



National Housing
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How Older Women with lived experience of housing insecurity built a movement that is transforming public policy in Queensland

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The lived experience and its impacts

How do Older Women experience housing insecurity?

We are not safe on the streets, so older women move between:

- Couch-surfing, sleeping in our cars, tents or shipping containers, finding informal “rentals” on Gumtree and noticeboards, house-sitting (less available since Covid)
- House sharing is the only relatively secure and affordable option for those not in social, community, or affordable housing

What are the impacts of housing insecurity on Older Women?

- › Prolonged stress which negatively impacts on physical and mental health
- › Frequent moves lead to loss of connection to community, friends, family, and work opportunities, creating an increased sense of isolation which further impacts on wellbeing



Why are Older Women the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness?

- **Decades of failures in public systems underpinned by** gender inequity, have resulted in a **legacy** impacting most significantly on most single women over 55yrs who are on the **edge*** and looking at a 30+-year crisis in affordable and amenable housing options in both private and public sectors.
- 400,000 older women in Australia and many more in developed countries around the world experience a fall from this edge into homelessness with a loss of employment, poor health, relationship breakdown, increased carer demands.
- This can be your mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, co-worker, friend or neighbour.

One of the most common factors is a small or non-existent superannuation balance due to work history, carer responsibilities outside the workforce or impact of relationship breakdown.

The issues Older Women face are:

- Current social, community, and affordable housing provision is completely inadequate
- The private market is well beyond their economic reach, and has worsened with Covid
- Current policy and legislation prevent innovative solutions which could be provided by public, private and community sector partnerships.



Public action

Linda's story illustrates the key aspects of the practice of community development work where we weave the interactions of personal experiences in a broader analysis that transforms peer relationships into an individual and systems-change process.



Moving from private or personal experience to public action

- › Listening to individual stories, connecting those people and their stories to each other,
- › Building a shared system analysis about the common concerns,
- › Consider the question that arises from the analysis, 'what does this mean we will do'?

Our quest continues as we define actions and establish agreements

- › What's been done elsewhere, what's possible, and who do we need to talk to?
- › How and with who do we form the connections we need to bring about this change?
- › How do we organise ourselves to do it... especially in the middle of a pandemic!

HOW Movement – from private experience to public action

- › **Birth of the Housing Older Women Movement** and alignment with supportive organisations and individuals to achieve our goals.
- › **Community Development practice***- weaving personal experiences and fostering a broader analysis of our shared experiences we transform peer relationships into a systems-change movement
- › **Leading and influencing public awareness and debate** - over 2 years the HOW Movement has engaged with over 200 individuals and organisations and gathered over 1000 Facebook group members



Vital alliances include

- Q Shelter
- Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG)
- Older Women's Network
- Zonta
- Mission Australia
- Mercy Foundation



* www.cdqld.org for CD practice resources

Personal and Public Outcomes

Personal Change Outcomes

- › As volunteers, we continue to learn about public policy - its impacts and legacy, housing and economic systems, governance, leadership, conflict resolution, alliance building, while connecting with women in crisis and taking their voice and their solutions to government and other stakeholders to achieve the change.

System Change Outcomes* – our co-design process with the QLD Dept of Communities, Housing, Digital Economy, Arts (DCHDEA) resulted in the recent announcement of five important housing initiatives for older women

- New housing and support service hub with regional service responses
- A review of how older women are impacted by services provided by Dept Housing
- New housing models co-designed by women with lived experience
- Planning and zoning review to grow supply and generate better outcomes for Older Women
- HOW Movement on Advisory and Monitoring group with Qld government



* [Att 2.2.pdf \(mcusercontent.com\)](#)

Looking forward - creating solutions – enhancing resilience

- Our work with DCHDEA will be ongoing
- Ongoing **solution-focused engagement** with a range of stakeholders
- Making this cohort of “invisible homeless” **Visible and Audible**
- **Raising public awareness** and advocating for change to realise our vision:
“To ensure Older Women have safe, secure, and affordable housing appropriate to their needs, which fosters wellbeing and enables aging in place”
- **We continue to enhance our resilience** as individuals and active citizens through ongoing learning and celebrating our successes.



