly disadvantages struggling tenants, those who have been

**'blacklisted,' or those
reliant on Centrelink payments.
Consequently, many of the
millions of private tenants in this
country have found themselves in
unstable and upsetting
housing situations.**

As the number of tenants entering the private market has increased, and housing vacancy rates have decreased, there has been significant competition for housing. The use of software entailed in TICA, or likewise services such as 2Apply allow agencies and landlords to request information during the screening process, which allows a prospective tenant's rental application to better compete against other tenants. Consequently, struggling tenants, those 'blacklisted' or on Centrelink payments will be severely disadvantaged in competition against tenants in more desirable situations. As a result, a large majority of these vulnerable individuals are grappling with precarious housing situations or, worse, finding themselves without a home. The scale of the housing crisis becomes particularly apparent when observing the growing number of individuals

accessing homelessness services- this has increased by 8% nationwide from 2018/19 to 2021/22. Additionally, the rising number of individuals resorting to houseshares is evident, with platforms like *Flatmates.com* reporting a staggering 70% increase in monthly signups compared to the previous year.

Mandy*, an experienced property manager, emphasised that her agency's processes minimise discrimination. She explained that her agency never provides landlords with personal details such as an applicant's name, contact number, current or previous residential address, or contact information of the agency or property owner. They only disclose rental history information anonymously, allowing the landlord to make the final decision. She also stressed that a prospective tenant's information is destroyed after the application process.

Yet, despite these assurances, a lot of tenants are troubled by the possible discrimination and misuse of their information. Bridgette*, a mum and long-term renter explained that she is very "...concerned about discrimination. I question why agencies need information about things like: FORMER employers reference (what does my former employer have to do with my ability to pay the rent?), bank statements (what business is it of theirs how much I have in the bank?)"

Bridgette remarked that the idea of forfeiting sensitive information at the chance of getting a roof over your head is upsetting for tenants...

**"They can't control their own
info. They have no access to it.
They surrender their info and
hope for the best."**

As the cost of living and rent prices rise and wages and Centrelink payments remain stagnant, it is unsurprisingly that low-income individuals, particularly the 60% of renters in the bottom two income quintiles (as of 2017/2018), are questioning the processes and ethics of an industry that has become more and more inaccessible to them.

In a study conducted by the Anti-Poverty Network last year, titled 'Cold, Broke, Stressed: A Survey of 288 Low-Income Renters,' it was reported that

...64% of respondents felt discriminated against searching for rentals, particularly due to their Centrelink payments.

The discrimination highlighted by the Anti-Poverty Network has significant consequences for low-income households. One of the most concerning outcomes is the process of blacklisting. Bernie from Better Renting, an organisation focused on improving rental conditions in Australia, describes blacklisting as a constant source of fear and anxiety for tenants, "It's like this scary looming thing that hangs over your head like the sword of Damocles."

Blacklisting can have significant impacts on tenants and their ability to secure shelter. Even so, without an official blacklisting marker, the fear of being blacklisted still has a significant impact on tenants. As Bernie mentions, "People are often scared to rock the boat because they've been told about these blacklists and don't want to wind up on them."

"People are often scared to rock the boat because they've been told about these blacklists and don't want to wind up on them."

For those who have been blacklisted, such as Sarah*, a current tenant who has previously faced years of homelessness and couch surfing, blacklisting is a harsh sentence. Upsettingly, however, Sarah was only informed she had been blacklisted after a Real Estate Agent let her know after denying her a home.

Sarah remarked that "The same staff member told me that legally, I should have been advised in writing."

Sarah believes that she was blacklisted due to some of her house guests, suspecting that her complaints may have been used as an excuse to remove her from the property. This story of disregarding the law is all too common for those who have faced blacklisting.

According to the Residential Tenancy Act of 1995 (SA), when a tenant's information is added to one of those databases, landlords, agents, or authorities accessing the database must provide written notice to the tenant within seven days. The notice should specify the database being used and include the personal information uploaded, including the names of those who listed the information. The notice should also outline the circumstances in which the tenant can have their personal information amended or removed.

Furthermore, agents or landlords are required to provide prospective tenants with the contact information of the database used for screening. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in a maximum fine of \$5,000.

In my interview with Mandy, she urged that the majority of those within the rental industry generally do the right thing. However, Mandy did acknowledge that a few individuals within the industry can tarnish its reputation, but overall, most people act ethically.

