

# *Mercy Advocacy*

*‘Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”’*

*- Mt 8:20*



*Seeding the Future with Others*

*June 2015*

*Homelessness can mean loss of home  
loss of traditional lands  
loss of a welcome anywhere on earth.*



## **Risking homelessness or early entry into aged care**

Older people are at risk of homelessness or early entry into aged care as rental affordability continues to plummet. An Anglicare Australia report has sparked renewed calls from seniors groups for greater investment in affordable housing and short-term changes to increase the rate of Commonwealth Rental Assistance. An affordable rental was defined as one that cost less than a third of the household's income.

*“There is a growing number of older people, particularly older women, at risk of homelessness for the first time in their lives when they simply can't make increasing rental payments,”*

said Council on the ageing national chief, **Ian Yates**.

*“They don't have any superannuation to draw on, often have high medical costs, and often they'd like to keep working but because of age discrimination they can't.”*



<b>For Single Pensioners</b>		
<b>Number of affordable properties</b>		<b>% of rental properties affordable</b>
Qld Brisbane	18	0.3
Qld North (Cairns region)	8	0.6
QLD Central (Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald)	8	0.6
NSW (Sydney, Illawarra)	7	< 0.1
VIC (Melbourne)	18	0.1
<b>Total Australia Wide</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>0.9</b>

*Figures from a snapshot day in April*

*“Having little self-determining power over where they live, some may develop feelings of isolation and loss of control in their lives, in turn placing more stress on their mental and physical health and going against the positive ageing ethos that is promoted in our society,”*

From ‘*Affordable rentals thing of the past*’ - **Kirsty Stein**  
‘*The Senior News*’ June 2015



## **ACTION:**

Write to **PM/ Minister Morrison/Treasurer Hockey** in support of the call by Anglicare Australia and the Council on the Ageing for government leadership on a national affordable housing strategy, an increase of the Newstart allowance to keep pace with housing costs, a review of Rent Assistance.





## Living under the threat of homelessness

*If the WA Government wanted to create maximum anxiety among people with a history of dispossession, then this process has been a masterclass.*

History tells Indigenous elders that forcing people off their traditional lands will only make the situation worse. Uppermost in many minds is the calamity of the 1960s when changes to the federal pastoral industry award finally granted equal pay to Aboriginal stockmen but saw them and their families evicted from stations without support, creating decades of dysfunction and distress.

Five months since closures of remote Indigenous communities were floated, there's been no consultation, no assessment framework and no list of at-risk communities or criteria that will decide that – or certainly none that is public.

*“Not once has the state’s Minister for Aboriginal affairs, Peter Collier, come to see us about these plans,”*

**Gordon Gray** WA Aboriginal Advisory Council

Into the void has gone rumour and confusion. There's a document tabled in state parliament that purports to name all the two hundred and seventy-four recognized remote communities. Other lists are floating about, including one that rates each community under A, B and C for feasibility.

Representatives from the Northampton local shire council, in support of one community in their area, **Barrel Well**, remind **WA Premier Barnett** that the United Nations Declaration on the



Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that they “*shall not be forcibly removed from their lands*”

*“You’ve got to recognize they are custodians of the land – you’ve got to have some respect for that,”*

says shire CEO **Garry Keefe**.

*Extracts from ‘Remote Control’ Marie McInerney  
‘The Saturday Paper’ 2-8/05/15*

- Tabled in parliament - 274 communities
- Planned by government for closure - 150 communities
- Floating around on community feasibility lists - A,B and C categories

Result:

Total confusion and deep anxiety for Indigenous people



## **ACTION:**

Write to **PM/ WA Premier Barnett/WA Minister** for Aboriginal Affairs, Peter Collier to support the stand taken by the Northampton local shire council.



## Longing for a home

*“The policy of deterrence just means pushing the problem back on to someone else to fix”*

states **Richard Towle**, the UN refugee agency’s representative in Malaysia,

*“The lesson here is that this approach irritates relations between states and exposes people to greater danger.”*

An estimated twenty five thousand Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants and asylum seekers fled Myanmar and Bangladesh in the first three months of this year part of the largest movement of people across South East Asia since the fall of South Vietnam forty years ago.

Up to six thousand people could still be adrift in boats after Indonesia and Malaysia last week reversed policies to push boats back to sea, thanks largely to the actions of Achenese fishermen who saw the human faces and took them into their communities.

Malaysia admitted they found mass graves in a remote area near its border with Thailand that are believed could contain hundreds of Rohingya and Bangladeshi despite earlier denials that such graves existed. (From ‘*Sydney Morning Herald*’ 26/05/15)

All asylum seekers will go to extraordinary lengths to flee persecution and other dangers in their homelands. They will do almost anything to find sanctuary in a new country.



## Walat Barka's story

The following are the words under the picture which may be hard to read:

**Walat Barka** from Eritrea:



*“My father... He passed away while I was unborn....Five months in my mother's womb, he got shot after the civil war in Eritrea. Coming home in front of my mother...So many of my friends don't have fathers because of the war.”*

The only thing between us was my mothers soft swollen brown skin, a umbilical cord, 16 years of war, a facist, 2469 casualties, 395 widows, 289 father less children and still counting...

Extract from 'The Big Issue' 15-28/05/15



### **ACTION:**

The ALP will debate asylum seeker policy at its national conference in Melbourne in July

- Support Shadow Immigration, Minister **Richard Marles**, in his recent statement regarding the humanitarian dimension of the issue of displaced people in our region/world:

*“Building a deterrence network as the centrepiece of a philosophy.....and saying ‘we don't want to have anything to do with the problems of the world’... at a time when we are seeing the largest numbers of displaced people since WWII ... is unacceptable.”*



*When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome  
you in our homes ..... The King will reply,  
“I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least  
important of these ... you did it for me.”*

*Mt 25:38, 40*



**Compiled by Genevieve Caffery and Dolores Creevey**

**on behalf of the Members of the Reference Group**

