

NEWTOWN

Neighbourhood Centre

New(town) Beginnings #6

Dear Neighbour

I don't know about you, but these past few weeks have been a whirlwind of constant activity.

In fact, the month of May is always a juggle with Neighbourhood Centre Week, Volunteer Week, Reconciliation Week, NNC Health Hub, Paint Marrickville REaD birthday celebration, plus our regular events and weekly activities.

We also had the election to contend with as we acted as a pre-polling centre for people with no fixed address. In addition, a few days prior to election day we hosted over 100 people at a 'homelessness and older women' forum, in conjunction with partner organisations all demanding action on the housing affordability crisis and social inequity plaguing our cities.

I've never seen our main hall so crowded, with attendees eager to hear the housing and homelessness policies of the different parties. Labor and Greens senators attended and presented their policies, but unfortunately the LNP did not send a representative.

The inaction on such a vital issue becomes even more infuriating when winter arrives in earnest and we, as frontline staff, are confronted with the harsh realities of inadequate affordable housing. Rough sleepers who are normally resigned to sleeping outdoors, suddenly realise they may not survive the freezing chilled evenings and arrive at NNC seeking assistance.

Only this week I met a man in his late 30s, an ex-chef who had developed a debilitating drug addiction, which has rendered him homeless and unemployed. Over the past couple of years, he'd been in and out of rehab, like some sort of perverted carousel ride.

Homeless and frightened, he hadn't slept for days and was mourning the loss of his prized chef knives set, which had recently been stolen while he slept in the park. His biggest concern wasn't the loss of his valuable tools, but the fact that they would end up in the wrong hands.

He was desperate to get into rehab again but also needed temporary accommodation as he felt he wouldn't be able to resist the temptation of drugs or alcohol if he was forced to sleep rough again. An hour or so later we had managed to secure him a bed for two nights, along with promises from two rehabs that they would call him to do an assessment.

All in all, a good outcome.

We'd recently received some brand-new clothes from an amazing organisation called Thread Together. They distribute unworn clothing for community services to pass on to clients. Despite him telling me he had holes in his pants, he refused to take any items we offered, stating that someone else may need them more than he did.

This is a common response we hear from rough sleepers; they often reject “freebies” because they feel as though someone may need the items more than they do.

For people who spend so much time enduring the cold, they often seem to have the warmest hearts.

Take care of yourself, and others

Mel
Community Strengthening Team

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

1 Bedford St/PO Box 19, Newtown NSW 2042 | ABN 96 884 462 833

E admin@newtowncentre.org | P +61 2 9564 7333 | F +61 2 9519 2509 | W newtowncentre.org