“It is sad when a couple of people within the industry provide a bad representation of the whole industry because the majority of the people do the right things...it is the same within any industry you can get some good employees and some bad employees, it really comes down to the individual person, not the industry,”

Yet, after Mandy said that, I couldn't help but hear Sarah's story echo in my head. While it could be very possible that the majority of agents and landlords do the right thing by tenants, and it is a comforting thought that that would be the case, a landlord or worker's ability to 'do the right thing' within the rental industry will never be able to change its drive for profit which has contributed to its inaccessibility.

Residential Tenancy Databases have become a symbol of the harsh reality faced by tenants, who must fiercely compete within the housing market to secure a roof over their heads. These databases epitomize the ways in which tenants are disadvantaged and subjected to misuse, discrimination, and a lack of transparency.

Without swift action, including better renter protections and a substantial increase in public housing availability, individuals like Bridgette and Sarah will continue to endure hardship. The use and abuse of Residential Tenancy Databases underscore the urgent need for change. It is counterintuitive to consider whether these databases operate in good or bad faith solely because their use aligns with “business” interests. Tenants are people with a fundamental right to housing that should never be compromised for the sake of an industry's profits.

** All the names used within this article have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees.*

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Don't Piss off a 58-Year-Old Woman

Speech to JobSeeker - Public Meeting

8 March 2023

Delivered By: **Rita S**

I'm Rita, one of the coordinators of the northern branch.

I was working at the Aboriginal Elders Village in Davoren Park when I was sacked in March 2019, because I was a whistle-blower, and that was when my life began unravelling...

I knew, 3 months in, that my life was going to change, dramatically..and badly.

It took 3 months for my claim to be accepted..it was only after the intervention of my local Labor MP, that my claim was finally accepted.

By this time I was already experiencing financial hardships.

I was paying \$600 in rent, I was in a private rental at that stage.

In 2019 I sold my car for food.

In 2020 I sold my fridge for food (ironic).

I was eating out of dumpsters, going 3 or 4 days a fortnight without food,

I was rationing my medications, including my insulin

When you have a chronic illness, you must eat and medicate daily...or you die prematurely.

In 2020 my partner died of cancer...he was refused his last payment because he couldn't report in person.

In this time, my mental health took a huge nose dive - depression, anxiety, suicidal.

In this time too, I was hospitalised a number of times, complications due to uncontrolled diabetes.

In 2021 I had a stroke, affecting my communication centre. Leaving me with permanent memory loss and confusion.

When I was in hospital for my stroke, I was diagnosed as having community-acquired malnutrition, due to food insecurity.

I have permanent spinal damage, with metal replacing a couple of discs in my neck.

I have lost 50kilos in weight.

I can't walk for long periods...I use a walker

I have no teeth

I have nerve damage in my hands and feet, arms and legs

I have memory issues...I get confused a lot.. resulting in daily panic attacks.

In 2018 I was 120kilos, working 75 hours a fortnight, as a cleaner, carer, kitchen hand and laundry manager...in a job I absolutely adored.

Flash forward to now...you see before you a physically and mentally broken woman...

I have uncontrolled diabetes, so I don't envision a long lifespan.

I can't even afford to die, because my son won't be able to bury me... he's on DSP and homeless.

Even though all of that was taken from me, my life was taken from me, I still have my voice. Not as good as it was pre-stroke, but still loud and strong. This is my superpower. Words are my superpower. They will not take that away from me.

And that is what I intend to use in this war against the poor.

I am a broken woman, with nothing to lose.

We have some of the poorest and most broken people here in the north.

We are answering calls every day, from people who are hungry, homeless...

We have a tent city in Fremont Park.

Every Saturday morning, myself, Sara and Kathy are out at Fremont Park cos we care, meeting and talking to our community.

We have homeless families living in the shopping centre across from my unit.. we keep them fed and warm...

We have a poor community, but an oh-so-generous one.

The charities are struggling to meet demand...

Our Labor MP's, like Matt Burnell, are being very silent..

I think what we should do here and now.. let's call it what it is.. this is not a political issue any more..this is a humanitarian crisis..and this IS A POLITICAL CHOICE.

So, when budget time comes along in May, we have to have our voices heard.. DEMAND to be lifted out of poverty.

If those demands aren't met, we will just grow stronger and louder....more persistent and no more asking..we are demanding..

Because you don't piss off a 58 year old woman who has nothing to lose..





This F*cking Town

Rising rents; stolen homes. "And he sang as he watched..."



Mark Mordue

This fucking town is stealing souls and breaking hearts.

This fucking town is rising rents and not enough.

This fucking town is asking for blood on the streets and it will never pay the price.

This fucking town is killing families and small-time dreams, busting school shoes and taking back food from the table, pushing down pride as you walk the street, breaking children into tiny, nothing bones, breaking the promise of any future on its property-portfolio wheel.

This fucking town that cries for causes it hardly cares to win, performance politics on social media. Out there darker things.

This fucking town, divided, like the country is divided, taking hold of every other town with its money fingers; the urgent at the cliff, on their

pushbikes, driving second-hand cars, using public transport, saying please, heading over the edge - and the ones who don't care or understand watching. Do you hear the sea? The sea that wants you too?

This fucking town will rise and turn like a king tide. Upon itself. The empty homes, the empty shops, the mouths of the passers-by, pushed against the glass, kissing the empty spaces, saying 'let me eat the chance of shelter and one more possibility'. 'One more possibility'. 'One more possibility'. Each story like a breathy mist, lost in time upon a pane of glass. Each story once-upon-a-time and no less real.

This fucking town. Sold beneath our feet. Stolen from our backs. Us, the new medieval serfs, losing our worlds beneath the trample of the Land LORDS; us, the digital slaves, the disinvested poor, the ones who never owned a thing and never will, stolen from.

This fucking town. This fucking country. This fucking song of national suicide that everyone can sing like we always knew it was us. Our history of stealing. And having to steal back to just get by.

Waltzing to the end. "And our ghosts may be heard if you pass by".

This fucking town. This Sydney-blackened fucking song.

"And he sang as he watched..."

Originally posted here:

https://markmordue.substack.com/p/this-fking-town?r=i-84id&utm_medium=ios&utm_R3uUP7a3Hn7YGglr051tue-vtt3OWmrbDgZJbSQkEpl_wAGTpnWv1PWx97s

Photo by Dan Meyers on Unsplash



A \$60 Rent Increase

Speech to Parliamentary Forum on Renting

18 Oct 2022

Delivered By: **Jane**

I have been on Centrelink benefits for eight years after losing my full-time job, experiencing a bad fall and then an assault that meant two years in hospital appointments unable to use my left arm or leg.

My rent is now \$460 a week. This is after a \$35-a-week rise last year and a \$60-a-week rise just recently. That is a \$95-a-week increase in 13 months, which is just over a 26% increase. This means that after I pay my share of the rent and my essential bills, which I calculate by adding up all my bills for the year and dividing that by 26 to ensure I have enough, I have \$18 a fortnight left over to pay for food, petrol, public transport, medical appointments and everything else. This has forced my flatmate and I to look for a third person to share the rent.

While we were given plenty of notice of the increase, we were only allowed seven days in which to agree. We looked at other options but could find nothing suitable in our price range, even if we went further out from the city. And if we did go further out, the increase in travel costs would completely negate any rental savings. We knew we couldn't negotiate after one set of neighbours asked and they received a one-line email saying their lease renewal had been withdrawn so they had to move and a second set of neighbours were forced to move due to the rent increase they received.

I inquired about the legalities of this and was informed that in South Australia, **owners can put the price up as much as they want, which is completely different to other states where it is illegal to raise it by more than 10%**. The only avenue was to go to the tribunal and fight against an extreme rent increase, but you had to accept it first. You might win, but I was told it would be guaranteed that I would be kicked out on the next renewal, if not before, for being a problematic tenant. If you lost, you would have to pay the increased rent. There was nothing that my flatmate and I could do.

Meanwhile, the owner is a multi-millionaire architect and developer who I have been told has more than paid off the building costs of the complex I live in. We also hardly ever see repairs other than the ones that are legally required, so the place has never been fumigated, slippery and dangerous pavers have not been cleaned, no security has been put in despite three thefts in less than six months and our electrical cross wiring with our neighbours is still there after being informed over a year ago.

I only buy food at the FoodBank which the vast majority of is highly processed food that is beyond its best before date. There are usually limits on the number or weight we can purchase and you never know what will be there so you cannot plan meals until you are there.

It is rare to have more than carrots, onions and potatoes for vegetables and usually only one or two fruits if any. You are only allowed to spend \$25 per visit which has just increased to \$40 due to people hoarding and supply chains being affected which means the FoodBank now has to purchase food, the cost of which they pass onto us. You are lucky to see toilet paper once every six to eight weeks. You can only visit a maximum of once a week, but most people can only afford to go once a fortnight.

Meanwhile, Centrelink benefits certainly have not increased by \$95 for rent and \$15 for food a fortnight.

For the first time in my life, I have high cholesterol and this is due purely to eating a highly processed food diet. I am also highly anaemic due to not being able to afford meat or iron tablets, much to my doctor's frustration.

The manager of the JobSearch provider I attend once told me that research has shown that 65% of those who utilise a disability provider will develop depression and anxiety in addition to the original illness that they had while on Centrelink benefits. This means we have a system that is actually making people mentally ill.

I am certainly in that category and my greatest fear now is becoming homeless. I will be turning 50 soon and the fastest-growing cohort of homeless people in Australia is single women over the age of 50. It is not hard to imagine being on the streets when you have no safety net and rental vacancy is at 0.2-0.3% in Adelaide. Owners do not want to lease to Centrelink recipients despite the fact I have perfect payment history and keep properties immaculate.

I have been on the waiting list for public housing in South Australia for four years and in Queensland for three years before that. I have been able to apply for one co-operative housing place in that time and was unsuccessful. When looking for alternative accommodation, I have not found a single property that I could afford to rent on my own in Adelaide or even rural South Australia. Even sharing with a flatmate, this latest increase means I am spending well over half my income on rent.

The government says that people should only be spending a maximum of 25% of their income on rent. Real Estate Agents have increased this over my last 25 years of renting from 25% to 33% to now 50% being common. This is unsustainable meaning people cannot save for emergencies or house deposits or anything else. Rent freezes would greatly help those that have not experienced a hike yet and should absolutely be implemented, but for me it is too little too late. I am so far under the poverty line; I can't envisage a way out.

I do not socialise or go out because I can't afford it. I rarely use my car for anything beyond groceries because I can't afford the petrol. I walk just about everywhere because I can't afford public transport beyond the absolutely necessary. I do not use any heating or cooling because I cannot afford the increase in the electricity bills.

Poverty is a political act of will in this wealthy country of ours. You have the power and the means to ensure that no one lives in poverty and that all people are safely housed. Yet current laws benefit the wealthy and powerful, allowing people to grow wealthy from housing which is a basic human right. This is unethical and immoral and needs to change.

Resources

Homelessness and emergency housing services:

If you're homeless or at risk of homelessness, contact the appropriate services listed below (24 hours, 7 days):

Homeless Connect SA (including families)

Ph: 1800 003 308

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/emergency-shelter-and-homelessness/homelessness-service-providers>

Domestic Abuse:

Domestic Violence And Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway

Ph: 1300 782 200; 1800 800 098

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/family-and-community/seniors/seniors-health/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

Advice Services:

Rent Right

Free, independent, legal advice for people renting in the private, public, and community sectors. Advice provided for issues such as leases, bond disputes, property maintenance, and unpaid rent. Monday-Friday, 8am-8pm, advisors available through phone or e-mail, and face-to-face appointments across multiple locations.

Ph: 1800 060 462

<https://www.syc.net.au/rentrightsa>

Advice Services:

Better Renting

Better Renting is a community of renters working together for stable, affordable, and healthy homes.

Your housing has a big affect on your health. But with more Australians locked out of home-ownership, more of us are renting for longer and raising children in unhealthy homes. This is a big problem: a home that is too cold, for example, can contribute to asthma or stroke. People renting on a low-income, or with a health condition, are especially vulnerable. Even if a house is too expensive to buy, you still need a home that keeps you healthy.

<https://www.betterrenting.org.au/about>

The Anti-Poverty Network

<https://apn-sa.org/about-us/history/>

Tribunal and state services:

SACAT And Housing Disputes SACAT (South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal) is the State Government body that deals with disputes between tenants and landlords.

Ph: 1800 723 767

<https://www.sacat.sa.gov.au/about-sacat>

Housing SA:

Anyone who wishes to apply for public and community housing must complete a 'Registration Of Interest In Housing' form, and there are several steps that have to be met.

Ph: 131 299

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/renting-and-letting/public-housing/register-for-housing>

Public, Social and Low-Income Housing Providers:

Uniting SA:

Ph: (08) 8440 2244

Email: housing@unitingsa.com.au

<https://unitingsa.com.au/housing/community-housing/>

Anglicare:

Ph: 1800 688 000

Email: admin@anglicaresa.com.au

Believe Housing *which exists as a part of Anglicare*

Email: enquiry@believehousing.org.au

www.believehousing.org.au

Amelie Housing:

Ph: 1800 950 575

Email: adminsa@amelie.org.au

www.ameliehousing.org.au

Common Equity Housing (co-op housing):

Ph: 8354 2790

Email: info@cehsa.com.au

www.cehsa.com.au

Common Housing Ltd

Ph: 1300 245 468

Email: info@chl.org.au

www.chl.org.au/

Cornerstone Housing:

Ph: 8165 5300 (9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday)

Email: infos@hcau.org.au

www.housingchoices.org.au

Junction and Women's Housing:

Ph: 8203 5700

Email: housing@junctionaustralia.org.au

junctionaustralia.org.au

Salvation Army Housing:

Ph: 8368 6800

Email: sahsa.admin@aus.salvationarmy.org

www.salvationarmy.org.au/sa

Unity Housing:

Email: admin@unityhousing.org.au

www.unityhousing.org.au

Westside Housing Company:

Ph: 8155 6070

www.westsidehousing.org.au

Disability Housing Providers and Services:

Access 2 Place:

Ph: 8274 6300

Email: info@access2place.com.au

www.access2place.com.au

Julia Farr Housing Association:

Ph: 8373 8333

Email: property@jfha.org.au

www.jfha.org.au/

Minda Inc:

Ph: 8422 6200

www.mindainc.com.au

Your Place Housing:

Ph: 8351 8466

www.accessiblehousing.org.au

Useful Tenant Resources:

The Law and Renting:

<https://lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/ch23s01.php>

General Government Information:

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/renting-and-letting>

Consumer and Business Services, Renters Rights:

<https://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/campaigns/renting-rights>

Anti-Poverty Network

Information Sheet and Resources

<https://antipovertynetworksaorg.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/housing-support-may-2023.pdf>

<https://apn-sa.org/resources/help-with-welfare-and-housing/#emergency>

Anti-Poverty Network Common Issues for Tenants FAQ: (up to date as of June 2023)

What type of lease is fixed or periodic?

A fixed-term agreement is for a defined period and has a set starting date and a set ending date. A periodic agreement is for a recurring period without a fixed term (it has a starting date but no specified end date). A periodic tenancy can continue indefinitely.

Breaking a fixed-term lease

If you need to leave a property early, it is always best to try to negotiate with your landlord and arrive at a written mutual agreement. If this is not possible, a tenant can apply to SACAT (South Australian Civil And Administrative Tribunal) and ask the Tribunal to be released from the lease early on grounds of undue hardship, domestic violence, or any other special circumstance (financial penalties may be incurred).

Minimum notice for property visits and inspections

Your Housing Provider has to give you 7 to 14 days notice of their intention to enter your property to inspect. However, they can attend without prior notification in the case of an emergency or to make urgent repairs. Rent increases Are allowed every 12 months, if written into your rental agreement, as long as 60 days notice is provided.

Getting your bond back

A bond should be returned to the tenant at the end of the lease, provided there are no claims made by the landlord. For information please visit: <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/renting-and-letting/residential-bonds/bond-refunds>

What is a Form 2

Form 2 is a warning letter. You need to rectify the breach by the date stated. If you do not rectify the breach by this date the landlord/agent can apply to the SACAT for a hearing to have you evicted.

This is a rich country. Yet 1 in 6 children and 1 in 7 adults live in poverty.

Why is there always money for tax cuts for the rich, but never money to ensure that pensioners, job-seekers, sole parents, and others have a liveable income?

No one should have nothing left after they pay the rent. No one should have to skip meals or medicines.

But millions of people face this situation, including people looking for paid work, who have to live on JobSeeker, at just \$46 a day (\$16K a year).

In 2020, the government showed how quickly poverty can be eliminated, when it introduced the COVID Supplement, lifting millions of people above the poverty-line.

Then, it took away almost all that extra money.

The Anti-Poverty Network SA is calling on the government to bring together those on low incomes to fight for a society where no one is left behind and where all are treated with respect.

We believe in a dignified life for all above the poverty-line. At least \$88 a day, enough to keep your home, your food, look after your health, and be part of your community.

OF HOUSING STRESS,
HOMELESSNESS OR
RENTAL STRESS

Free specialist

A LIVEABLE
INCOME FOR

ALL



Tenant blacklists and access to personal information on tenant databases